

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
13 JANUARY 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire on Wednesday, 13 January 2016

PRESENT: Councillor Veronica Gay (Chair)

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Ron Davies, Glenys Diskin, Chris Dolphin, David Evans, Cindy Hinds, Joe Johnson, Colin Legg, Brian Lloyd, Nancy Matthews, Ann Minshull and Paul Shotton

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Clive Carver (for Hilary Isherwood)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Christine Jones, Tim Newhouse, Aaron Shotton and David Wisinger

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Bernie Attridge (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment), Councillor Kevin Jones (Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection & Leisure), Councillor Derek Butler (Cabinet Member for Economic Development), Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Waste and Ancillary Services Manager, Transportation and Logistics Manager, and Integrated Transport Unit Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

52. CONSIDERATION OF A MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE PURSUANT TO THE CALL-IN ARRANGEMENTS

The Member Engagement Manager explained the procedure for the Call-In of a Cabinet decision.

53. HOPE HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CENTRE (HRC) SITE

The Chairman referred to the Call-In to the decision of the Cabinet from its meeting held on 15 December 2015 relating to Hope Household Recycling Centre (HRC) Site. The Call-In notice had been signed by four Members of the Council. To assist Members, the following documents had been circulated with the agenda:

- (a) A copy of the procedure for dealing with a called in item.
- (b) A copy of the report considered by Cabinet on 15 December 2015.

- (c) A copy of the Cabinet Record of Decision No.3250.
- (d) A copy of the Call In notice signed by Councillors Tim Newhouse, David Roney, David Williams and Phil Lightfoot.

The Chairman invited Councillor Tim Newhouse, as spokesperson for the signatories, to address the Committee. Councillor Newhouse detailed the reasons for the Call-In. He explained that the initial business case which had been submitted to enable a community bid to be put forward to take over the HRC site had been inadequate. A revised business plan had been presented, however, further work was required to make 'fit for purpose'. He referred to the active promotion of Community Asset Transfers by the Authority to achieve financial savings and said that a short term extension had been agreed with the Cabinet Member and Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) to the deadline to allow time for a more cohesive and robust business plan to be presented to the Authority by 31 January 2016.

Further to the statement made by Councillor Newhouse the Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure, provided background information and emphasised that the Authority would support the development of the business case through regular meetings with the interested parties and senior officers of the Waste team, to ensure the case was substantially completed by the agreed deadline. The Case would be reviewed on an ongoing basis and all parties informed of any issues or concerns arising. In the event that the business case was determined to be credible a report would be taken to the meeting of Cabinet to be held on 16 February 2016 for consideration.

The Member Engagement Manager explained the Committee's options for reaching a decision. Councillor Chris Dolphin proposed Option 1 which was seconded and on being put to the vote the proposal was carried.

RESOLVED:

That having considered the decision, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was satisfied with the explanation received and the decision could be implemented.

54. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

55. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced a report to update the Committee on the final stage of the Public Conveniences Review. He provided background information and advised that the final step of the review would consider the future of the remaining public convenience facilities in the County.

The Chief Officer referred to the five dedicated public convenience facilities which were operated by the Authority. He reported that a further review of service had taken place and drew attention to the recommendations for future provision as detailed in the report. He explained that it was proposed that the Authority promote the use of existing toilet facilities within Council buildings and cited leisure centres, libraries, and Connects Centres as examples, instead of the dedicated and sometimes isolated facilities which had been previously provided. The Chief Officer advised that expressions of interest had been received from some Town and Community Councils in taking over public convenience facilities which could form part of Corporate Asset Transfers. He also referred to the use of commercial facilities such as local businesses, which with the assistance of grant funding from the Welsh Government, could make their facilities available to the general public.

The Chief Officer emphasised the need for clear and consistent signage to be provided in town centres so the public were made aware of where public conveniences were available.

