

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
THURSDAY 1 MARCH, 2012

Minutes of the meeting of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Thursday 1 March, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor H.J. McGuill (Chair)

Councillors: Eng. K. Armstrong-Braun, J.B. Attridge, S.R. Baker, D. Barratt, G.H. Bateman, M. Bateman, R.C. Bithell, H. Brown, C.S. Carver, D.L. Cox, R. Davies, A.J. Davies-Cooke, Q.R.H. Dodd, R. Dolphin, B. Dunn, C.A. Ellis, J.E. Falshaw, V. Gay, F. Gillmore, A.M. Halford, G. Hardcastle, N. Humphreys, H.D. Hutchinson, H.T. Isherwood, G. James, C.M. Jones, R.B. Jones, S. Jones, C. Legg, R.P. Macfarlane, D.I. Mackie, D.L. Mackie, N.M. Matthews, D. McFarlane, A. Minshull, W. Mullin, M.J. Peers, P.R. Pemberton, N. Phillips, H.G. Roberts, I.B. Roberts, L.A. Sharps, A.P. Shotton, N.R. Steele-Mortimer, C.A. Thomas, W.O. Thomas, D.E. Wisinger, A. Woolley and M.G. Wright

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: L.A. Aldridge, J.C. Cattermoul, P.J. Curtis, C.J. Dolphin, E.F. Evans, R.G. Hampson, P.G. Heesom, C. Hinds, H.T. Howorth, R. Hughes, N.M. Jones, E.W. Owen, M.A. Reece and D.T. Williams

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Director of Lifelong Learning, Director of Environment, Director of Community Services, Head of Finance, Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Democracy and Governance Manager, Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

139. PRESENTATION

The Chair welcomed Mr. Christopher Rowe, Accommodations Officer to the meeting and thanked him for his hard work within the Homelessness Team.

The Director of Community Services, on behalf of Members, congratulated Mr. Christopher Rowe, who had been awarded a Local Hero Commendation by Business in the Community, which was a UK wide charity organisation marking the 10th anniversary of its Business Action on Homelessness programme. He thanked him for his hard work which he said had been greatly recognised across the County.

140. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Democracy and Governance Manager confirmed that no questions had been received.

141. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Members declared a personal interest for Agenda item number 17 – School Admission Arrangements 2013/14:-

Councillors: Eng. K. Armstrong-Braun, J.B. Attridge, D. Barratt, G.H. Bateman, M. Bateman, H. Brown, D.L. Cox, R. Davies, A.J. Davies-Cooke, Q.R.H. Dodd, R. Dolphin, B. Dunn, C.A. Ellis, J.E. Falshaw, V. Gay, F. Gillmore, A.M. Halford, G. Hardcastle, N. Humphreys, H.D. Hutchinson, H.T. Isherwood, C.M. Jones, R.B. Jones, S. Jones, C. Legg, R.P. Macfarlane, D.I. Mackie, D.L. Mackie, N.M. Matthews, H.J. McGuill, A. Minshull, W. Mullin, M.J. Peers, P.R. Pemberton, N. Phillips, H.G. Roberts, I.B. Roberts, A.P. Shotton, N.R. Steele-Mortimer, C.A. Thomas, W.O. Thomas, D.E. Wisinger, A. Woolley and M.G. Wright

142. COUNCIL MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Flintshire County Council held on 31 January, 2012 had been circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

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

143. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair explained that details of her communications would be made available in the Members room. She said that on 27 February, 2012 she had welcomed the children from Chernobyl to County Hall, which she said had been very humbling.

144. PETITIONS

Councillor J.E. Falshaw submitted two petitions, seeking a speed reduction on the A541 Afonwen from 60mph to 40mph and also seeking a speed reduction on the A541 through Melin-y-Wern from 60mph to 30mph.

Councillor C. Legg submitted a petition seeking the provision of a safe dry path from the school to pass the bungalows on the B5123.

145. NOTICES OF MOTION

The Democracy and Governance Manager confirmed that no notices of motion had been received.

146. QUESTIONS

The Democracy and Governance Manager confirmed that no questions had been received.

147. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS ON COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Democracy and Governance Manager confirmed that no questions had been received.

148. COUNCIL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2012/13

The Head of Finance and Chief Executive jointly presented a report which provided Members with the recommendations of the Executive for the Council Fund Revenue Budget 2012/13.

Prior to the presentation the Chief Executive and Head of Finance expressed their thanks to all the extended Corporate Management and Finance staff who had been involved in the preparation of the budget and for the valuable input from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Chief Executive explained that many Members would have seen much of the information to be presented previously but that it was appropriate for the Council to re-receive this information to inform its decision making.

