

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
19 NOVEMBER 2019

Minutes of the meeting of Flintshire County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 19 November 2019

PRESENT: Councillor Marion Bateman (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Bernie Attridge, Janet Axworthy, Haydn Bateman, Sean Bibby, Chris Bithell, Helen Brown, Derek Butler, Clive Carver, Geoff Collett, Bob Connah, Paul Cunningham, Jean Davies, Rob Davies, Ron Davies, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Mared Eastwood, Veronica Gay, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Patrick Heesom, Kevin Hughes, Ray Hughes, Joe Johnson, Paul Johnson, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Tudor Jones, Colin Legg, Richard Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Hilary McGuill, Billy Mullin, Ted Palmer, Mike Peers, Vicky Perfect, Neville Phillips, Ian Roberts, Kevin Rush, Tony Sharps, Aaron Shotton, Paul Shotton, Ralph Small, Ian Smith, Carolyn Thomas, Martin White, Andy Williams, David Williams, David Wisinger and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Glyn Banks, Sian Braun, David Cox, Adele Davies-Cooke, Andy Dunbobbin, Carol Ellis, David Evans, George Hardcastle, Cindy Hinds, Dave Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Rita Johnson, Brian Lloyd, Michelle Perfect, and Owen Thomas

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive; Chief Officer (Governance); Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy); Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation); Chief Officer (Housing & Assets); Chief Officer (Social Services); Senor Manager Human Resources and Organisational Development; Democratic Services Manager; and Democratic Services Officer

Prior to the start of the meeting the Chair read out a statement to advise Members that during the General Election period not to refer in debate to political parties, the political 'colour' of Governments, or the potential impacts of any particular election outcome.

60. PRESENTATION

APSE Apprentice of the Year Awards Recognition

The Chair advised that the APSE Apprentice of the Year Awards was open to all local authorities to recognise the achievements of front line service apprentices and the support they received from Councils and partner organisations. The prestigious Awards were presented to the most enthusiastic apprentices who proved themselves to be innovative and focused on producing excellence in their service area. In competition against peers from across the United Kingdom, it was a significant achievement for an apprentice to be announced as a shortlisted finalist. The Chair was pleased to inform that Flintshire County Council had three apprentices which

had reached the finals of the APSE Apprentice of the Year Awards Recognition in 2019.

The Chair welcomed and introduced Gareth Allen, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, Housing Asset Management, Finalist in the 'Building Skills' category; Matthew Evans, Streetscene Operational Apprentice, Finalist in the 'Streetscene' category; and Adam Cook, Streetscene Operational Apprentice, who was overall winner of the 'Streetscene' category.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas explained that Matthew and Adam had joined the Council in September 2018 as Streetscene Operational Apprentices and were beginning their second year of the programme. During the first year they had worked alongside operational staff on highways maintenance, grounds maintenance, cleansing and waste and recycling services, whilst completing an Environmental Services NVQ at Coleg Cambria. Matthew and Adam had been nominated for the APSE Apprentice of the Year Awards 2019 after receiving positive feedback about their attitude, enthusiasm, and progress, from their mentors and college tutor. Both were strong contestants and shortlisted as Finalists. Following a rigorous interview process against other contenders from across the UK, Adam was awarded Overall Winner of the Streetscene Category.

Councillor Thomas spoke in support of the apprentice scheme which had been provided by the Streetscene service for the last five years and said it provided a valuable opportunity for young people to learn a range of new skills and operate machinery. Apprentices worked in a number of areas across the Streetscene Service to gain an overall view and identify their preferences. Councillor Thomas advised that the Service also offered a range of certificated national accredited training which was provided 'in-house'. She expressed her congratulations to Matthew and Adam and thanks to their tutors and mentors.

