

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
21 SEPTEMBER 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 21 September 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Paul Johnson (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Bob Connah, Paul Cunningham, Patrick Heesom, Dave Hughes, Richard Jones, Mike Lowe, Hilary McGuill, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGY: Councillors: Clive Carver and Andrew Holgate.

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance; Councillor Billy Mullin, Cabinet Member for Corporate Management; Chief Executive; Chief officer (Governance); Corporate Finance Manager; Corporate Business & Communications Executive Officer , Community & Business Protection Manager; Sharon Cairn, Chief Inspector North Wales Police; Trading Standards Team Leader; Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator; Rhiannon Edwards (Regional Domestic Violence co-ordinator); Mike White (North Wales Fire & Rescue Service) and Business Information and Compliance Advisor.

IN ATTENDANCE: Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Support Officer.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

17. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the 13th July 2017 were submitted

RESOLVED:

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

18. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

The Chief Executive introduced the report and gave an overview for the Committee to be confident of fulfilling its role as the statutory crime & disorder scrutiny committee for Flintshire.

The Community & Business Protection Manager, presented the Flintshire Community Safety Partnership Annual Report. She reported that a range of strategies were in place to address crime & disorder, substance misuse and reoffending issues.

Councillor Paul Cunningham referred to a recent North Wales Police Awards Ceremony which he had attended. This event had highlighted the successes within communities involving young and older residents who had come together to eliminate for example anti-social behaviour, alcohol misuse, trafficking problems. Flintshire had entered two projects for consideration.

Councillor Paul Johnson referred to the reporting of hate crime and asked whether there had been an increase. In responding, the Chief Inspector provided an overview of hate crime incidence within Flintshire.

In response to a question from Councillor Cunningham, the Community & Business Protection Manager referred to the regional plans for migration and commented whilst other counties had seen an impact from migration, Flintshire had not. Flintshire was part of the CDRP Group which met monthly and the co-ordinator for Wrexham, Denbighshire and Flintshire shared information with North Wales Police.

Councillor Richard Jones referred to problems of organised crime gangs targeting the homes of vulnerable people with learning difficulties area to deal in drugs. This was known as 'cuckooing' and the Chief Inspector confirmed that this was a problem across the UK with gangs moving out of inner cities. The PSPO and Safety Officers needed to identify vulnerable people and seek the support of local residents. Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, Orders had been issued to stop people going to these houses. This could only work with all public service agencies and public working together. The Partnership members present committed to consider further action on this emerging challenge.

The Anti-social Behaviour Co-ordinator referred to the monthly meetings which he attended where hotspot areas in social housing were highlighted. These meetings also included neighbourhood wardens. Councillor Haydn Bateman commented on concerns about problems happening in his ward at night

Rhiannon Edwards commented on the implementation of national training. This has been a massive undertaking with a pilot scheme already rolled out. With regard to victims of sexual violence, in April 2018, it was planned that all people working with vulnerable people would have the enhanced training as they were the first points of contact for victims. Councillor Paul Johnson suggested it would be useful for Members to attend training.

The Chair thanked the colleagues from the Community Safety Partnership for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Community Safety Partnership Annual Report be noted and the progress made supported.

19. ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES

The Chief Executive introduced this report which was a positive overview of the Council with no formal recommendations and a small number of (voluntary) proposals for improvement. The proposed Cabinet response was attached to the report. The Auditor

General's Annual Improvement Report was indicative that Flintshire was a mature and responsible council.

Councillor Billy Mullin congratulated the team for their hard work in ensuring that Flintshire had received such a good report.

Councillor Richard Jones raised concerns the true effects on services with over estimating the amount of efficiencies last year; he felt that it would be better to drop the efficiency rate to 90%.

In responding, the Chief Executive commented that the level of efficiencies were set too to press for momentum and achievement. He recognised that the in-year efficiency rate was behind the target.

Councillor Richard Jones referred to the efficiencies for car parking at County Hall and in Flint, and software introduction. He felt that these were not dependent on other things and yet had not been met. The Chief Executive explained the complexities involved with car parking at County Hall which had included negotiations with the unions and workforce. In Flint, car parking charge implementation had been delayed by the major regeneration works. The new finance software was a complex internal project.

Councillor Patrick Heesom commented he was not concerned with delivery issues and it was a good response in the Auditor's report. He was concerned with the role of scrutiny and his concerns that Scrutiny committees were not working properly. He felt that Members were not given enough time to read very large complex reports. The Chief Executive clarified the meaning of the Wales Audit Office report on overview and scrutiny, which referred to post evaluation review of major service changes only, and were noted intended as a general critique.

