

EXECUTIVE
6TH OCTOBER 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the Executive of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 6th October 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor A. Woolley (Chairman)

Councillors: C.A. Ellis, H.D. Hutchinson, N. Matthews, L.A. Sharps, N.R. Steele-Mortimer and H. Yale.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: K. Armstrong-Braun, R.G. Hampson, D. Mackie, Mrs D. Mackie and A.P. Shotton.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Director of Community Services, Director of Environment, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of Finance, Policy, Performance and Partnerships Manager and Head of Committee, Member and Electoral Services.

130. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

Minute No. 119 – Sponsorship of Highway Roundabout

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services referred to the resolution which needed to be corrected to replace the word “association” with “associated”.

131. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by Members

132. DEESIDE LEISURE CENTRE

The Executive Member for Leisure and Public Protection introduced a report which updated Members on progress with the Deeside Leisure Centre project and sought authority to proceed with the procurement process for a development partner. He thanked the officers and Project Board for the work undertaken on this project.

The Director of Lifelong Learning referred to the Leisure Centre which was a major facility for both Flintshire and North Wales but was in need of regeneration. The Project Board focussed on the re-development potential for a largely new-build facility on site and possible part disposal of the site. In the context of greater financial constraints throughout the economy, it had become clear that such an option was unlikely to proceed as originally envisaged. The Project Board was of the view that a major refurbishment of the Centre involving a comprehensive re-modelling of space would present much better value and a lower risk to the Council and was recommending that a development partner

would be required to successfully manage the project. The Appendix to the report set out a timetable for the proposals.

The Chief Executive thanked the Executive Member and the Director for their introduction and endorsed the proposal for options on central functions and services and financing routes.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the commencement of the identified procurement process, be authorised.

133. QUARTER ONE PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2009/10

The Chief Executive presented a report for Members to consider the 2009/10 quarter one performance reports produced by the Heads of Service and Corporate Heads. Copies of the performance reports had been deposited in Members' Group rooms and these had previously been considered by the People and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Chief Executive explained that there would be a new approach to quarterly performance reporting. The reader would be provided with the narrative of quarterly performance, putting into context key areas of overall performance. Reports were being prepared by the Heads of Service within each of the Directorates and by the Corporate Heads.

The Policy, Performance and Partnerships Manager referred to the amount of work that had been undertaken in bringing together the quarter one report and confirmed that the appendices referred to in the report had not been re-circulated as these had already been received by Members with the agenda for the meeting of the People and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She outlined the changes in bringing performance information forward for consideration by Members and customers and that work was being undertaken to give the level of quality in overall performance. A copy of the Local Authority Performance 2008/09 produced by the Local Government Data Unit was made available at the meeting and she outlined the areas where performance indicators had shown a positive change and those showing a negative change. There was a 62% improvement on overall indicators.

The Executive Member for Waste Strategy and Management referred to information provided to her by Councillor Richard Jones, vice chairman of the People and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee, on the much improved performance and that a special meeting of the People and Performance Committee would be held on 5th November 2009 to on target setting which the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees would be invited.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

134. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2009/10 (MONTH 4)

The Head of Finance before presenting a report which provided Members with the most up-to-date revenue budget monitoring information at month 4 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account 2009/10, referred to a news release from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) which had provided early information on the draft Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) Budget announcement the previous day and officers were currently working on interpreting this.

The headline was a 2.1% uplift for Local Government and whilst this was higher than previously expected, it was the lowest level since devolution. However, the 2.1% uplift was an average figure and it was recommended that planned work should continue on the 2010/11 Flintshire budget preparation based on a 1% uplift. Details of the Local Government provisional settlement were expected on 13th October 2009. One of the issues being debated prior to the publication on 13th October was the possibility of a "floor". Local Government generally were supportive that no Authority should have less than a 1% uplift.

The Head of Finance then referred to the month 4 budget monitoring report and the projected position at month 4 was for the General Fund to have a net underspend of £0.310m and the Housing Revenue Account to have a net overspend of £0.500m.

