

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 NOVEMBER 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, 15 November 2017.

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Dunbar (Chairman)

Councillors: Sian Braun, David Cox, Jean Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Mared Eastwood, George Hardcastle, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Ted Palmer, Mike Reece, Paul Shotton and David Wisinger

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Christine Jones and Patrick Heesom

APOLOGIES: Councillor Bernie Attridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Rosetta Dolphin

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development; Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise), Enterprise & Regeneration Manager, Benefits Manager, Housing Solutions and Commissioning Manager, Service Manager Housing Programmes, and Enterprise and Regeneration Manager

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 Carl Sargeant, Assembly Member, and asked Members and officers to take part in a minutes silence in tribute to his memory. The Chairman expressed his condolences and thoughts to his family and friends.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

28. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor David Wisinger nominated Councillor Ted Palmer as Vice-Chair of the Committee and this was duly seconded.

Councillor George Hardcastle nominated Councillor Rosetta Dolphin and this was seconded.

On being put to the vote Councillor Ted Palmer was appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Ted Palmer be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

29. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2017 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

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

30. WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

The Benefits Manager introduced the report to provide an update on the impact Universal Credit 'Full Service' and other welfare reforms were having on Flintshire's residents and the work which was ongoing to mitigate and support households. She provided background information and gave a presentation on Welfare Reform in Flintshire which covered the following key points:

- Pre Universal Credit Reforms
 - Bedroom Tax
 - Benefit Cap
- Universal Credit
 - Issues and Impacts
- Support Work
 - Personal Budgeting support
 - Assisted Digital support
 - Discretionary Housing Payments
- Projected Welfare Reform impacts
- Data Analysis
- Future Welfare Reforms (from 2020)
 - LHA Restriction – scrapped for Social Housing Tenants
 - LHA Restriction – scrapped for supported Accommodation
 - Ring fenced funding for Emergency Accommodation

The Chairman thanked the Benefits Manager for a detailed and informative presentation and invited Members to raise questions.

Councillor Paul Shotton referred to the concerns he had raised previously around the impact of Universal Credit and commented on the issue of rent arrears. He expressed praise for the work of the Benefits Manager and her Team for the support and guidance provided to Flintshire residents, which had been recognised by the Welsh Government.

Councillor David Wisinger said he had received complaints from some residents that they had been unable to make payment for rent locally and had experienced difficulties when contacting the Authority by telephone to speak about Universal Credit. The Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise) agreed to follow up the concerns expressed by Councillor Wisinger following the meeting.

During discussion the Housing Solutions and Commissioning Manager responded to the questions and concerns raised around homelessness and explained the impact of the Universal Credit full service and the resultant pressure on Flintshire's

homelessness budget. She advised that the Government was planning to introduce a change in legislation in the New Year to provide an alternative way for Local Authorities to recover some of the costs incurred when placing an individual or family in short term emergency accommodation.

Officers responded to the questions raised by Councillor George Hardcastle concerning provision of interim accommodation and use of bed and breakfast accommodation. Councillor Hardcastle also raised questions around the issue of tenants in rent arrears, and the difficulty experienced by tenants who wished to 'downsize' to a smaller property but were unable to do so due to a lack of suitable properties available. The Chief Officer gave an assurance that contact was made as soon as possible with residents who were in rent arrears to provide information and support around income and entitlement.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee continues to support the on-going work to manage the impacts that Welfare Reforms have and will have upon Flintshire's most vulnerable households.

31. STRATEGIC HOUSING AND REGENERATION PROGRAMME (SHARP)

The Service Manager Housing Programmes introduced a report to provide an update on the progress of the Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme (SHARP). He provided background information and reported on the individual schemes which were being undertaken or considered as part of the SHARP Programme going forward.

The Service Manager Housing Programmes also reported on the main points, as detailed in the report, around progress on future sites which would deliver a mixture of Council Affordable and Shared Equity properties, funding for social housing, the Welsh Government Affordable Housing Grant and Innovative Housing Programme, Flintshire House Standard, and performance and community benefits.

