

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 NOVEMBER 2022

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Environment and Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Tuesday, 15 November 2022

PRESENT: Councillor David Evans (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Mel Buckley, Chris Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, Ray Hughes, Richard Lloyd, Mike Peers, Vicky Perfect, Dan Rose, and Roy Wakelam

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Dennis Hutchinson for Councillor Ian Hodge

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Chris Bithell (Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection), Councillor Dave Hughes (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy), Councillor David Healey (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy), Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), Regulatory Services Manager, Enterprise and Regeneration Manager, and Access and Natural Environment Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officers

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

28. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking report. She drew attention to the items scheduled for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 13 December 2022 and reported on the items for consideration at future meetings.

The Facilitator gave an update on work in progress on the outstanding items on the Action Tracking report. She also gave an update on progress to arrange a joint meeting with the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee to consider parking outside schools.

The Chair requested that an item be added to the Forward Work Programme to consider the exceptions criteria for 20mph implementation which was to be introduced by the Welsh Government next year. Councillor Mike Peers spoke on the 20 mph highway scheme which had been introduced as a trial in Buckley in March this year. He gave background information and said concerns had been expressed by local Members in the Buckley area to the Minister around the trial scheme. He commented on the County Council's view of the trial scheme and said he supported the suggestion to hold a meeting or workshop to consider the issue as early as possible.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson raised concerns around the poor condition/visibility of some road markings in Flintshire and cited the road markings next to roundabouts in some areas as an example.

In response to the comments and concerns raised by Councillor Peers the Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) explained that public engagement was planned regarding the Buckley 20mph scheme and a press statement would be released this week. She referred to the Welsh Government's launch of the national rollout of the new legislation in January 2023 and supported the suggestion that a workshop should be held following the launch. The Chief Officer agreed to discuss any specific concerns that Councillor Hutchinson had around road markings with him following the meeting.

Councillor David Healey spoke in support of public consultation being held on the Welsh Government 20mph highway scheme.

Members were invited to raise any further items they wished to put forward for inclusion on the Programme.

The recommendations in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Mike Peers and Roy Wakelam.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That subject to the amendments put forward at the meeting, the Forward Work Programme be approved;
- (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 Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions

29. HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CENTRE VEHICLE PERMIT POLICY

The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) introduced the report. She provided background information and advised that the report provided an overview of the impact of the revised policy along with details of the review undertaken and proposals for amending the policy. Further considerations were presented on the broader operations for Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) with a view to introducing further service improvements and efficiencies.

The Regulatory Services Manager presented the report and gave an overview of the main considerations concerning the implementation of the vehicle permit policy as detailed in the report. The Regulatory Services Manager referred to two all Member workshops which were held during September 2022 to undertake a review of the policy so that Members could provide officers with constituents' feedback or concerns. The review was extended to include the wider HRC site operations with a view to introducing further service improvements and efficiencies and maximising the opportunities for recycling. Details of the content of the workshops were appended to the report.

The Regulatory Services Manager advised that following evaluation of the feedback provided from the workshops a number of proposals were presented for consideration. Members' comments, the associated considerations to be reviewed and, following appraisal of the advantages and disadvantages of those considerations, a proposed outcome for each comment, were detailed in Appendix 3 of the report. The proposed outcomes had been written into a revised policy document for consideration. The amendments and new clauses for inclusion in the policy were highlighted in Appendix 4.

The Regulatory Services Manager also reported on further service improvements and efficiencies at HRCs and referred to proposals concerning the booking service, charges for disposal of waste (Trade/Charity), alternative opening hours, and charging for soil conditioner.

Councillor Roy Wakelam referred to page 55, Appendix 4 of the report, and asked if the bullet point 'mobility vehicle' could be amended to read 'any mobility vehicle'. The Regulatory Services Manager explained that clarification could be provided around the height and length restriction of the vehicle in the policy.

Councillor Mike Peers expressed concerns around the reason for refusing vehicles with sign writing with specifically associated trade waste and said the policy did not include anything not associated with trade waste. He asked that consideration be given for an exemption for residents with sign written vehicles not associated with business, not producing trade waste, and where the vehicle was assigned to a residential property which was subject to council tax. He asked that the policy be amended to reflect those circumstances or deferred to enable the Streetscene service to develop an exemption.