In relation to the General Fund, the two most significant changes to the original budget were the directorate effect of holding pay inflation centrally pending the outcome of the National Pay Negotiations of £1.543m and the directorate effect of measures taken to achieve the efficiency target of £0.905m. These items had been reported to the Executive on 4th August and 21st April 2009 respectively as a result of which directorates had been allocated the relevant budgetary provision in line with the actual pay award and this would be reported in future monitoring reports. Details of budget variances were contained in the appendices.

Appendix 6 to the report detailed the movements to-date on unearmarked reserves and the level of contingency sum available for allocation by the Executive. As a result of the movements as set out in the report, the amount currently available in the contingency reserve was £2.339m.

The Housing Revenue Account showed the net effects of the revised balance brought forward and the projected outturn was that there would be balances in hand at the end of year of £0.779m which at 3.3% of budgeted expenditure was greater than the minimum level of 3% recommended by the Head of Finance. The projected year-end balance of £0.779m was £0.513m less than was assumed when the 2009/10 Housing Revenue Account budget was finalised.

In conclusion, the Head of Finance referred to recommendation 7.01 (d) which needed to be corrected so that the projected final level of balances on the Housing Revenue Account was referred to paragraph 6.05 and not as stated in the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the overall report be noted;
- (b) That the allocations from the contingency reserve (paras 5.02 and 5.03) be approved;
- (c) That the General Fund contingency sum available as at 31st March 2010 as set out in section 5, be noted;
- (d) That the projected final level of balances on the Housing Revenue Account as set out in paragraph 6.05, be noted.

135. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2009/10 (MONTH 4)

The Head of Finance presented a report which provided Members with the latest Capital Programme information for 2009/10 at month 4.

The table contained in paragraph 3.01.1 of the report, set out how the programme had changed during 2009/10 from the original Capital Programme of £34.647m to a revised programme of £42.465m. This net increase of £7.818m had arisen from roll-over (slippage) from 2008/09 of £10,350m which had been detailed in the report to the Executive on 4th August 2009. This had been reduced by £2,532m with a reduction of £3.040m in Environment and £0.508m increase in Lifelong Learning, details of which were set out in paragraph 3.02 of the report.

The Head of Finance referred to the contractually uncommitted (generally finance) budgets and at this early point in the year no programme budgets had been identified as likely to remain contractually uncommitted but work continued in this respect. The element of the General Fund total finance from General (Non-Specific) financing resources – unhypothecated supported borrowing, general capital grant and capital receipts (£22.323m) relied on total General Fund capital receipts of £4.040m. The capital receipts position continued to be closely monitored as part of the overall monitoring of the Capital Programme.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and approved.

136. COUNCIL TAX – DATE LIMITATIONS TO VALUATION BAND REDUCTIONS

The Head of Finance presented a report which provided members with information on Welsh Assembly Government proposals to limit to six years, the amount of time that the effect of an alteration to reduce a Council Tax valuation

band could be back-dated. The report also recommended that Members support the proposals as set out by the Welsh Assembly Government.

The Head of Finance explained that the Assembly was proposing that regulations be amended so that if a property was shown in a higher band that should have been the case, an alteration that results in a reduction in the banding of a property can be back-dated for no more than six years.

RESOLVED:

That the proposals as set out by the Welsh Assembly Government be supported and that this be communicated as the Council's response to the consultation.

137. SAFEGUARD POLICY – LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE

The Head of Finance presented a report which sought approval of the safeguard policy for local housing allowance schemes.

The Head of Finance explained that in April 2008 a new scheme of housing benefit was introduced called Local Housing Allowance. This new scheme changed the way that benefits were paid to customers living in private rented sector accommodation. The allowance was paid direct to customers who in turn made their payments to the landlord. The allowance was usually paid to the tenant and under the scheme a tenant could not simply request that payment is made to a landlord to cover their rent, but authorities had discretion to make payment to the landlord when certain criteria were met. It was important that customers were safeguarded in these circumstances and a new safeguard policy alongside a staff procedure and guidance note had been drafted.