Councillor Ian Dunbar congratulated Gareth on achieving Finalist in the 'Building Skills' category. He explained Gareth had started his apprenticeship with the Council as a painter and decorator in September 2018 and had proved himself to be an asset to the Service. In addition to being a finalist at the APSE Awards, Gareth was also recently awarded a Certificate of Recognition at "Skills Competition Wales" following nomination by his college tutor. Feedback from the APSE judges stated: "Gareth came across as passionate about his apprenticeship and gave excellent insight into the value it has to him personally and his ambitions for the future".

The Chair congratulated Gareth, Matthew and Adam on their achievements and presented them with their APSE Awards.

The Chair thanked Ian Peters and Denise Price, Team Managers – Housing & Assets, and Gemma Boniface, Wayne Jones and Russell Broughton, Streetscene & Transportation, for their work and support.

61. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 22 October 2019 were received.

Accuracy

Page 5: Councillor Patrick Heesom asked that the minutes be amended to record that he was unable to attend the start of the meeting due to a prior engagement.

Page 7: Councillor Richard Jones referred to his comments on the last paragraph. He said that he had asked a question on the Deeside Plan and how it had affected the Transport Strategy in Flintshire and said there was no reference to the second part of his question in the minutes. He asked that the minutes be amended to reflect this.

Page 12, paragraph 7, the training session link to the Domestic Abuse Safety Unit (DACU) should read (DASU).

Matters arising

Page 7: Councillor Clive Carver said he had not yet received the information requested on the number of landlords/letting agents not complying with Rent Smart Wales regulations.

RESOLVED:

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

62. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chief Officer (Governance) referred to Item 10 – Updated Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20 and explained that as the Statement had not changed and there were no proposed changes to the current practice, Members and officers could remain in the meeting without declaring an interest, however, if during debate Members wished to seek change to the current practice he would revise his advice.

63. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

In presenting her Communications, which had been circulated prior to the meeting, the Chair highlighted a number of events and referred to the Buckley Mayor's Charity Ball and Dinner, the official opening of Llys Raddington Extra Care Home, Flint, and the official opening of Hwb Cyfle Day Centre, Queensferry.

64. PETITIONS

None were received.

65. TRIBUTES TO THE LATE CONCILLOR NIGEL STEELE-MORTIMER

Prior to making tribute to the late Councillor Steele-Mortimer the Chair referred to the sad news of the death of former County Councillor Ann Slowick. The Chair thanked

the Vice-Chair for attending the funeral of Councillor Slowick to represent the Authority on her behalf. She advised that Councillor Slowick had been the Chair of County Council 2001-2002 and would be remembered as a hard-working and well respected colleague by many Members.

The Chair said she had been privileged to attend the funeral of Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer who had been a member of the Council for over 30 years. She said he was admired and respected by all Members and she had always found him to be a true gentleman. The Chair expressed her deep condolences to his wife and family on their sad loss.

The Chair asked Members to stand for one minutes silence in tribute to the late Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer and Councillor Ann Slowick.

Councillor Clive Carver led the tributes from Members. He said Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer had been a long-serving Member since 1987 and held a number of senior appointments during his term of office. He had also been a member of many prominent and worthy external organisations and bodies and again held a range of senior positions within them. Councillor Carver commented on Councillor Steele-Mortimer's role and responsibilities during active service, his professional career, and personal interests and hobbies. He reiterated the view expressed by the Chair that he was a gentleman and a man of integrity; a person who could be trusted and gave good counsel. He said Councillor Steele-Mortimer would be sadly missed.

Councillors Ian Roberts, Patrick Heesom, Arnold Woolley, Neville Phillips, Tony Sharps, Mike Peers and Derek Butler made further tributes to Councillor Steele Mortimer. They spoke of their long-standing association with him and reiterated that he had served the Council well in a number of senior positions and was an immeasurable source of guidance and information to others. Members reiterated that Councillor Steele-Mortimer was highly respected by Members and Officers and was regarded as an honourable and trusted friend who would give help and sound advice when needed.

Councillors Ian Roberts, Tony Sharps and Derek Butler also paid tribute to former Councillor Ann Slowick who represented the Gronant Ward. They said Councillor Slowick was hard working and had served the Council in a distinguished manner as a previous Chair of Council and had been an excellent representative for her community. She had been well regarded for her personal qualities by all Members.

