

EXECUTIVE
15 July 2008

Minutes of the meeting of the Executive of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 15 July, 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor L. A. Sharps (Vice Chairman in the Chair)

Councillors: C. A. Ellis, P. G. Heesom, H. D. Hutchinson, N. M. Matthews, N. Phillips, N. R. Steele-Mortimer and H. Yale.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: J. B. Attridge, R. Baker, R. C. Bithell, C. Carver, B. Dunn, R. G Hampson, D. Mackie, Mrs D Mackie and A. P. Shotton

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Director of Community Services, County Legal and Democratic Services Officer, Chief Education Officer, Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, Assistant Director of ICT and Customer Services, Acting Director of Community and Housing, Assistant Director of Financial Management, Chief Regeneration Officer and Head of Committee, Member and Electoral Services.

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: A. Woolley and M. Higham

The Chairman reported that at the conclusion of the business on the Agenda the Chief Executive would provide a update on the proposed industrial strike action to be held later in the week. He also reported that the Leader was absent due to a medical appointment and also reported that Councillor Mel Higham had had to return to hospital following his recent operation. It was agreed that the best wishes of the Executive be forwarded to Councillor Higham.

The Chief Executive also reported that Dave Faulkner was due to return to the office the following Monday.

33. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 24 June, 2008 were confirmed as a correct record.

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

35. **SINGLE STATUS PROJECT UPDATE**

A report of the Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, copies of which had been previously circulated to Members, was submitted. The Interim Head presented the report the purpose of which was to provide an update on a Single Status Project and to outline the works still required to finalise the project and implement the agreement.

The report provided the background to the Single Status Project being set up to implement the National Agreement on single status conditions. The project was central to the development of an equality proofed pay structure which was the Authority's future defence against equal pay claims. This was a large and complexed corporate project and when completed would have a major impact on most employees of the Council. The project was now reaching the final stage of the communication activities which were detailed in paragraph 2.02 of the report and these described the remainder of the process which would require experienced resource up to final implementation. There had been some delay in the project in the number of questionnaires not being completed by the original deadlines.

Councillor P. G. Heesom as a member of the Panel complimented the work undertaken on the project by Annette Facer.

The Chief Executive explained that this was a significant project to manage on a phased basis in response to a statutory requirement and paid tribute to the co-operation of the Trade Unions. He also referred to the financial implications of the report and to the contingency fund available from which a one off allocation from unearmarked reserves would be made. He explained that the project had not been fully extended to cover schools until March 2008. In response to a question from the Chairman, he indicated that provided the remainder of the project timetable was met and there were no further delays on the completion of evaluation questionnaires no additional funding would be required for the completion of the stages of the project within the control of the Council. Any further variations would be reported to the Executive.

RESOLVED

- (a) That a one off contribution of £78,000 from the Contingency Reserve to cover the costs of completion of the project by December 2008, be approved.
- (b) That a one off contribution of £50,000 from the Contingency Reserve to fund development work for a time limited period to enable mainstreaming into the HR function, be approved.
- (c) That a further report be submitted to the Executive in due course on the future structure needed in the pay and grading function once at the maintenance stage.

- (d) That the Executive receive detailed reports from the relevant Director of the regulatory reports identified in section 3.02 of the report which included proposals for actions to address any issues raised.

36. ESTYN INSPECTION OF EDUCATION SERVICES IN JANUARY 2009

A report of the Assistant Director – Schools Services, copies of which had been previously circulated to Members, was submitted. The Chief Education Officer presented the report the purpose of which was to inform the Executive of the forthcoming inspection by Estyn of the Educational Services in January 2009 and to inform the Executive of the proposed approach to be taken in preparation for the inspection.

The Chief Education Officer referred to the statutory duty of Estyn to undertake LEA inspections and the report outlined the areas that would be inspected during January 2009. The inspection would be based on the LEA's self evaluation and subsequent action planning processes which would include reporting against a number of key and local performance indicators and performance in previous inspections. The report also referred to the proposal that a Project Board and Team be established to assist the Authority in preparing the inspection. The role of the Project Board and its membership were outlined in the report together with the reporting mechanisms.