RESOLVED

- a) that the safeguard policy be endorsed; and
- b) that the policy be placed on the Council's internet site for customer awareness.

138. EDUCATION ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Executive Member for Education and Youth introduced a report which sought Members' approval of the draft Education Asset Management Plan. He explained that this had been considered by the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier in the week and this represented one of the "building blocks" to be used as part of the School Modernisation Strategy which was due for consideration at a future meeting of the Executive. The Executive Member referred to revised figures that were tabled at the meeting which reflected the most up to date position as of January 2009.

The Director of Lifelong Learning also referred to the School Modernisation Strategy which had been mentioned in previous meetings and this management plan was a key element in its course of preparation.

RESOLVED

That the document be approved for consultation with schools and other stakeholders.

139. SUNBEDS IN LEISURE CENTRES

The Executive Member for Leisure and Public Protection introduced a report which advised Members of the position over sunbeds within leisure centres and to invite a decision on future provision.

The Director of Lifelong Learning referred to the environmental health and medical profession pressure to remove sun bed provision from public sector leisure centres. This had become more intense following the International Agency for Research on Cancer statement in July 2009 which classified sun beds as carcinogens and the BMA Cymru action to remove sun beds from public sector buildings.

RESOLVED

That all sunbeds be removed from Council leisure centres from the end of the current financial year.

140. FLINTSHIRE TOWN ACTION PLAN INITIATIVE

The Director of Environment presented a report which requested an additional £148,000 from Flintshire County Council's Capital Programme to support the Town Action Plan initiative in 2009/10. If approved, this would bring the total Council contribution to £335,000 for countywide projects and projects emerging from the seven local town partnerships.

The Director referred to the approach to approve applications for assistance which was a process whereby all towns could bid against two funding streams. The first was the Welsh Assembly Government Tidy Towns Fund of £120,000. The second was £187,000 of Flintshire County Council capital monies, making a total of £307,000. He emphasised that the Council was not able to influence the disbursement of the WAG Tidy Towns funding.

Once the £55,000 required for "Countywide" projects was deducted from the £187,000 the maximum available allocation across each of the seven towns would amount to approximately only £20,000 per town. Whilst this maximum allocation could be seen to be fair it also limited the scale and scope of projects that towns could put forward. To double this maximum amount to £40,000 would give each town far greater scope to make an impact in this crucial first year of the Town Action Plan process.

The Chief Executive supported the recommendations of the report and allocating additional funding would still leave some flexibility within the Capital Programme as approved by Council.

RESOLVED

That the further allocation of £148,000 from the Capital Programme - £93,000 to support the projects initiated by the Local Town Partnerships and £55,000 to support the countywide project summarised in appendix A be approved and this additional allocation would enable each town to bid for a maximum of £40,000 of Flintshire County Council Capital Monies.

141. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS

An information report of the Chief Executive was submitted, the purpose of which was to inform Members of the actions taken under delegated powers. The actions taken were as set out below:-

Community Services – approval to increase the number of modern trainees from four to six to increase the support available to Social Services for children.

Corporate Services – engagement of a temporary staff resource to complete work undertaken to date to review the Council's approach to the allocation of support services.

- assistance with increased rental costs – Flintshire Disability Forum.

- Assisted Car Purchase Scheme – interest rate to be applied to car loans approved during 2009/10.

- approval given to an additional staffing resource for a six month period to undertake certain duties of the Funds Manager. A number of Pension Fund investment and governance matters needed to be addressed by the head of Pensions/Funds with the assistance of the Funds Manager.

Environment – granting of a licence of first floor premises, Arosfa, Mold to Action for Children.

142. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and ended at 10.20 am.

143. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press and one member of the public in attendance.

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Chairman

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

EXECUTIVE	DATE: 6th October 2009
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MEMBER	ITEM	MIN. NO. REFERS
NO DECLARATIONS WERE MADE		