

HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
21 JANUARY 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 21 January 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Ron Hampson (Chairman)

Councillors: Amanda Bragg, Peter Curtis, Rosetta Dolphin, Jim Falshaw, Alison Halford, George Hardcastle, Mike Reece, Gareth Roberts and Sharon Williams

SUBSTITUTE: Councillor: Haydn Bateman (for Ray Hughes)

APOLOGIES: Councillors: David Cox, Ron Davies, Glenys Diskin and Brian Lloyd

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: Marion Bateman and Carolyn Thomas

CONTRIBUTORS: Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Cabinet Member for Housing, Chief Executive, Director of Community Services, Head of Finance, Head of Housing, Housing Asset Manager, Finance and Accountancy Manager, Neighbourhood Housing Managers

IN ATTENDANCE: Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

No declarations of interest were made.

50. BUDGET CONSULTATION FOR 2014/15

The Chairman welcomed the contributors to the meeting.

The Director of Community Services introduced the report to set out the consultation arrangements with Overview & Scrutiny for 2014/15. He provided background information and advised that an information pack including background papers had been made available prior to the meeting and that a copy of the report on the Housing Revenue Account 2014/15 and Capital Programme 2014/15 received by Cabinet earlier in the day was appended to the report.

The Head of Housing presented the budget proposals and key service issues for the 2014/15 Revenue and Capital Budget Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The main features of the presentation were:-

- Welsh Government – Draft Financial Determinations
- Housing Revenue Account subsidy system
- Approach to Housing Revenue Account budget setting
- 2014/15 Housing Revenue Account efficiencies

- 2014/15 Housing Revenue Account Service Improvements/ Pressures
- Funding for Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2014/15
- Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2014/15
- Achievements
- Looking forward to 2014/15
- Housing Revenue Account 30 year Business Plan

Commenting on the change to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) subsidy system, the Leader explained that negotiations were still ongoing with the Welsh Government. He opined that the recent, significant, no votes, by tenants who wanted their homes to stay in local authority ownership, which had taken place in Caerphilly and in Flintshire, had prompted a clear policy shift nationally. There had been consistent gains on what Flintshire had been able to project for management and maintenance allowances in the business plan, meaning that the gap was closing. There was now real potential to achieve the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) before the target date of 2020 and without the expensive borrowing which other authorities had incurred.

The comments and questions raised by Members of the Committee on the presentation, together with the responses given, are detailed in Appendix 1 (attached).

Members expressed their thanks to officers for their hard work and achievements in the current financial restraints and the positive proposals put forward.

The Chief Executive reported that the Cabinet had, earlier in the day, approved the HRA budget proposals, which now, with the endorsement of the Committee could be forwarded to Council. He went on to comment that Flintshire's successful approach to WHQS and initiatives within Education had been examples which the County had cited in the submission to the Williams Commission as examples of corporate effectiveness.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the presentation be noted;
- (b) That the Committee endorse the resolutions from Cabinet to Council as follows:
 - i. The proposed HRA budget for 2014/15 as set out in Appendix 1, incorporating the financial assumptions in Appendix 2 and the service Improvements and Efficiencies in Appendix 3;
 - ii. The level of rent and service charges for 2014/15 as set out in paragraphs 3.01 to 3.07;
 - iii. The level of projected balances at 31 March 2015 at 3.20% of total expenditure;

- iv The proposed HRA Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 4;
and
- (c) That the impact of the proposed revenue budget and capital programme on the 30 year Business Plan be noted.

51. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were two members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 3.30 pm and ended at 4.30 pm)

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Chairman