Members thanked Councillor Steele-Mortimer and Councillor Slowick for their commitment and service to Flintshire and said they were exemplars of how an elected Member should conduct Council and community business.

66. WELCOME TO COUNCILLOR KEVIN RUSH

The Chair formally welcomed Councillor Kevin Rush, newly elected Member for Bagillt West.

Councillor Rush thanked the Chair for her warm welcome. He also thanked Members, officers, and staff for their welcome and support and specifically the

Returning Monitoring Officer and the Election team for their work on the Bagillt West By-Election. He said it was a privilege to be elected to represent the Bagillt West community and he would strive to serve residents to the best of his ability.

67. FLINTSHIRE ELECTORAL REVIEW

The Chief Executive introduced the report to respond to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission of Wales (LDBC) Review of the Electoral Arrangements of the County of Flintshire – Draft Proposals. The consultation period during which the Council and other interested parties could respond to the proposals would end on 27 November 2019.

The Chief Executive thanked Members for their work and collaboration to achieve local consensus in most cases and meet the deadline for Stage 2 of the review process. He referred to the initial consultation between November 2018 and January 2019 when Members had made proposals to the LDBC for changes to improve local representation. Appended to the report was the Council's draft response to Stage 2 of the LDBC's draft proposals for Flintshire. The Chief Executive explained that the approach to the initial response had been to allocate proposals a red/amber/green (RAG) status which has been carried through to the second response (Green being supported LDBC proposals or alternative proposals which had consensus amongst local Members; Amber showed local proposals which do not have full consensus support; and Red indicated that no local agreement had been possible).

The Democratic Services Manager presented the report. He advised that the LDBC draft proposals for Flintshire, published in August 2019, changed the arrangement of electoral wards to achieve a "significant improvement" in the level of electoral parity across Flintshire. This would mean a Council of 65 Members with a proposed County average ratio of 1,836 electors per Member, and a reduction to 39 electoral wards instead of the current 57. He reiterated that the draft proposals to be submitted to the LDBC, based on extensive consultation undertaken with Members, were detailed in the appendix to the report.

The Democratic Services Manager said that Members had a unique understanding of the areas which they represented and knowledge of local needs and community ties which provided community cohesion and effective representation. He said that some of the Council's proposals might not meet LDBC electoral parity requirements but they did present viable options which would have local support. He reported on the main considerations around the proposals which had formed the Council's response to the consultation. He explained that there was still an opportunity prior to the deadline on 27 November 2019 for Members to make further personal representations or encourage group representations. Following conclusion of the Stage 2 process the Commission would prepare a Final Proposals Report (Stage 3) which would be submitted to the Welsh Government. He cautioned that changes at Stage 3 would be difficult.

The Chief Executive explained that the Council's response brought out the areas, as detailed in the report, where it felt that the Commission had deviated too much from

its own rules. He reiterated the need to provide the best response possible to the proposals at Stage 2 as change may not be accepted later.

In moving the report Councillor Ian Roberts thanked the Democratic Services Manager and the Election Team for their work and assistance to help Members formulate a response to the proposals. He also thanked Group Leaders for their work and spoke of the Council's united opposition to the proposal to have three member wards. The Chief Executive explained that the Council's response would emphasise its opposition to the creation of three member wards.

Councillor Richard Jones referred to the example in the report that the proposal for combining the current three Holywell wards into a three member ward would mean that each individual Member had the prospect of representing not the LDBC ratio of 1 member:1,836 people but 1 member:4,634 people and said this would increase to 1 member:6,900 people for a Buckley ward member. He suggested that a second example be included in the response to highlight the variation in numbers.

Councillor Mike Peers said the LDBC draft proposals received in August had caused concern in some communities in Flintshire around the introduction of three member wards and instances where wards were to be joined together. He supported the views expressed by Councillor Ian Roberts and Group Leaders that three member wards were not required in Flintshire. He thanked the Chief Executive and Chief Officer (Governance) for their work on the Council's response to the LDBC and said the offer to put forward additional representations prior to the deadline was welcomed.