Referring to the Flintshire House Standard, the Service Manager explained that it was proposed to establish a project team consisting of tenants, Elected Members and officers, to review the Flintshire House Standard to ensure it continued to provide quality homes and value for money to the Council and NEW Homes. The Council would also use the opportunity to assess the Flintshire standard against the Welsh Government Technical Standards, making it eligible for the Affordable Housing Grant. He asked for volunteers from the Committee to form a project team.

Councillor Paul Shotton spoke in support of the SHARP Programme and expressed praise for both the new council and affordable homes which had been built to date. He asked if solar panels could be installed on new build properties in the future.

Councillor Ray Hughes expressed his thanks to the Service Manager Housing Programmes and his team for the housing schemes at the Maes y Meillion and Heol Y Goron sites in Leeswood. He asked that his thanks be passed to Wates for the work

they were undertaking and for engaging with him, as the local Member, and local residents in keep all informed.

Councillor George Hardcastle raised a number of concerns around the Gary Speed development at Aston, particularly the availability of affordable homes for single people and the road highway infrastructure. The Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise) agreed to follow up the concerns about the road. In response to a further query from Councillor George Hardcastle, the Service Manager advised that affordable homes/apartments were made available where possible to meet the needs of single people as well as families.

Councillor David Wisinger asked what provision was made for disabled residents. The Service Manager explained that the Service worked closely with the Specialist Housing Register to help those most in need and disabled people were consulted in the design of new build properties.

Councillor George Hardcastle expressed the need for Members to be involved in the design of infrastructure for housing developments within their Ward.

In response to the Chairman's request, the Chairman and Councillors David Wisinger, Ray Hughes, and Ted Palmer put their names forward to serve on the Flintshire House Standard Group.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee supports the overall approach for the delivery of new Council and affordable homes through the Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme (SHARP); and
- (b) That the following Members be nominated as representatives to the Council's Project Review Team of the Flintshire House Standard: Councillors Ian Dunbar, Ray Hughes, Ted Palmer and Dave Wisinger

32. COUNCIL PLAN 2017/18 – MID YEAR MONITORING

The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) introduced the report to present the mid-year monitoring of progress for the Council Plan priorities 'Supportive Council' and 'Ambitious Council' relevant to the Committee. She provided background information and referred to the main considerations around monitoring of activities, performance and risks, as detailed in the report, and invited the Enterprise and Regeneration Manager, Benefits Manager, Service Manager Housing Programmes, and Housing Solutions and Commissioning Manager, to provide an update on progress in their service areas.

The Service Managers referred to the Council Plan 2017/18 Mid-Year Progress Reports – Supportive Council and Ambitious Council, which were appended to the report and reported on the sub-priorities and overall progress and outcomes of activities for their service areas.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson expressed his appreciation to Officers for their work and support in addressing the issue of unlawful encampment on Buckley Common.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

33. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Facilitator presented the Forward Work Programme for consideration. She advised Members that it had been agreed that a short briefing session to consider 'How the HRA works' would be held at 9.30 a.m. prior to the next meeting of the Committee on 20 December 2017. She also explained that it had been agreed that the meeting of the Committee to be held on 31 January 2018, be rescheduled to 15 January 2018.

The Facilitator drew attention to paragraph 1.03 of the report and advised that at the meeting of the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee held on 25 October 2017, it was resolved that each Committee should be canvassed for views on its meeting preference as part of their forward work programme. She referred to the options as detailed in the report and asked the Committee to express a preference for its meeting pattern. The outcome would be reported back to the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee.

Councillor Paul Shotton proposed that the Committee retained its current arrangement to meet on a Wednesday morning at 10.00 a.m. and when put to the vote this was agreed.

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; and
- (c) That the Facilitator provides feedback to the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee that the Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee supports meetings remaining at 10.00 a.m. on a Wednesday morning.

34. 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 11.58 pm)

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Chairman