

**COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**20 SEPTEMBER 2017**

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, CH7 6NA on Wednesday, 20 September 2017.

**PRESENT: Councillor Ian Dunbar (Vice Chair in the Chair)**

Councillors: Sian Braun, David Cox, Jean Davies, Ron Davies, Rosetta Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, George Hardcastle, Dennis Hutchinson, Ted Palmer, Mike Reece and Paul Shotton

**SUBSTITUTION:** Councillor Patrick Heesom (for Councillor Ray Hughes)

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors Helen Brown and David Wisinger

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Bernie Attridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development;

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise), Enterprise & Regeneration Manager, Benefits Manager, Capital Works Team Manager, and Housing Strategy Officer

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

Prior to the start of the meeting the Chairman referred to the sadness at the recent death of Councillor Ron Hampson and asked Members and officers to stand in silent tribute to his memory.

**13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None were received.

**14. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 19 July 2017 were submitted.

**Matters arising**

Referring to page 2 of the minutes, Councillor Ron Davies asked that his thanks be passed to officers who had provided him with information of capital works being carried out in his Ward promptly following the meeting. The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) agreed to pass his thanks to the Council Housing Service Manager to convey to the team.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson referred to page 5 of the minutes and expressed concern around the narrow stairwell in Castle Heights, Flint, and asked that this be looked at to ensure all residents could evacuate safely in the event of an emergency.

The Capital Works Team Manager explained that the evacuation process in all high rise properties in Flint were being reviewed and a detailed update report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

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

**15. COUNCIL (IMPROVEMENT) PLAN 2017-23**

The Chief Officer presented the report and provided background information. She referred to the main considerations, as detailed in the report, and invited the relevant service manager to provide an update on the revised priorities and sub priorities for action which were proposed for adoption by the Council.

The Capital Works Team Manger and the Enterprise and Regeneration Manager reported on the priority Supportive Council, and the following sub priorities:

- appropriate and affordable homes
- modern, efficient and adapted homes
- protecting people from poverty

The Enterprise and Regeneration Manager also provided an update on the priority Ambitious Council and the sub-priority business sector growth and regeneration.

The Chairman sought further information on the sub priority to protect people from poverty and the development of a strategy to address food poverty. In her response, the Chief Officer referred to the development of a holistic approach to address the issue of poverty and commented on the need to provide help with budget management, fuel poverty, and help people gain employment. The Chief Officer suggested that a report on food poverty be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee when appropriate

Councillor Aaron Shotton advised that the Council (Improvement) Plan set out the Council's priorities for the forthcoming five years and what it aimed to achieve. He commented on the significant financial pressures and the impact of under-funding and said that whilst focused on objectives during 2017/18 the Plan was also realistic about the national barriers to what could be achieved.

In response to the concerns raised by Councillor Paul Shotton around a delay experienced by some people in relation to claims for Universal Credit, the Benefits Manager gave an update on progress on the roll out of Universal Credit and advised that detailed analysis would be provided to the meeting of the Committee to be held in November 2017.

During discussion Officers responded to the further questions raised concerning progress completing Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WQHS) work schemes. The Capital Works Manager explained that for various reasons some tenants refused to have improvement works carried out, however, every opportunity was taken to

recapture 'refusals' and inform the tenant that improvement works could be undertaken to improve the standard of housing to the benefit of the tenant.

Councillor Denis Hutchinson expressed his thanks to Councillor Bernie Attridge and officers for the assistance provided to address the issue of unauthorised gypsy and traveller encampments in his Ward.

Councillor Patrick Heesom thanked the Chief Officer for a detailed and informative report and commended her and her team for their work. He spoke of the needs and challenges faced by young people, citing the 18-24 age group in particular, and commented on the need to develop affordable accommodation for this group of people. Commenting on the WHQS Programme he asked that the Committee be provided with the findings of the internal audit of the Programme when completed.

**RESOLVED:**

That the comments made by the Committee be collated and feedback provided to Cabinet.

**16. HOUSING (WALES) ACT 2014 – HOMELESSNESS**

The Chief Officer introduced a report to provide an update on how the Council has met the requirements of the new homeless legislation and some of the projected challenges that face the Council. She provided background information and advised that there had been an increase in the numbers of households seeking assistance and that the service was forecasting additional pressures due to a combination factors.

Councillor George Hardcastle thanked the Chief Officer and her team for their work around the prevention of homelessness. He referred to the provision of interim accommodation and the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation and asked how many families were placed in bed and breakfast accommodation at the current time. The Chief Officer explained that the current number of people in bed and breakfast accommodation was very low. Councillor Hardcastle also commented on the issue of tenants who were in rent arrears, and cited the bedroom tax as an example, and asked how many tenants had requested to 'downsize' to a smaller property but were prevented from doing so due to a lack of suitable properties available. The Benefits Manager agreed to provide this information following the meeting.

Officers responded to the questions and concerns raised and advised that a report on the impact of Welfare Reforms would be provided to the meeting of the Committee to be held in November 2017. The Chief Officer explained that the Council had a fair debt policy and took a holistic view of each case and worked with the customer to provide the best outcome for the tenant and the Council.

Councillor Aaron Shotton commented on the reduction to the Supporting People Grant and suggested that the Committee may wish to lobby the Welsh Government to seek support for the Grant. It was agreed that a letter be sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children on behalf of the Committee to seek Welsh Government support to protect the Supporting People Grant.

During discussion the Chief Officer responded to the comments and suggestions put forward around new methods and the innovative use of existing buildings to address the issues of interim accommodation and housing shortage.

In response to the concerns raised by Councillor Hardcastle around conversion, repairs and renovations to existing buildings the Chief Officer agreed to provide the Committee with information on asbestos at properties following the meeting.

Following a suggestion from Councillor Rosetta Dolphin, the Housing Strategy Officer said she would look into the possibility of having a cleaning service at shared properties.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the update on the management of the new legislation within the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 be noted;
- (b) That the challenges that the Council has faced finding suitable housing options for households and the further risks to this should, transition funding cease and/or Supporting People funding reduce be noted;
- (c) That the Committee supports the proposals to develop new housing provision to alleviate homelessness in the County; and
- (d) That a letter be sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children on behalf of the Committee to seek Welsh Government support to protect the Supporting People Grant.

**17. SOCIAL HOUSING GRANT (SHG) PROGRAMME**

The Housing Strategy Manager introduced a report on the current Social Housing Grant (SHG) programme which funds a range of affordable housing delivered by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in Flintshire.

In response to a question from Councillor Patrick Heesom, the Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) said that currently all Council house building schemes were fully funded by the Council and that there was a strong case that the Council should have access to grant funding and for the cap on funding to be removed to allow for a level playing field between the Council and RSLs in Flintshire.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee supports the Flintshire Social Housing Grant Programmes

**18. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Facilitator presented the Forward Work Programme for consideration. She advised Members that it had been agreed that an additional meeting of the Committee would be held on 25 October 2017 to provide an update on the delivery of domestic energy efficiency programmes, and an update on the Communities First Programme.

Councillor Mike Reece asked if Councillors could be informed when new tenants moved into their Ward. The Chief Officer said this should be happening and would follow this up with the team following the meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

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

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

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

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.07 pm)

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**Chairman**