

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
19 MARCH 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 19 March 2015

PRESENT: Councillor Hilary Isherwood (Chair)

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Peter Curtis, Chris Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, David Evans, Veronica Gay, Cindy Hinds, Ray Hughes, Joe Johnson, Colin Legg, Nancy Matthews, Ann Minshull, and Paul Shotton

SUBSTITUTES: Councillor: Tim Newhouse (for Brian Lloyd)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Christine Jones, Richard Jones, and Aaron Shotton

CONTRIBUTORS: Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection & Leisure, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Waste Manager, Acting Streetscene Manager, Street Lighting Manager, and Parking Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer. .

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

43. MINUTES

- (i) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 December 2014 were submitted.
- (ii) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 January 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

44. WASTE COLLECTIONS POLICY

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced a report to seek a recommendation from the Committee to Cabinet to approve the changes to the Waste Collections Policy following the 2015/16 Business Planning process. He provided background information and referred to the

main considerations in the report which summarised the changes to the existing Policy.

The Chief Officer introduced Harvey Mitchell, Waste Manager, and invited him to give a presentation on the review of the Waste Collections Policy. The main points of the presentation were as follows:

- Household Recycling Centre's (HRC's)
- Missed collections
- Garden Waste Service
- Bulky Waste Service
- 7 day collections
- Replacement containers

Councillor Cindy Hinds thanked the Community Councils for their contributions to the Workshops held the previous week. She expressed concerns about Hope Recycling Centre and asked if it could remain open at weekends. The Chief Officer advised that the Centre had the lowest footfall and poorest recycling rates of all Centres.

Councillor Nancy Matthews suggested that point 3.38 of the report relating to collections on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's day needed to be made clearer within the policy. Councillor Matthews also asked if the van permits could be extended to 4 sites. She expressed concerns that the draft policy still allowed for side waste to be collected, and said she was uncomfortable with the proposals for Sunday collections.

The Chief Officer advised that Greenfield and Mold were the largest sites and additional staffing resources were made available. He explained that there would be cost implications in relation to staffing for other sites to accommodate van permits.

Councillor Ian Dunbar sought clarification regarding yellow stickers on bins for assisted collections. He advised that on occasions there were problems at the Connah's Quay site due to traffic queues when the skips were being emptied.

The Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection & Leisure advised that yellow stickers should no longer be in use. He explained that assisted collections were agreed between the individual and the relevant team. He acknowledged that servicing the sites had caused some problems but that every effort would be made to ensure that traffic continued to flow.

Councillor David Evans referred to the need to provide a household bill when collecting replacement containers. He felt this was unnecessary and expressed concern that this may create problems for residents and discourage them to recycle or result in fly-tipping. He also requested data on fly tipping for Flintshire and emphasised the need to monitor fly-tipping if changes were implemented. Councillor Evans emphasised the need for waste containers to be returned to their point of origin.

The Waste Manager stated that the cost of replacement containers was considerable. He advised that historic data on fly tipping was available and would be included in performance reports in future. He said it would be the responsibility of the charge-hand in future to ensure that the waste containers were returned appropriately.

Councillor Haydn Bateman expressed concerns regarding Sunday collections and asked which areas would be affected. The Waste Manager reported that the vast majority of people would continue to have their bin collected on the same day that they currently do, however, it was envisaged that the collections would be in the North West of Flintshire.

Councillor Bateman asked for further information regarding bag splitting at the Recycling Centres. The Cabinet Member explained that the staff would be recycling the contents and opening the bags. He reminded Members of the visit to the Household Recycling Centre (HRC) site at Sandycroft which was scheduled to take place at the end of March 2015.

Councillor Chris Dolphin asked how many charge-hands would be appointed. He also asked for information on the cost of Saturday and Sunday collections and how this would result in efficiencies. Councillor Dolphin queried why it was not possible to state that collections would take place in the morning or afternoon rather than after 7am as was stated in the Policy. He expressed the view that the Policy was weighted against residents and said he had serious reservations about doubling the collections on a Saturday and the introduction of a Sunday collection. In his response the Waste Manager advised that the cost savings were mainly around vehicle costs and he agreed to provide a breakdown of the proposed savings.