RESOLVED

That the report and proposals outlined in Section 3 and impending inspection be noted.

37. ADOPTION OF THE RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

A report of the Acting Director of Environment and Regeneration, copies of which have been previously circulated to Members, was submitted.

The Chairman explained that he had been approached by the Chairman of the Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee and asked for this report to be referred to that Overview and Scrutiny Committee to allow further investigation to be made and for a report back to the Executive.

RESOLVED

That the Rights of Way Improvement Plan be referred to the Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration before it was considered further by the Executive.

38. FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2008/2009

A report of the Acting Director of Environment and Regeneration, copies of which have been previously circulated to Members, was submitted. The Chief Regeneration Officer presented the report the purpose of which was to seek approval for the Food Service Plan for Flintshire County Council which detailed the Service Delivery Programme for the period 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2009.

The Chief Regeneration Officer reported that Local Authorities throughout the UK had been directed by the Foods Standards Agency to take the necessary action to implement the new framework agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement which was operational from 1st April 2001. The Service Plan was available in the Members rooms.

The Executive Member for Leisure and Public Protection thanked the officers in the department for the work on the Food Service Plan and to the increased number of inspections.

RESOLVED

That the Plan be recommended for approval to the County Council.

39. POST OFFICE CLOSURES – NORTH WALES

A report of the Chief Executive, copies of which have been previously circulated to Members, was submitted. The Chief Executive presented the report the purpose of which was to inform the Executive of the impending announcement from Post Office Limited over proposed Post Office closures in North Wales and the subsequent consultation exercise.

The Chief Executive referred to the Government announcement that the Post Office Limited was to close post offices across the Country and many Members had concerns on the impact this was going to have on North Wales and in particular in Flintshire. The local public consultation in North Wales was due to commence on 29th July 2008 and details of the proposed Post Office closures in Flintshire and North Wales would be released on 29th July 2008. In North Wales the period of public consultation would last for seven weeks and would end on 15th September 2008. The Post Office had been requested to extend the consultation period by a month but to date no further concession had been granted. On the basis of the closures to date in South and Mid Wales it was estimated that approximately forty eight post offices would be affected across North Wales. The Chief Executive has spoken to the Assembly Minister, Mr Brian Gibbons, to establish whether the Post Office Development Fund could be used to assist on this matter and an assurance had been received on this. It was proposed to submit a further report when the consultation had been completed.

Councillor P. G. Heesom referred to the impact this proposal could have on the rural communities and there was a need for the County Council to take a lead on this issue. He also sought clarification on the suggestion that Outreach Centres should be used. The Chief Executive referred to the discussions with the Welsh Assembly Government as to how the Post Office Development Fund could be used and Councillor Nancy Matthews referred to discussions she had had with Sue Huggins, Head of the Post Offices Network Change Programme, and expressed concern as to how these Centres could be utilised.

Councillor Carol Ellis referred to the views expressed by Members in relation to the consultation exercise and suggested that in addition to the report back to the Executive on 5th August 2008 a further report be submitted to the Executive to be held in September and this was agreed.

RESOLVED

That an update on the Post Office closures for Flintshire be submitted to the meeting of the Executive on 5th August 2008 following the announcement of closures on 29th July 2008 and a further report be considered at the meeting of the Executive in September 2008.

40. THE FLINTSHIRE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2008/2011

A Joint report of the Director of Community Services and Chief Education Officer, copies of which have been previously circulated to Members, was submitted. The Director of Community Services presented the joint report the purpose of which was to seek approval for the Plan and she explained that the Local Authority had a statutory duty to publish a Plan setting out its strategy for discharging its functions as required by Section 26 of the Children Act 2004.

The Director referred to the Welsh Assembly Government which had adopted the UN Convention on the rights of the child as the basis for all its work with children and young people. The Children and Young People's Plan was structured around the seven core aims set out in paragraph 3.04 of the report.