The Council was informed that at its meeting on 21 February, 2012, the Executive had considered a joint report from the Head of Finance and Chief Executive on the Council Fund Revenue Budget 2012/13 which was attached at Appendix A of the report. The initial budget proposals considered by the Executive on 20 December, 2011 had been referred to Overview and Scrutiny for consideration. A summary of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees' observations and questions, together with comments from officers, was included in the Appendix of the 21 February, 2012 Executive report. The budget proposals had also been discussed with the School Budget Forum and the Flintshire Joint Trade Union Committee.

The Head of Finance and Chief Executive gave a joint presentation and commented upon the following areas:-

- Budget Overview
- Budget Strategy
- Scrutiny Considerations
- Budget Proposals
- Schools Budget
- Estimates & Reserves
- Looking Ahead

The Head of Finance said that she was satisfied that the total level of reserves was adequate to meet currently identified future liabilities and that the Council should maintain the current level of general balances of £5.564m, alongside other specific reserves, to safeguard its position and be in a strong position to plan ahead to meet the continuing period of constraint in public sector funding, the impact of the economic downturn and to be able to invest in its priorities for the future.

Councillor. A. Woolley, Leader of the Council proposed that the Council accept the recommendations of the Executive, as outlined within the report. He explained that this had been a challenging budget and despite the difficult economic climate there would be no compulsory redundancies and no cuts to essential front line services as a consequence. He said that the proposals

provided a balanced budget which reflected the shared priority with Welsh Government (WG) requirements to protect the delivery of Education and Social Services. On Education funding, he commented that Flintshire County Council was one of the highest spenders in Wales as a share of its total budget. In 2012/13 the total amount delegated to schools would increase by £1.112M and the Council's proposed schools budget had been supported by the School Budget Forum at its meeting on 28 February, 2012. Also additional funding of £21,500 had been identified for Play Areas which recognised the response of Town and Community Councils and ensured that the Council's contribution would be an equal amount. He thanked all officers for their hard work in preparing the budget and asked all Members to support his proposal.

In seconding the proposal, Councillor L.A. Sharps, Deputy Leader of the Council concurred that this had been a challenging budget. He outlined the good work of the Environment Directorate and thanked the Director of Environment for the services which had been delivered across the County. He commented on the investment which had been made to Deeside and Flint Leisure Centres and the introduction of the Dog Fouling Policy which had resulted in prosecutions. He said that the Council had fulfilled its obligation to carry out the Housing Ballot with the result of the Ballot to be reported to the County Council at its meeting on 27 March, 2012. He said that there was a modest increase to Council Tax payers but supported the budget which was necessary to ensure that front line services were maintained.

Councillor Eng. K. Armstrong-Braun spoke in support of the recommendations and the increased funding for schools. He also thanked the Director of Environment for the excellent maintenance of roads and thanked officers for the improvements which had been made within the Housing Service.

Councillor A.P. Shotton said that he would be voting against the budget proposals as he did not feel that they were sustainable and would need to be revisited following the County Council Elections in May, 2012. He commented on the amount of money which had been taken out of Reserves over the last four years which needed to be addressed. He commented on the closure of libraries and youth clubs which had resulted from the 2011/12 budget proposals and had been opposed by the Labour Group. He raised concern that the money saved from closing the libraries and youth clubs had not been spent within the 2011/12 financial year and had been identified as efficiencies for the 2012/13 financial year. He thanked the Audit Committee for its work in identifying the cost for the use of consultants which was £3M and said that since being highlighted by the Labour Group last year little had been done to address this matter. He also raised concern that the proposed budget did not allow the Council to deliver on the issues affecting residents in Flintshire. Councillor R.C. Bithell concurred with the comments and said that many residents had been affected by the cuts to social services transport. He said that the money spent on consultants should have been used to protect such services.

In response to the comments made on the cuts to social services transport, Councillor C.A. Ellis, Executive Member for Social Services that this had been a difficult decision to make, but had ensured that cuts had not been made to any front line service. The Director of Community Services explained that each recipient of free social services transport was assessed and personal circumstances were taken into account. Each recipient also received over £50 a week in benefit.