The Leader commented there were no recommendations for Flintshire in the report from the Auditor General for Wales: to receive an Audit report with no recommendations indicated that the Council had come a long way. He also emphasised that and Cabinet ensured any comments received from Scrutiny, and especially from this committee were properly considered. This view was supported by Councillor Mullin, who opined that Cabinet valued the contribution of Overview & Scrutiny.

RESOLVED:

The Committee is assured by the Auditor General for Wales' Annual Improvement Plan for 2016/17 and support the executive response to it

Councillor Heesom asked that it be minuted that he had abstained from the vote.

20. WALES AUDIT OFFICE STUDY REPORTS

The Chief Executive introduced the Wales Audit Office Study Reports. There were four voluntary) proposals for improvement. He summarised the proposed executive response to the reports.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee is assured by the review reports of the Wales Audit Office and supports the Council's executive response.

Councillor Heesom asked that it be minuted that he had abstained from the vote

21. COUNCIL PLAN 2017 – 23

The Chief Executive introduced the Council Plan 2017 – 23 and explained the Council Plan was in two parts. Part 1 was the statement of aims and intentions. Part 2 described the targets and milestones by which the achievements would be measured. The purpose of today's report was to enable the Committee to consider the structure, format and content of the Council plan, together with the Measures and Milestones document, and to provide feedback to the Cabinet. The Plan would be submitted for adoption to Council on 27th September.

Councillor Richard Jones referred to the section on supporting town centre vitality which he felt could be detrimental to continued retail use. He was concerned that this could influence master plans and local development plans (LDP). He also referred to the Deeside Plan and had concerns that Flintshire lacked capacity to ensure that other areas within Flintshire would also be considered.

The Chief Executive commented that these issues were within the remit of the Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee which had considered and supported the Plan at the meeting the previous day. The wording was meant to support wider regeneration of town centres, including housing, but not at the expense of the local retail offer.

Councillor Jones was concerned developers would identify this in the LDP and that town centres would be lost. The Chief Executive explained that this was not a formal planning policy document and should not pose that risk.

The Leader agreed and shared concerns on housing encroachment on retail and in his ward there were housing developments where there were once shops but added 'living over the shop' could be successful. He continued, referring Members to the developing regional local transport strategy reference of the Deeside Plan, the Metro Scheme to link towns to employment centres.

Councillor Haydn Bateman asked for clarification on strengthening regional air quality collaboration to help promote better health and well-being outcomes. The Corporate Business & Communications Executive Officer responded that this was a regional strategic approach to collate air quality data and fell within the remit of the Public Services Board and Natural Resources Wales

Councillor Patrick Heesom referred to his previously expressed reservations regarding the Plan for stakeholders and partners. He also referred to the Regional Growth Deal Bid for North Wales Growth but had concern at the lack of detail about the west end of the county.

The Chief Executive commented that all of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees would have seen the Council Plan during the consultation process and that Members were generally supportive, only offering specific comments on matters of detail. The Leader referred to 4 or 5 years ago when improvement plans were not treated as a priority as a priority in the way that the Council Plan was now treated – as a plan for the Council as a whole.

Councillor Richard Jones asked for an assurance that investment in each of Flintshire's towns would be equitable. In the last ten years, the centre of Buckley had lost 25 businesses. The Chief Executive responded that such equity could not be guaranteed, as many government grants were very specific in their use and Buckley may not qualify. Therefore, it would be unrealistic to make such a commitment in the Council Plan.

The Leader commented that it was not practical to view all investments needs as equitable – the market had chosen to concentrate employment on Deeside. It would be helpful to consider a wider discussion with Members about the North Wales Growth – a briefing could be provided - and he emphasised that Flintshire, unlike other local authorities still had an economic development team with ambitions to grow and access these opportunities.

Councillor Patrick Heesom felt this was a helpful discussion and suggested that the briefing would be of interest to all Members especially as regards infrastructure.

The Chief Executive commented that the majority of the £50m investment for regional Metro Schemes would be for Flintshire. The Council was a co-leader in developing the North Wales Regional Growth Deal Bid and this as outside of the Plan which was written as a local plan.