Councillor Peers referred to the Council's draft response appended to the report. He said that the second column on the proposed ward, number of Members etc., had come directly from the Commission in the August proposals. He said that the green comments in certain instances advised of the number of electors to move from one ward to another but he felt that the number of wards in a town needed to be clarified, for example where 4 wards had reduced to 2 in the commentary it should be stated that there was a need to retain 4 wards. He also said there was a need to clarify the proposed members per ward in the latest proposals.

Councillor Clive Carver referred to the Ewloe, Hawarden, Aston, and Mancot wards and said a suggestion which had the agreement of all the current councillors for the wards, was that as Hawarden was being absorbed the other areas would have an east/west or north/south element, for example Hawarden East, or Hawarden West and said he did not see reference to this in the appendix. The Democratic Services Manager agreed to include the comment in the Council's response to the LDBC. The Chief Executive confirmed that an email would be sent to all concerned – to that effect - and that the proposals would be referred to in the response as consensus.

Councillor Neville Phillips commented on the National Assembly for Wales elections to be held next year and said he understood that voting may be introduced for 16/17 year olds which would effect the calculations for member:elector ratios in the current wards in Flintshire. The Chief Executive acknowledged the point made by Councillor Phillips and advised that the Local Government Bill had only just been published and if enacted would be in place next year. He explained that it was discounted by the

LDBC under its current legal brief, and his advice was that it could not be relied upon in the Council's response at this point in time.

Councillor Chris Bithell commended the Democratic Services Manager and his team for their assistance to support Members in comprehensive and sensitive matters. He said he fully supported the views which had been expressed on the opposition to introduce three member wards in some areas. He spoke of the strong relationship between Members and their local communities which was vitally important.

In summarising the Chief Executive explained that the Council, in a written letter with evidence, would challenge the LDBC to balance community ties and artificial ratio.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Ian Roberts and seconded by Councillor Bernie Attridge.

RESOLVED:

That the Council agrees to submit the proposals set out in Appendix 1 with variation.

68. UPDATED PAY POLICY STATEMENT FOR 2019/20

The Chief Executive introduced the report and provided background information. He explained that the Pay Policy Statement presented within the report was an amended version of the seventh annual Statement approved by the Council in January 2019. It had been necessary to update the pay policy to reflect the changes to pay for a large proportion of the workforce as a result of a pay modelling exercise to accommodate Year Two (2019) of the NJC pay agreement.

The Senior Manager Human Resources and Organisational Development presented the main considerations, as detailed in the report. She advised that having implemented the various national pay awards the Authority's lowest evaluated rate of pay was £17,364 and the medium salary had increased to £19,554 and said the gender pay gap was closing. She explained that only five sections of the pay policy had been amended. Four were minor changes which reflected changes due to pay awards and improvement in the position around pay relativity. She continued that the main change was in Section 11 – National Living Wage (NLW) and the introduction of the new pay model.

The Senior Manager commented on the scope of work. She said the effective date of the new pay model had been 1 April 2019 and it was implemented in July 2019 (backdated to April 2019). An independent Equality Impact Assessment had been undertaken which in summary found the amendment to the pay and grading structure to be a positive development.

In response to a question from Councillor Bernie Attridge on the national living wage the Senior Manager commented on compliance with the national agreement and explained that the Council had been a living wage employer since April 2019.

Councillor Richard Jones thanked the Senior Manager and her team for their work and acknowledged the commitment to stay within budget, manage the pay gender gap, and collaborative work undertaken with Trade Unions.

RESOLVED:

That the Updated Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20 as appended to the report be approved.

69. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None were received.

70. QUESTIONS

None were received.

71. NOTICE OF MOTION

None which were eligible and able to be considered during the pre-election period were received.

72. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.24pm)

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Chair