

**COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**12 JANUARY 2016**

Minutes of the meeting of the Community and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 12th January, 2016

**PRESENT:**     **Councillor Ron Hampson (Chairman)**

Councillors: David Cox, Paul Cunningham, Ron Davies, Rosetta Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Jim Falshaw, Alison Halford, Brian Lloyd and Gareth Roberts

**SUBSTITUTE:** Councillors: Haydn Bateman (for George Hardcastle), Paul Shotton (for Peter Curtis) and Arnold Woolley (for Amanda Bragg)

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors: Ray Hughes and Mike Reece

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Bernie Attridge

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance; Councillor Helen Brown, Cabinet Member for Housing; Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development; Chief Officer, Community & Enterprise; Service Manager for Enterprise & Regeneration and Enterprise Manager

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Community and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

**61.     DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**

There were no declarations of interest.

**62.     MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2015 were submitted.

Matters Arising

Councillor Ron Davies clarified that the issue he had reported in his ward related to a boiler and that this had now been resolved.

**RESOLVED:**

That, subject to the amendment, the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**63.     STRATEGIC HOUSING AND REGENERATION PROJECT (SHARP)**

The Chief Officer introduced a report to seek support to progress the next stages of the Council's Strategic Housing and Regeneration Project (SHARP) and to set out the proposed design of the first development located at the former Custom House School site in Connah's Quay. The introduction of self-financing

for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) had enabled the Council to commence its plans to develop new Council homes on a range of sites.

Detailed proposals were shared on the scheme in Connah's Quay on which work was due to commence in February 2016. Preparation of the plans had taken into consideration the need for sufficient parking on the site together with the design fitting with the local environment. The Flintshire Housing Standard, which had been adopted for use on all the Council's new housing schemes, had been developed by a working group of Members, officers and tenants using industry standards. This demonstrated the Council's commitment to provide high quality living environments with adequate storage space and quality fixtures/fittings. An update was also given on progress made towards future SHARP schemes and the delivery of various community benefits including the creation of an apprenticeship academy.

The report highlighted the approach to funding, utilising prudential borrowing for the Connah's Quay scheme, with future projects to be reviewed case by case. The Chief Officer circulated a financial analysis of build costs for the Connah's Quay scheme which was subject to ongoing verification and challenge. This included a breakdown of additional costs for drainage, parking etc, that was affordable within the HRA. Members were assured that the total cost of the scheme (including borrowing, repairs, allowance for bad debt and empty properties etc) would be recovered through rental income over a 50 year period.

Councillor Aaron Shotton described this as a watershed moment for the Council, which addressed one of the priorities set out in the Improvement Plan as well as meeting the needs of residents and filling the void in the housing market. He referred to the challenges encountered in reaching this stage which gave the opportunity to meet general housing needs and provide a high quality standard of living.

In thanking officers for the report, Councillor Ian Dunbar welcomed this first new build development under the SHARP programme and in particular the location of the scheme and parking provision.

As a point of accuracy on paragraph 3.02, Councillor Alison Halford pointed out that planning permission had been granted in December 2015 and took the opportunity to praise all those involved in making the right decision at that time. She commented that the plans for the scheme demonstrated a good quality build and design. On the costings provided, she queried the amount of £4,246 for car parking spaces. The Chief Officer pointed out that this equated to £353 for a second car park space per property. Consideration had been given to adequate parking provision, given the nearby school and traffic implications, and would be a key consideration for future developments to address the increase in car ownership.

Whilst welcoming the proposals for the Connah's Quay scheme, Councillor Paul Shotton was particularly pleased that some of the features of the former Custom House School had been incorporated in the development. In response to questions, the Chief Officer explained that the £140K opening market value was an estimate of the properties' value at the time of building. The 7% financial

institution yield was an assumed starting interest rate on the advice of financial colleagues.

Councillor Aaron Shotton thanked Councillor Bernie Attridge for helping to retain some of the original features of the former school for the new development, and said that the plans demonstrated the Council's approach to ensure that each scheme was designed to fit in with the surrounding area.

Following queries from Councillor Rosetta Dolphin, it was confirmed that £91.67 and £100.83 weekly rent had been set for the two and three bedroom properties respectively on the Connah's Quay scheme. This compared favourably to the Local Housing Allowance weekly rent as indicated in the document circulated. On another question, it was explained that at least two social enterprises would be used during the programmes; one to employ apprentices who could be guaranteed a four year programme to complete their training through SHARP and improvements to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

In supporting the plans, Councillor Gareth Roberts spoke about the need to abolish Right to Buy to protect new Council properties. Councillor David Cox felt there was an opportunity to publicise and highlight the Council's housing initiative to show progression to meet the needs of residents.

Councillor Aaron Shotton said it was important that the Welsh Government promptly approve the Council's application to suspend Right to Buy. He added that although some progress had been made, more work was needed to lobby for an increase in the borrowing cap as this restricted the Council's ability to continue the momentum on addressing future housing needs.