The Chief Officer drew attention to the Public Health Bill unveiled by the Welsh Government in June 2015 which placed a duty on local authorities to prepare and publish strategies for the provision of toilets for public use within their area. He advised that whilst the Authority had closed a number of dedicated facilities access to their Council owned toilets had been improved.

Councillor Chris Dolphin commented on the need for easily accessible public convenience facilities to be provided for the elderly, disabled people, and young children. These needed to be situated close to shops and local amenities. He expressed the view that there should be a public convenience located in every town centre. Councillor Clive Carver commented on the implications for people who had health problems.

Councillor Dolphin raised further concerns around meeting the needs of a large number of people during public events and said that some of the Council owned buildings which had been suggested could be used as an alternative facility to isolated buildings, for example Connects Centres, were not open at evenings or weekends. He also referred to the £500 grant from the WG to assist local businesses and shops with existing facilities to make provision for the public and said the amount was inadequate to support or encourage use at such premises. Councillor Dolphin said he supported the initiative of liaison with Town and Community Councils to consider the feasibility of taking over the maintenance and operation of public conveniences.

In response to the concerns raised by Councillor Dolphin concerning access and availability, Councillor Bernie Attridge commented on the proposal to consider use of the public facilities which were already available in libraries, leisure centres, restaurants, pubs and supermarkets.

Councillor Nancy Matthews also commented on the need to for consideration of provision for tourists and public events to be taken into account. She sought further information around Corporate Asset Transfers (CAT) and urged the Authority to proceed with caution. Councillor Attridge acknowledged the concerns raised and referred to the timescales for the proposals as outlined in the report which were 2017/18 with the exception of the facility at Talacre. He advised that a number of Town and Community Councils had already expressed an interest to the Authority in the opportunity to pursue the CAT option. The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) explained that if a CAT was not feasible then the Authority would give consideration to other options available.

Councillor Paul Shotton reported on the use of the public convenience facilities provided at the Connects Centre based in Connah's Quay which attracted people to the Centre. He said the facilities were well used and there had been no incidents of anti social behaviour arising as frequently occurred in isolated buildings. Councillor Shotton suggested that there was a need to make local businesses aware of the funding available from the WG to assist them to make their facilities available to the public. Councillor Ann Minshull commented on the benefits to local businesses and shops in generating increased 'footfall' and trade to their premises.

In response to a request from Councillor Matthews for regular updates on the CAT process with Town and Community Councils, Councillor Attridge agreed to provide a briefing paper to update members of the Committee as and when there was further information to report.

Councillor Clive Carver asked if the Authority supplied portable toilets. The Chief Officer advised that the Authority did not provide portable conveniences but did supply a list of where public conveniences were available, including Authority owned sites, for its employees who were not based in a building and cited waste operatives as an example.

Councillor Colin Legg emphasised the need for a public convenience to be situated in all town centres and opined that this should be made a statutory provision.

Councillor Chris Dolphin reiterated the view expressed by Councillor Legg that there should be statutory provision of public conveniences in town centres. He suggested that a caveat be added to the recommendation in the report to request that the WG provides adequate funding for such provision. He also commented on the need to regenerate economic growth in town centres. During discussion it was agreed that Councillor Bernie Attridge would write on behalf of the Authority to the WG to make representations for funding for public conveniences.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee recommends approval of the outcome of the final review of the Public Convenience service provision to Cabinet.

56. REVIEW OF THE COUNCILS SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICES

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced a report to update the Committee on the proposed review of subsidised bus services and outline the proposed approach for consulting with local communities on the development of Community Transport. He provided background information and referred to the Council's current spend on subsidised bus services for provision that would not be commercially viable. He reported that there was no statutory duty on the Council to provide local bus services or any other form of public transport, however, the Authority had a statutory duty to keep the bus network under review and intervene where appropriate. He introduced Katie Wilby, Transportation and Logistics Manager, and Ceri Hansom, Integrated Transport Unit Manager, and invited them to report on the key considerations.