Councillor Carol Ellis as the Executive Member for Social Services congratulated the Director and her staff for the work that had gone into the preparation of the Plan.

RESOLVED

That the Plan be submitted to the County Council for approval.

41. EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (ERDF) PRIORITY FOUR

A report of the Acting Director of Environment and Regeneration, copies of which have been previously circulated to Members, was submitted.

Councillor H. D. Hutchinson reported that as a bus operator he had taken advice from the Monitoring Officer and informed the Executive that he had no interest to declare in this item.

The Chief Regeneration Officer presented the report the purpose of which was to seek approval to submit the Sub Regional (Flintshire/Wrexham) Transport Project as the sole bid for the North East Wales area under the European Regional Development Fund Priority Four. He explained that the ERDF consisted of four priorities and the objective of Priority Four was "regeneration for growth". This was to provide support for integrated approaches to regeneration that would produce sustainable economic, environmental and social benefits. This priority was expected to fund four sub regional initiatives including one for North East Wales covering both Flintshire and Wrexham. Whilst the funding had not been ring fenced a quarter share per initiative would equate to approximately £1.82m for each area and with match funding of 60% of the project costs being required this would result in a total potential project value of approximately £4.6m for North East Wales.

The considerations of the report outlined the joint bid with Wrexham County Borough Council which was to expand the Demand Responsive Transport Deeside shuttle service and to further develop both Hawarden Bridge and Wrexham General Railway Stations. This would concentrate on improving accessibility from areas of deprivation to the two major sub regional employment growth hubs – Deeside Industrial Park/Northern Gateway in Flintshire and the expanding retail sector in Wrexham and in addition to widen the coverage of the DRT scheme across both Local Authority Areas.

Councillor P. G. Heesom referred to the contents of the report in relation to the Demand Responsive Transport, Deeside Industrial Park and the Hawarden Bridge Station and emphasised the importance of Flintshire having its share of the project and also to the wider issues of European funding.

Councillor H. D. Hutchinson referred to the increase in use being made of the Wrexham to Bidston Railway line and emphasised the need for this to continue. In this regard, the Chairman referred to the condition of the Bidston Station which was in need of improvement similar to the works undertaken at Flintshire Railway stations and as Vice Chairman of TAITH he would be reporting these concerns to a future meeting.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the submission of the proposed project for the North East Wales ERDF Priority Four Programme be supported.
- (b) That a further report be submitted to the Executive.

42. HRMIS PROJECT UPDATE AND PHASE TWO BUSINESS CASE

A report of the Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, copies of which have been previously circulated to Members, was submitted. The Interim Head presented the report the purpose of which was to provide an update on the progress of Phase 1 of the project and to present a business case for Phase 2 which would provide for employee and manager self service.

The Interim Assistant Director said that this was an important corporate project that since approval had been funded incrementally according to Project Phase. The system and its progress had been considered by the Executive and People and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee periodically. Phase 1 was now coming to an end and two parallel runs had been planned for July and August pay dates and on a successful completion of these the anticipated "go live" date would be September 2008. The report also contained the Phase 2 proposals and that employee and manager self serve modules would benefit the organisation considerably in terms of more efficient ways of working and better management information.

The Chief Executive referred to the previous consideration by the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny consideration of HR projects and the Phase 2 proposals were now submitted for approval. He referred to the implementation of Phase 2 which would achieve cashable efficiency savings and non-cashable savings.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the progress in achieving Phase 1 of the project be noted.
- (b) That the contents of the business case for Phase 2 as set out in Appendix A of the report and in particular the potential efficiencies be noted and the commitment to proceed with Phase 2 planning be supported.
- (c) That a one off contribution from the Contingency Reserve of £100,359 to fund the implementation of Phase 2, be approved.

43. WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPERS – BUSINESS RATES

A report of the County Finance Officer, copies of which have been previously circulated to Members, was submitted. The Assistant Director presented the report the purpose of which was to provide Members with background information in relation to two Assembly Government consultation papers for business rates. The report sought endorsement of an officer response sent to the Welsh Assembly Government on 1st July 2008 relating to companies in administration and to seek views on Assembly proposals to extend the Small Business Rates Relief Scheme.

The Assistant Director reported that two consultation papers have been received. One, proposals to exempt companies in administration from the liabilities for business rates on empty properties with the closing date of 30th June 2008 to which a response had been sent agreeing to the proposal. Secondly, proposals to extend the qualification values for Small Business Rate Relief Scheme with the closing date of 31st July 2008.

Councillor P. G. Heesom referred to the current economic situation and requested if a further report on the implications of the changes in the light of the prevailing national economic situation.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the action already taken by officers in support in the Assembly proposals for businesses in administration be endorsed.
- (b) That the Assembly proposals to extend the Small Business Rates Relief Scheme be supported.
- (c) That a further report be submitted in six months time.

44. PROPOSED NEW CEMETERY AT CONNAH'S QUAY

A report of the Acting Director of Community and Housing, copies of which have been previously circulated to Members, was submitted. The Acting Director presented the report the purpose of which was to provide an update on progress over the proposed new cemetery at Connah's Quay. This was to enable continued burial provision for local residents of the Town and the immediate area. Secondly, to seek a final determination and preferred option from Members in order for officers to proceed with implementing a suitable scheme as a matter of priority to facilitate a new cemetery at Connah's Quay.

The Acting Director referred to the background to the report and to the existing cemetery which was nearing capacity and that there was a maximum of twelve months burial provision remaining. The report outlined three options for the Authority to consider. The Acting Director proceeded to outline option 1 - which was to do nothing, option 2 - to allocate a portion of Council land at Colomendy Farm and develop a cemetery of suitable size and option 3 - Kelsterton Farm which would require the purchase of land and develop an eight acre cemetery. Option 3 had now been approved by the Environment Agency subject to normal cemetery planning conditions and in this regard outline planning permission had been granted, this was to facilitate a change of use of the Kelsterton Farm land from agricultural to cemetery burial purposes.

RESOLVED

- (a) That approval be given for the immediate progression of option 3 as set out in the report subject to full planning approval being granted.
- (b) That further consultations take place with Connah's Quay Town Council.

45. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS

An information report of the Chief Executive, copies of which have been previously circulated to Members, was submitted. The purpose of the report was to inform Members of actions taken and the delegated powers.

The actions taken were as set out below:-

- (a) Temporary renewal of lease of police land at Council Depot at Alltami until 31st March 2010 – Director of Community and Housing.
- (b) Items arising from budget monitoring – Final Outturn – County Finance Officer.
- (c) Items arising from month twelve budget monitoring – County Finance Officer.
- (d) Redistribution of Library Assistants staff hours – Director of Lifelong Learning.
- (e) Reconstruction of a single arch to the bridge and regulate the river flows in two channels – Director of Environment and Regeneration.

46. ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEM

The Chief Executive provided an update on the proposed industrial action which would now take place on Wednesday 16th and Thursday 17th July 2008. A third bulletin would be released later in the day to the workforce and copied to the press. This would confirm which Council properties were open and closed. The Council depots would be closed because of Health and Safety issues. All staff from these offices would be reporting to County Hall. He thanked the Trade Unions for agreeing to exemptions for key workers. Skeletal staff would be provided in certain areas and the Trade Unions had also agreed to exemptions to call in employees to meet any unforeseen emergencies. Senior Management of the Authority would be in attendance to manage Council business and services and all meetings within County Hall had been cancelled/postponed.

47. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 09.30 am and ended at 10.33 am.

48. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were three members of the press in attendance and one member of the public.

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Chairman

**SUMMARY OF DECLARATIONS MADE BY MEMBERS
IN ACCORDANCE WITH FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S
CODE OF CONDUCT**

EXECUTIVE	DATE: 15 July 2008
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MEMBER	ITEM	MIN. NO. REFERS