Councillor Richard Jones reiterated his concerns. He understood the need for the transportation links to Deeside and the employment opportunities it could create but felt other town centres and areas of Flintshire would suffer. He added town centres would die without some sort of support.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee supports the structure, format and content of the “public” version of the Council (Improvement) Plan for 2017-23.
- (b) That the committee supports the targets and milestones in the Measure and Milestones document (appendix 2) to the Council (Improvement) Plan 2017-23 with the following observation to the Cabinet for their consideration: Page 161 amend the second bullet point of item 5 to remove the phrase ‘especially for residential use’ and replace it with ‘for multi-use of all types’, and noting the Council support for the North Wales Economic Growth Deal Bid outside of the Plan.
- (c) That a briefing should be provided for all Members on the North Wales Economic Growth Deal Bid.

22. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

The Chief Officer (Governance) introduced the report which identified that in November 2016, the cabinet had approved a joint procurement strategy with Denbighshire County Council. The Council spends £150m per year on buying goods and services. The Procurement Strategy sets out how the Council intends to use that purchasing power to support its wider policy aims. The strategy includes the following 2 high level outcomes

1. Flintshire County Council achieves value for money from the goods, services and works it procured
2. Flintshire County Council improves the contribution its procurement activity had on the local economy especially social enterprise

These outcomes underpin and support the following key aims in the Council Plan

The procurement strategy did not contain any measure or actions that could be used to track progress and these were included in the action plan. There was by contrast a very high level of detail in the action plan to enable managers to track progress on all aspects of the strategy. Rather than report all measures and actions. It was proposed to report a number of key issues if councillors agreed that they covered the most important points.

Referring to the proposed measures for public reporting, Councillor Richard Jones about other measures which would not be reported, tender arrangements and for an example of community benefit which had already been secured.

The Chief Officer Governance responded to these points. With regard to Community Benefits, he referred to the Wates contract which had an Apprenticeship Scheme and free training for council lawyers being provided by solicitors and barrister and firms.

Chief Officers and Service Managers would work with the local supplier market to help them understand the council tendering processes. This would improve the quality of their bids and hopefully result in local suppliers winning contracts because their bids were both the cheapest and highest quality.

Councillor Richard Jones asked if progress would be reported by to committee. In response the Chief Officer Governance confirmed that outcomes would be reported with keys issues highlighted.

RESOLVED:

That the Procurement Strategy Action Plan in general and the measures and actions for public reporting be recommended to the Cabinet for adoption.

23. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2017/18 (MONTH 4) AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING (MONTH 4)

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced the report which provided Members with the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2017/18 (Month 4) Report and the Capital Programme 2017/18 (Month 4) Report.

Councillor Patrick Heesom referred to the projected underspend in Domiciliary Care and asked what the budget was in the first place as this area was critically under pressure. The Corporate Finance Manager responded to clarify this was the realignment of the overspends and underspends in social care budgets.

Councillor Richard Jones referred to the Planning and Environment projected planning fee income shortfall. He asked how many were predicted and was there background information on these. The Corporate Finance Manager indicated that he would provide the information Councillor Jones outside the meeting.

Councillor Richard Jones asked why the efficiency targets set were so high and whether it would be better to identify an achievable budget of 90%. The Corporate Finance Manager responded that if this were so, then the shortfall of 10% would have to be found from somewhere else.

Councillor Patrick Heesom referred to Public Libraries & Art, Culture and Events and to the variation for the library service and asked what the view of Corporate Finance Manager was with regard to this. The Corporate Finance Manager responded to say it was on track with minor underspends of £0.006m.

The Capital Report was introduced by the Corporate Finance Manager and summarised changes made to the Capital Programme 2017/18 since this was set in February 2017 to the end of month 4 (July 2017).

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the committee, having considered the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2017/18 (Month 4) report, has no specific matters which it wishes to be noted and reported verbally to the Cabinet.
- (b) That the committee, having considered the Capital Programme 2017/18 (Month 4) report, has no specific matters which it wishes to be noted and reported verbally to the Cabinet.

24. WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT Q1 2017/18

This report was introduced by the Business Information & Compliance Adviser who provided a brief narrative on the overall performance against a number of indicators. A more detailed explanation was provided on an exceptional basis where performance was falling below organisational performance indicators or where there has been a significant movement, either upwards or downwards, in the reported trends. The narrative included an explanation for the movement in trend and details of any proposed actions to improve or maintain performance.

Councillor Heesom asked if the review of agency workers would be coming back to Committee. The officer confirmed that it would.

The Chair commented that the 'dashboard' format used within the report was very useful. Councillor Richard Jones responded that it had been devised in consultation with members of the committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Workforce Quarter one report be received.

25. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

This report was presented by the Democratic Services Manager.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme as submitted, be approved with amendments and
- (b) That the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, should this be necessary.

26. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.41 pm)

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Chairman