Councillor Peers proposed that the policy be amended to allow residents who had a sign written vehicle and were not associated with a building trade and were promoting their business for the benefit of the community, but not producing trade waste, be allowed a permit which he said had previously been granted. Councillor Peers said he felt there should be a "two tier system" and the current "catch all" situation could be rectified by information provided at the permit application stage, which would enable residents the right to dispose of household waste. In response to the comments made by Councillor Peers the Chief Officer explained that it is a challenging area to control and police, as a lot of commercial waste is inherently similar to household waste and therefore difficult to distinguish from legitimate waste produced from domestic properties, but it is more likely to be delivered or deposited by a trade vehicle. The Chief Officer spoke of the potential for more applications for permits which would impact on waste and recycling rates.

Councillor Peers proposed that the Policy be amended as follows: where the Policy states that sign written vehicles would not be permitted, this should relate to trade vehicles associated with trade waste and on Section 2 - checking of the vehicles under vehicles permitted, a sign written vehicle will be permitted provided it is registered to a residential address in Flintshire for council tax, is not a trade associated with any trade waste, does not generate any trade or business waste, and the only waste presented is domestic waste. Councillor Peers

suggested that this could be part of the application process and checked, and the vehicle could be checked and monitored by the operator at it enters the HRC site.

Councillor Richard Lloyd seconded the proposal put forward by Councillor Peers. Councillor Lloyd spoke in support of a charging system to enable residents to pay for bulky items to be taken to HRCs for disposal if unable to transport items themselves.

The Chief Officer responded to the comments and questions raised by Members.

The recommendations as set out in the report, were moved and seconded by Councillors Dan Rose and Mike Peers

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee supports the review undertaken and endorses the proposed amendments to the Vehicle Permit Policy for Household Recycling Centres with the addition on the amendment proposed above on signed vehicles and trade waste;
- (b) That the Committee supports and endorses the inclusion of tyres as an additional waste stream in the HRC booking system to ensure waste minimisation and control; and
- (c) That the Committee supports and endorses the additional proposals to improve HRC operational controls and services.

30. ASH DIEBACK UPDATE

The Access & Natural Environment Manager presented a report to provide an update on how Flintshire County Council had addressed Ash Dieback in 2021/22 in line with the 2019 Ash Dieback Action Plan, and the recommendations following an internal audit in July 2021.

The Access & Natural Environment Manager provided background information and reported on the main considerations as detailed in the report. The 2019 Ash Dieback Action Plan identified and proposed ways in which to manage the risk and costs associated with Ash Dieback, highlighting where infected Ash trees had an increased risk to public safety and the financial cost incurred to the Council. To moderate and manage the risk associated to Ash Dieback, a series of surveys had been undertaken to assess the distribution and disease classification of roadside Ash trees for primary and secondary roads. A programme of tree removal is ongoing for Flintshire owned trees and landowners with infected trees have been contacted to highlight the presence of Ash Dieback in their trees, with an expectation that they will manage their own trees to mitigate risks.

Councillor Mike Peers referred to the work on recovery to re-plant trees lost due to the disease and asked if each area would be subject to its own site survey. Councillor Peers also commented on the impact on landscapes. The

Access & Natural Environment Manager acknowledged the points raised by Councillor Peers and explained that recovery was an important part of the Ash Dieback Plan and said areas would be looked at on a case-by-case basis as not all areas would warrant additional tree planting for various reasons. He said the main focus was on risk mitigation.

The Access & Natural Environment Manager responded to the further questions and concerns raised by Members around timelines, re-planting, impact on bio-diversity, the cost to the Council of dealing with Ash Dieback, and removal/disposal of diseased trees.

The recommendation as set out in the report was moved by Councillor Mike Peers and seconded by Councillor Mike Allport.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted and the ongoing work associated with Ash Dieback supported.