The Transportation and Logistics Manager advised that a summary of all the Council's subsidised services and other types of bus services was appended to the report. She referred to the workshops which had been held to assist in identifying the core bus routes across the County and the frequency and standard of service each route should provide. A list of the proposed core network of bus routes has been produced and a map of the core routes attached at appendix 2 to the report. She referred to the next step for the review of service to deliver the 2016/17 savings, as detailed in the report, and advised that the final stage of the review would involve extending the arrangements to all other subsidised routes to deliver the required savings for 2017/18.

The Transportation and Logistics Manager advised that to assess which routes are no longer sustainable a review of the existing subsidised services, including utilisation and passenger number per journey, had been undertaken. This had identified a number of routes or sections of routes which are not sustainable and it was recommended that the subsidy for these routes (or sections of the routes) was withdrawn from 1 April 2016. A list of the routes (or sections of route) was provided in appendix 3. The Transportation and Logistics Manager explained that consultation with the Town and Community Councils affected by the unsustainable routes would be undertaken and a commitment/expressions of interest sought to take forward the development of community based transport schemes which to feed into the core network of bus routes prior to the withdrawal of the subsidy.

The Integrated Transport Unit Manager commented on the research undertaken to determine the provision of community transport in other areas and explained that details of good practice elsewhere in the County would be shared with Town and Community Councils to meet the needs of a wider group of residents. This would ensure the development of a sustainable community

transport system. She also referred to a series of 'drop in' events to be held across the County to engage with the wider community and stakeholders to explain how people can get involved in the project and what financial and other support may be available to set up new initiatives and cited car-share, community mini bus hire, and taxi services as examples.

The Chief Officer gave an assurance that the core routes would operate and that the Authority would work with local communities to develop more sustainable transport services for Flintshire residents. The Transportation and Logistics Manager commented on the proposal to establish a voluntary quality partnership with commercial operators on certain corridors.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions.

In response to the concerns raised by Councillor Clive Carver the Transportation and Logistics Manager reiterated that Transportation officers would be consulting with Town and Community Councils in early February prior to the withdrawal of any existing routes.

Members asked questions regarding the amount of subsidy per passenger. The Transportation and Logistics Manager agreed to share the relevant information with individual Members following the meeting on request.

Councillor Nancy Matthews commented on the proposal to develop local community transport arrangements and cited car share as an example. She asked if information and advice would be provided to drivers about the implications for insurance. The Integrated Transport Unit Manager explained that a number of expressions of interest had been made by individuals and groups who were keen to be involved in the project and clear and concise guidance would be provided around all aspects of local community provision. The Chair asked who would provide the MIDAS training for volunteer drivers. The Transportation and Logistics Manager explained that the Community Transport Association (CTA) for Wales provided some training and there is the opportunity to fund training through the community transport grant funding on a regional basis. The Chair expressed the need for more locally based training and the Transportation and Logistics Manager agreed to look into this.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee recommends approval of the proposed core network of bus routes to Cabinet; and
- (b) That the Committee supports the withdrawal of the existing subsidised journeys and routes that are poorly used and no longer sustainable or affordable and the mitigating actions that are intended to reduce the impact of the proposals in the community currently serviced by each route.

57. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Member Engagement Manager introduced the current Forward Work Programme for consideration by the Committee.

Members referred to the item on design of drainage for new development sites scheduled for consideration at the meeting of the Committee to be held on 9 February 2016. Members were keen for an item on Flooding, to also involve Welsh Water, to be included as soon as possible and it was suggested that this could be amalgamated into the topic “design of drainage for new development sites”. The Member Engagement Manager said that the Chief Officer (Planning and Environment) would be approached about widening the remit of the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme as submitted with the verbal amendments be approved and
- (b) That the Facilitator in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair be authorised to alter the Forward Work Programme between meetings

58. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were two members of the press and no members of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00am and ended at 12.45pm)

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Chair