In response to a question on the levels of Education Indicator Based Assessment (IBA) since 2008, the Head of Finance confirmed the following IBA levels:-

- 2008/09 – 98.39%
- 2009/10 – 96.32%
- 2010/11 – 97.3%
- 2011/12 – 97.46%
- 2012/13 – Estimated to be 97.14%

Councillor I.B. Roberts said that when the Labour Group were in Administration many Members had raised concern with the spend of Education IBA, which during this time had been over 98%. Administration Members had promised to increase this spend within their election literature and in four years this was still lower than when the Labour Group had been in administration. If the Administration of the Council had matched the level as was left by the Labour Group this would have created an additional £5M above the increase outlined within the report, for schools in Flintshire.

Councillor N.M. Steele-Mortimer, Executive Member for Education commented on the current economic crises and said that despite this the Administration had succeeded in increasing spend per pupil and the overall budget for schools in Flintshire. The Chief Executive explained that where efficiencies had been found in education, this additional funding was being reinvested. A number of Members welcomed the additional funding for education.

In response to further comments on the schools budget, the Head of Finance said that the indicative budget had been considered by the School Budget Forum on 28 February, 2012. Further work would be carried out on projected future funding to schools based on the increases in the following two years expected by the WG. This had been built into the Medium Term Financial Plan along with projections which would be built upon across all Council services. The Director of Lifelong Learning explained that schools across Flintshire would be informed of their budget within the next week.

Councillor H.G. Roberts thanked the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and officers for their work in preparing the budget. He commented on the need to spend up to the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) to ensure that Flintshire was not penalised for this by the WG in future years. In view of the comments made by Members, he proposed that the Council Tax increase be set at 4%. This amendment was not seconded.

Councillor R.P. Macfarlane raised concern on the new arrangements for managed weekly refuse collections and the affect the savings made within this service area had had on the overall service. In response, Councillor M.J. Peers, as Chairman of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee said that officers had been working hard to alleviate the problems encountered following the introduction of the new managed weekly collections. He thanked the Director of Environment and officers for the workshop on managed weekly collections held on 23 February, 2012 which formed part of the review of the service currently being undertaken.

Councillor A. Woolley, in summing up, said that the Administration had delivered in a number of areas, including School Modernisation, Single Status and the Housing Ballot. He commented on the high education results across Flintshire and said that the proposed budget was sensible and achievable and asked all Members to support it.

RESOLVED:

That the County Council approve the recommendation of the Executive from its meeting held on 21 February, 2012 as set out in section 8 of the Executive report attached to the Council report.

149. COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2012-13

The Head of Finance introduced a report for Council to agree the statutory and other necessary resolutions for the purpose of administering Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates for 2012-13. The report identified the figure recommended by the Executive for the General Fund Budget requirement for 2012/13. The results of the resolutions outlined within the report would be that the Council Tax would be levied across all areas of the County as set out in Appendix A of the report and further analyses in Appendix B by amount and percentage increases.

The Head of Finance reported on an amendment to page 82 of the report that the word 'Council' should read 'Executive' in paragraph 1.

Councillor A. Woolley, Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Asset Management proposed the acceptance of the recommendations outlined within Appendix A of the report. This was seconded by Councillor L.A. Sharps, Deputy Leader of the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the resolutions within Appendix A of the report be approved subject to Council being Executive on the first line of paragraph 1.

150. COUNCIL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012/13 TO 2021/22

The Council received the joint report which presented to the Council the recommendations of the Executive on the Council Fund Capital Programme 2012/13 to 2021/22.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor W.O. Thomas on the figures presented for the cost of milk for schools, the Head of Finance said that she would speak to Councillor Thomas following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the County Council approve the recommendations of the Executive from its meeting held on 21 February, 2012 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Executive attached to the Council report.

151. TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY & STRATEGY STATEMENT 2012/13

The Council received the report of the Head of Finance which presented to Council the recommendations of the Executive on the Treasury Management Policy Statement for 2012/13.

Councillor A. Woolley, Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Asset Management proposed the acceptance of the recommendations as outlined within the report. This was seconded by Councillor R.C. Bithell.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the adoption of The Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA) Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2011 be approved; and
- (b) That the Council's Treasury Management Policy and Strategy Statement 2012/13 be approved.

152. PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2012/13 TO 2014/15

The Council received the report of the Head of Finance which presented to Council the recommendations of the Executive in relation to the setting of a range of prudential indicators.

Councillor A. Woolley, Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Asset Management proposed the acceptance of the recommendations as outlined within the report. This was seconded by Councillor R.C. Bithell.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the prudential indicators as detailed in Section 3 of the Executive report dated 21 February, 2012 be approved; and

- (b) That delegated authority be given for the Head of Finance to effect movements between the separately agreed limits within the authorised limit for external debt and the operational boundary for external debt (section 3.11 and 3.12 of the Executive report dated 21 February, 2012).

153. MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION 2012/13

The Council received the report of the Head of Finance which presented to Council the recommendations of the Executive in relation to the setting of a prudent minimum revenue provision for the repayment of debt.

Councillor A. Woolley, Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Asset Management proposed the acceptance of the recommendations as outlined within the report. This was seconded by Councillor R.C. Bithell.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Council accept the recommendations of the Executive, being that:-
- (1) Option 1 (Regulatory Method) be used for the calculation of the minimum revenue provision in 2012/13 for all supported borrowing.
 - (2) Option 3 (Asset Life Method) be used for the calculation of the minimum revenue provision in 2012/13 for all unsupported (prudential) borrowing.

154. SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2013/14

The Director of Lifelong Learning presented a report to advise Members of the outcome of the statutory consultation exercise on the admission arrangements for September, 2013 following Executive approval.

Councillor N.M. Steele-Mortimer proposed the School Admission Arrangements for September, 2013 be approved. This was seconded by Councillor R.C. Bithell.

Councillor W.O. Thomas spoke against the proposal. He questioned the need for an oversubscription criterion as there were no oversubscribed schools in Flintshire and that the school admission arrangements did not tackle schools where there were surplus places. He proposed an amendment that the arrangements be reviewed. This was seconded by Councillor C.A. Thomas who also spoke against the proposal. She said that the School Governors of Ysgol Parc-Y-Llan had written to the Director of Lifelong Learning and the Chair of the Council to outline their concerns on the school admission arrangements. She asked if consideration would be given to including an additional criteria for the admission arrangements for schools within a consortium.

The Director of Lifelong Learning explained that each year the Council was required to undertake a statutory consultation exercise on its admission arrangements and the consultation exercise for 2013/14 was carried out between 25 October and 16 December, 2011 and no comments had been received. The Chief Executive explained that it was an annual requirement for the Council to approve the admission arrangements and following this they could be reviewed.

A number of Members spoke in support of the admission arrangements. Councillor R.C. Bithell said that amendments to the admission arrangements could impact the cost of travel arrangements across the County.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed admission arrangements for 2013/14 be approved; and
- (b) That, for clarification, the following be added to the admissions policy after criterion (d) for primary and secondary and after criterion (f) for junior schools:-

“If the authority is unable to comply with the parental preference(s) expressed then the parent will be offered a place at the next nearest appropriate school with an available place”.

155. BUCKLEY COMMON BYELAWS

The Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced a report to recommend that the County Council approve the making of new byelaws in respect of Buckley Common.

Councillor J.B. Attridge proposed that the amended Buckley Common Byelaws be approved. This was seconded by Councillor A.P. Shotton.

A number of Members spoke in support of the new byelaws. Councillor M.J. Peers said that there was a need to ensure that Buckley Common was protected and enhanced for the enjoyment of residents in Buckley. Councillor C.A. Ellis welcomed the new byelaws and said that further enforcement action was needed to stop heavy good vehicles using the area.

RESOLVED:

That the amended Buckley Common Byelaws be approved.

156. SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Chair and Vice-Chairman, the Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Principal Solicitor be authorised to affix the Common Seal of the County Council between meetings of the County Council.
- (b) That the action of the Chair and Vice-Chairman, the Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Principal Solicitor in affixing the Common Seal of the County Council as set out in the seal register numbers 13221 - 13278 be noted.

157. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 2.00 p.m. and ended at 4.18 p.m.

158. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were two members of the public and three members of the press present.

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Chair

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

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	1 MARCH, 2012
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MEMBER	ITEM	MIN. NO. REFERS
Councillors: Eng. K. Armstrong-Braun, J.B. Attridge, D. Barratt, G.H. Bateman, M. Bateman, H. Brown, D.L. Cox, R. Davies, A.J. Davies-Cooke, Q.R.H. Dodd, R. Dolphin, B. Dunn, C.A. Ellis, J.E. Falshaw, V. Gay, F. Gillmore, A.M. Halford, G. Hardcastle, N. Humphreys, H.D. Hutchinson, H.T. Isherwood, C.M. Jones, R.B. Jones, S. Jones, C. Legg, R.P. Macfarlane, D.I. Mackie, D.L. Mackie, N.M. Matthews, H.J. McGill, A. Minshull, W. Mullin, M.J. Peers, P.R. Pemberton, N. Phillips, H.G. Roberts, I.B. Roberts, A.P. Shotton, N.R. Steele-Mortimer, C.A. Thomas, W.O. Thomas, D.E. Wisinger, A. Woolley and M.G. Wright	School Admission Arrangements 2013/14	154.