The Cabinet Member for Environment emphasised that the Policy had yet to be agreed by Cabinet and was still at the consultation stage. He said that he was listening to the views expressed and the comments made by Members would be given due consideration prior to the final decision being made.

The Chief Officer advised that an evaluation was currently taking place to determine how many charge-hands would be required. Councillor Dolphin requested that local members be provided with contact details for the charge-hands when appointed.

Councillor Ray Hughes asked that further consideration be given to continuing the household recycling service at Hope.

Councillor Joe Johnson referred to problems concerning which vehicles were allowed to visit the HRC Centres. The Waste Manager advised that that signs would be displayed to clearly indicate which vehicles were allowed at each site.

Councillor Peter Curtis asked how information would be communicated to residents when the changes to the Policy were finalised. He welcomed the suggestion of morning and afternoon collections. The Chief Officer agreed that communication was key to the successful implementation of any changes and that the relevant information would be communicated to residents prior to the implementation of any changes.

Councillor Peter Curtis referred to the discounts available for the elderly and people who received benefits and expressed concern that there may be some people in paid employment who may not earn as much as someone in receipt of a benefit.

Councillor Veronica Gay referred to the potential for disputes over missed collections and asked for a robust system to be put in place to evidence what steps had taken place. The Waste Manager explained that proof of sign-off would be available. Councillor Gay also asked that further consideration be given to allowing van permit holders to use the Sandycroft site to ensure geographical balance of provision across Flintshire. She referred to a problem with fly-tipping of tyres in the Saltney area which was a cause for concern. The Waste Manager said that the point made about the Sandycroft site would be taken into consideration.

The Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure, welcomed Members comments and suggestions but emphasised that due to budget constraints the Authority had to make significant savings and work more efficiently.

Councillor Richard Jones expressed concerns that the Committee was being asked to recommend approval of Policy changes to Cabinet without a sufficient level of financial or economic detail to make an informed recommendation. Councillor Jones also asked why the Council would continue to collect its own trade waste rather than to outsource it based on the trade waste proposals and the suggested ability of private operators to deliver a more competitive service. The Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure responded that if outsourcing could deliver a more efficient service this would be given further consideration.

Councillor Tim Newhouse proposed that Hope Recycling Centre become a Recycling Only Centre and reduced its operating hours to weekends only from 10.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays, as from the earliest possible date. He requested that a recorded vote be taken on his proposal.

The Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure, advised that Cabinet would be making the final decision and if the decision was to be Called-In to the Committee then it would be appropriate to take a recorded vote.

Councillor Newhouse proposed that the recommendation be added to the current recommendation within the report.

The Chair emphasised that the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, and the Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection & Leisure, had undertaken to consider all the suggestions put forward at both the workshops and at the meeting prior to a final decision being taken by Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee recommends approval of the new Waste Collection Policy to the Cabinet with the recommendations as noted in the powerpoint presentation.
- (b) That the Hope Recycling Centre be open between 10.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday only

45. GRASS CUTTING POLICY

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced a report to seek a recommendation from the Committee to Cabinet to approve the Council's revised Grass Cutting Policy. He provided background information and referred to the changes to the current Policy which were summarised in the report.

The Chief Officer introduced Derrick Charlton, Acting Streetscene Manager, and invited him to give a presentation on the review of the Council's Grass Cutting Policy. The main points of the presentation were as follows:

- Well maintained Highways – Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management
- Environmental Protection Act
- Duty of Care
- Feedback

Councillor Haydn Bateman asked if an additional grass cutting service could be provided if required by Town and Community Councils, and cited the need if holding special events as an example. The Acting Streetscene Manager advised that this was possible if requested.

Councillor Veronica Gay suggested that the reference to additional cuts for Health and Safety reasons needed to be more specific within the Policy. The Acting Streetscene Manager agreed to review the wording and amend if necessary to ensure it was specific.

Councillor Colin Legg expressed the need to protect rare plants whilst at the same time ensuring that species such as Ragwort were controlled. The Acting Streetscene Manager gave an assurance that the Service was aware of the need to safeguard plants and wildlife and sourced information through

local knowledge. He advised that the Authority had a duty to control certain plants including Ragwort.