Councillor Derek Butler commented that the programmes would provide opportunities to maximise skills and demonstrated that schemes were being targeted in communities where there was demand.

Concerning apprenticeships, Councillor Jim Falshaw spoke about the skills shortage in the construction industry and asked whether the training programme included Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) accreditation which was highly valued in the industry. The Chief Officer agreed to check whether this was already part of the plan.

In response to a question from Councillor Paul Cunningham on the recruitment of apprenticeships, the Chief Officer said that local schools and colleges had been made aware of the opportunities. Although preference would be given to local applicants, those from outside the area could not be excluded.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the development of 12 new Council homes on the Custom House School site, Connah's Quay be supported; and
- (b) That the standard scheme development assumptions as identified in section 1.20 of the report be supported.

**64. FLINTSHIRE BUSINESS WEEK 2015 (FBW15)**

The Enterprise Manager presented a report on the delivery and outcomes of Flintshire Business Week 2015 which had incorporated a regional theme to support local and regional business to maximise opportunities for investment, employment and skills. She spoke about the growth of the event with continued improvements sought year on year to respond to the needs of the wider economy.

The Committee received a summary of the key activities from the event held in October 2015, with good outcomes reported against the aims and performance indicators, as set out in the report. Delegate attendance had surpassed expectations, mainly due to the success of the Science Technology Engineering & Maths (STEM) event which gave high school students an opportunity to engage directly with the manufacturing sector. Plans were underway on the 2016 Flintshire Business Week which would also celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Councillor Derek Butler paid tribute to the small dedicated officer team and said that Flintshire Business Week was a widely recognised flagship event which demonstrated the richness of the county's industries. He commented on the positive feedback and record attendance for the 2015 event, particularly on the STEM event, and referred to the timing to coincide with the Wales Rally GB.

In congratulating the team, Councillor Paul Shotton particularly noted the excellent networking opportunities and quality seminars which had taken place.

Councillor Alison Halford asked about the role of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) and the availability of the business booklet highlighted by Councillor Butler.

Councillor Butler confirmed that the business booklet had been made available in the Members' room. He explained that the NWEAB was a regional partnership between the six North Wales Councils, chaired by Conwy, with priorities on the region's economy, tourism, transport and infrastructure. He advised that he was currently Vice-Chair of the Mersey Dee Alliance (MDA) and was soon to be appointed Chair, and that an update on the MDA together with an overview of the ongoing work of the NWEAB would be received at the March meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Aaron Shotton referred to the ambitious programmes of the NWEAB which included representatives from each of the six Authorities and the work of the MDA in establishing links with North West England.

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin stated the need for a better understanding of the regeneration functions which were a new area of responsibility for the Committee. She pointed out the shortage of skilled trades people and asked what was being done to encourage young people to take up this training.

Councillor Butler reported that some progress had been made to encourage local colleges to offer a range of skills courses. The Enterprise Manager referred to the joined-up approach between the Council and its

partners, such as Coleg Cambria, to develop opportunities across the region. She added that investment often involved a slow process and spoke about the importance of ensuring young people were job-ready, working with existing companies in the process of expansion and engaging with larger contractors to develop opportunities for apprenticeships.

Councillor Aaron Shotton welcomed the future update report on regeneration to help the Committee to scrutinise these important issues. He went on to refer to the steady growth in STEM events and in the number of young people taking advantage of employment and apprenticeship opportunities in Flintshire, which was not the case in some other counties.

Following comments from other Members, Councillor Paul Shotton felt that schools could do more to help address the shortage of trade skills and suggested that these concerns be relayed to the Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Chief Officer advised of plans to promote different types of apprenticeships at a jobs fair as part of National Apprentice Week in March. She agreed to share Members' questions with colleagues from the education sector with whom officers would be engaging to find routes from schools to apprenticeships or work-based learning.

In highlighting the importance of Welsh Government support for the MDA, Councillor Arnold Woolley asked about progress with the Halton Curve. Councillor Butler said that the achievements of the MDA had been acknowledged at ministerial level. The Halton Curve project had been agreed. He went on to say that the shortage in construction skills was a national problem as schools and colleges were lacking the infrastructure required, and that this would need to be addressed.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the key activities and outcomes from Flintshire Business Week 2015 be recognised and supported; and
- (b) That the Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee be asked to look into the concerns of the Committee around skill shortages and review how schools are working to reduce this shortage.

**65. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

In presenting the current Forward Work Programme for consideration, the Facilitator reminded Members of the budget meeting on 15 January.

Due to the number of items planned for the February and March meetings, the Committee agreed that the Facilitator liaise with the Chairman and Chief Officer to schedule an additional meeting of the Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted; and

- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

**66. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.20 am)

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**Chairman**