31. BIODIVERSITY SECTION 6 REPORTING

The Access & Natural Environment Manager presented the report which detailed how the Council was making progress in delivering its biodiversity duty under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The report explained the Council's Biodiversity Duty Delivery Plan 2020 – 2023, 'Supporting Nature in Flintshire' and the progress of action to deliver objectives, highlighting key areas of biodiversity work within the County. The report also included the statutory Section 6 report which would be submitted to Welsh Government in January 2023 at the end of the second 3 year reporting round.

The Access & Natural Environment Manager provided background information and reported on the key points referring to the 6 objectives and the progress made in delivering action to meet the Plan's 20 actions under the objectives (Appendix 1).

Councillor Mike Peers commended the Access & Natural Environment Manager and his team on the success of schemes undertaken in the community citing the 'wild meadows scheme' as an example.

Councillor Chris Dolphin also spoke in support of the 'wild meadow' scheme but said some concerns had been raised regarding a risk of fire due to exceptionally hot and dry weather and long grass. The Access & Natural Environment Manager acknowledged the point made and explained that overall, due to the small areas concerned and monitoring of local climate conditions, it was felt that the benefits outweighed the potential risk. He gave reassurance that there was flexibility to mow the area if needed at any time.

Councillor Chris Bithell spoke on the work of the Planning Service and the ways in which planning could help with biodiversity.

Councillor Dan Rose raised concerns about the loss of habitat. He commented on the loss of green spaces and hedgerows due to planning

development and on other services provided by the Council which used pesticides and other methods of control. He asked if there was recording in place to monitor the impact. The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) advised that the points raised by Councillor Rose could be addressed in the Monitoring Report which would sit alongside the LDP and could be addressed at Planning Strategy Group.

Councillor David Healey spoke on the importance of bio-diversity at a local level referring to Town and Community Council involvement.

The recommendation in the report was moved and seconded by Councillors Roy Wakelam and Mike Peers.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted and the ongoing work associated with improving biodiversity be supported.

32. LEVELLING UP FUND – ROUND 2

The Enterprise and Regeneration Manager presented the report to provide an update on the development of the programme and projects and to recommend approval by Cabinet of capital funding to meet the required match funding expected by UK Government.

The Enterprise and Regeneration Manager provided background information and advised that the report updated on the development and submission of two bids in line with the bidding strategy agreed at Cabinet on 18 January 2022 and on a third strategic transport bid. The report also provided an update on the programme as a whole and requested an allocation of match funding from the capital programme of £1,106,915 (£630,467 Alyn & Deeside bid, £476,448 Delyn bid) in order to draw down the UK Government funding.

Councillor Mike Peers, commented on the risk of match funding availability referred to on page 124 of the report. He suggested that as the Council's budget for 2023/24 was not yet presented that recommendation 3 be agreed in principle only until further details on the budget were known. Officers responded to the concerns raised by Councillor Peers on the bids put forward and commented on the firm commitment to funding required. The proposal by Councillor Peers was not seconded.

The recommendations as set out in the report, were moved and seconded by Councillors Dan Rose and Mike Allport.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the progress in developing and submitting bids to round two of the UK Government Levelling Up Fund be noted;
- (b) That the risks and mitigations associated with the package of projects be noted; and

- (c) That the allocation of match funding of up to £1.107m from the capital programme in 2024/2025 be supported.

33. SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

The Enterprise and Regeneration Manager presented the report. He provided background information and advised that the report provided an update on the development of the programme management infrastructure, locally and regionally, and sets out recommended priorities for the programme as well as criteria by which projects seeking funding through the programme would be assessed. The report also provided a broad update on the strategic Council projects which were under development in readiness for the programme. Members were asked to recommend to Cabinet for approval to be given for the framework of priorities and processes needed to effectively operate the programme.

Councillor David Healey spoke in support of the project and commended the Enterprise and Regeneration Manager on his work.

The recommendations in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Dan Rose and Mike Allport.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the progress made in developing the SPF programme both regionally and locally be noted;
- (b) that the broad outline of the structures and processes to be used to deliver the programme be noted' and
- (c) that the proposed outline uses of 2022/2023 funds by the Council be supported

26. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 10.00am and ended at 12.58 pm)

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Chair