Councillor Paul Shotton commented on the Authority's reputation for its well maintained highways and hoped the policy changes would not result in a detrimental effect. He also expressed thanks to the work undertaken by the litter-pickers to keep Flintshire litter free and tidy.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee recommends approval of the Council's revised Grass Cutting Policy to Cabinet with the recommendations as noted in the powerpoint presentation.

46. STREETLIGHTING POLICY

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced a report to seek a recommendation from the Committee to Cabinet to approve the Council's revised Street Lighting Policy. He provided background information and referred to the changes to the existing Policy which were summarised in the report.

The Chief Officer introduced Darrell Jones, Street Lighting Manager, and invited him to give a presentation on the review of the Council's Street Lighting Policy. The main points of the presentation were around the proposed amendments and the summary and outcome of recent workshops.

Councillor Ray Hughes referred to the repair/attendance timeframe and asked that Councillors be kept informed so that they could respond to the queries raised by residents. The Street Lighting Manager advised there was already a process in place which should ensure that Councillors were being kept informed and he asked that Members make him aware of any local issues which arose.

Councillor Haydn Bateman asked what consultation would take place with regard to determining sensitive areas. The Street Lighting Manager advised that the areas would be determined in consultation with the Local Councillors, Town and Community Councils, and the blue light services.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee recommends approval of the Council's revised Street Lighting Policy to Cabinet with the recommendations as noted in the powerpoint presentation.

47. FLINTSHIRE PARKING STRATEGIES

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced a report to seek a recommendation from the Committee to Cabinet to approve the

Council's Car Parking Strategy and the introduction of parking charges at all viable car parks within the ownership of the Council. The report also sought a recommendation from the Committee to Cabinet to approve a workplace parking permit scheme at specific facilities where staff parking overlaps with the local parking strategy

The Chief Officer provided background information and referred to the main considerations which were summarised in the report.

The Chief Officer introduced Joanna Jones, Parking Manager, and invited her to give a presentation on the Car Parking Strategy. The main points of the presentation were as follows:

- Proposal
- Local Strategies aims
- Feedback and outcome of recent workshops.

Councillor Ray Hughes spoke in support of the revenue raised through car parking charges being retained within the Authority in the current financial climate. He added that the Authority held responsibility for the maintenance of the car parks not Town and Community Councils.

The Cabinet Member for Environment emphasised that the figure of 10% proposed was after all monies for upkeep, wear and tear etc. had been deducted.

Councillor Nancy Matthews referred to the issue of prohibited return and expressed great concern at this proposal. She also felt there should be a standardisation of fees across the County and disagreed with the proposal to introduce grade related parking at County Hall and emphasised that charges should be in line with parking elsewhere in the County.

Councillor Peter Curtis reiterated the view that there should be a standardisation of charges across the County. He referred to the current arrangement in Holywell where there were no car parking charges on days when special events were held in the town. He commented on the need to regenerate business in the area and requested that the current dispensation on car parking charges continued in the future. The Cabinet Member for Environment did not anticipate a blanket approach with regard to free car parking during special events and said that each case could be considered individually.

Councillor Chris Dolphin spoke against the introduction of a workplace charging scheme at County Hall. He commented that the proposal was to introduce an affordable and equitable charging scheme and expressed the view that this should exclude employees who earned an income of £16k and below.

Councillor Dolphin referred to residents parking permits and asked what was the cost of the permit. The Parking Manager advised that the proposed fee was in the range of £25 to £30.

Councillor David Evans proposed that the item be deferred for consideration to a future meeting of the Committee due to the lack of clarity around the proposals put forward. The Chair asked if the Committee wished to hold a special meeting to consider the item and when put to the vote this was agreed.

RESOLVED

That the item be deferred until a future meeting of the Committee.

48. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Environment & Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator introduced a report to enable the Committee to consider the Forward Work Programme.

Members reviewed the current programme and agreed that the following items be considered at the next meeting:

- Bus subsidy review and demand responsive transport
- Draft Improvement Plan 2015/16

The Facilitator drew attention to the invitation which had been extended to the Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee concerning Viable and Vibrant Communities on 24 March 2015 and the site visit to the Household Recycling Centre based at Sandycroft which would take place on 31 March 2015.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be agreed.

49. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00pm and ended at 12.33pm)

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Chair