

EXECUTIVE
5TH JANUARY 2010

Minutes of the meeting of the Executive of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 5th January, 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor A. Woolley (Chairman)

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

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: J.B. Attridge, R.G. Hampson, R. Jones, R.P. Macfarlane, Mrs D. Mackie, D.I. Mackie, and C.A. Thomas.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Director of Community Services, Director of Environment, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of Finance, Head of ICT and Customer Services and Head of Committee, Member and Electoral Services.

APOLOGY: Councillor H. Yale.

The Chairman welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Executive in the New Year and was pleased to report that Councillor Helen Yale had recently given birth to a baby girl.

216. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th December 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

217. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by Members.

218. ANNUAL LETTER FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2008/09

The Executive Member for Corporate Management and Strategy introduced the Chief Executive's report on the Annual Letter of the appointed Auditor and Relationship Manager which summarised the work of Pricewaterhouse Coopers and the Wales Audit Office during 2009. This had been considered at the County Council meeting before Christmas but the Executive Member felt that there were certain aspects of the report which needed to be highlighted to illustrate the significant improvements which had been made in Council governance and performance. He made particular reference to the development control function which the Annual Letter reported as showing substantial improvement since its original review in 2007.

The Chief Executive explained that the Annual Letter had been reported to and accepted by the County Council at its special meeting held on 16th December but the Executive needed to be satisfied with the comprehensiveness of the response to the content and recommendations of the Annual Letter and a copy of

the summary management response was appended to the report. The findings of the Regulators were positive and built on the progress made over recent years.

The Executive Member for Waste Management, Strategy and Function welcomed the regulators' comments that the Council had engaged effectively with and provided leadership for the North Wales Regional Partnerships resulting in good progress being made towards procurement of regional waste treatment facilities.

The Executive Member for Education and Youth Services referred to the regulators' comments on the Estyn inspection and was pleased to report on the considerable progress that had been made including the School Modernisation Strategy, working with schools and the report to be considered later on the agenda in respect of the Pupil Referral Unit developments.

The Executive Member for Social Services referred to the comments on the children safeguarding arrangements and to the significant amount of work that had been completed since the Annual Letter had been received and made particular reference to the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and the management response to the content and recommendations of the Annual Letter be endorsed.

219. DRAFT DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME 2009 - 2012

The Executive Member for Corporate Management and Strategy introduced the report which presented the Draft Disability Equality Scheme 2009 – 2012 for approval and thanked the Policy Officer Equalities for the work undertaken in drafting the scheme.

The Chief Executive explained that the report referred to the County Council producing its first Disability Equality Scheme in December 2006 and this report provided details on the progress made on the implementation of the scheme and presented the strategy for the three years 2009 – 2012. In response to a question by the Chairman on the financial implications and that a further report would be submitted to the Executive detailing the cost implications of implementing the scheme, the Chief Executive explained that he expected that a report would be made back to the Executive within three months.

RESOLVED

- (a) That Flintshire's Draft Disability Equality Scheme be approved;
- (b) That the actions contained within the Disability Equality Scheme be approved; and
- (c) That robust systems being in place within each Directorate to further the Disability Equality Scheme, be supported.

220. 2009 RESIDENTS' SURVEY

The Chief Executive presented a report which provided Members with the findings of the 2009 Residents' Survey. He thanked all those residents that had completed and returned the questionnaires and referred to the 37% response rate compared to the 35% rate in 2007. A summary extract of the Flintshire Residents' Survey report was attached as an appendix to the report and the full report was available in the Members' Library and on the Council's website.

The Chief Executive referred to the considerations of the report and made reference to the satisfaction with living in Flintshire which remained unchanged since 2007 with 75% of residents being satisfied. However, the top rating of "very satisfied" had increased from 26% in 2007 to 35% in 2009. Improvement areas that had been identified were the removal of dog fouling, the physical condition of roads and pavements and the provision of more Council litter bins. 88% of residents were either very or fairly satisfied with the collection of their household waste and satisfaction with kerbside recycling ranged from 71% for brown bin collection, 77% for blue bag collection and 80% for blue box collection.

The Chief Executive then referred to the survey which had asked residents for their perceptions of how good they believed the Council was at dealing with its customers. He was pleased to report that the survey showed that satisfaction with the attitude of staff had increased from 72% in 2007 to 84% in 2009; the ability of staff to direct the enquiry to the right area had increased from 67% to 77%; the ease of contact with the Council had increased from 77% to 84%. In response to the question as to how well the Council kept residents informed about services, 65% said they were either very or fairly well informed compared against 59% in 2007.

The Chief Executive welcomed the findings of the survey which would provide valuable information and data to be considered in greater detail to more accurately target areas for future improvement. A press release would be issued on the survey and those residents who had responded to the survey would be written to individually.

RESOLVED

That the findings of the report by BMG research be received.

221. PHYSICAL TRAFFIC CALMING

The Executive Member for Environment and Regeneration and Tourism referred to the Director of Environments' report. He recognised the urgent need for a new policy, however, there was a need for clarification of the terminology in the proposed policy and he therefore proposed that the report be deferred for further review prior to it being submitted to the Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED

That the report be reviewed and referred to the Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

222. DEESIDE LEISURE CENTRE

The Executive Member for Leisure and Public Protection and Clean Team Activity introduced the Director of Lifelong Learning's report which provided an update on the present position regarding Deeside Leisure Centre and the actions taken to seek a development partner. The Executive Member thanked the team for the work undertaken on this project and particularly the Finance Team. The final stage of the process would be the presentation by each of the companies of their proposals to a meeting of Members and Officers scheduled for 21st January, 2010. It had been agreed that the Executive Member for Environment and Regeneration and Tourism together with a Member from the Labour Group be invited to attend this meeting.

The Director of Lifelong Learning referred to the Leisure Strategy which had recognised the importance of Deeside Leisure Centre and the importance of renewing its facilities. This was a major facility for both the County and regionally and this had been recognised by the quality/standing of the companies which had expressed an interest in the project.

The Chief Executive restated the commitment to refurbishment/remodelling Deeside Leisure Centre. He also referred to recent media coverage on the project and confirmed that there had always been an assumption that there would be some use of surplus land at the site to generate a capital receipt.

RESOLVED

That the report be received and that the procurement process leading up to the identified presentations on 21st January, 2010 be approved.

223. SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2011

The Executive Member for Education and Youth Services introduced the Director of Lifelong Learning's report which sought authority to commence the Statutory Annual Consultation on the admission arrangements to apply from September 2011. He reminded the Executive that the Local Authority was required each year to undertake an annual statutory consultation exercise on its admission arrangements for the following year. He referred to the Council's policy regarding nursery admissions which was amended by the Council the previous year. This would take effect for September 2010 nursery admissions and the impact of the changing policy would be monitored.

The Executive Member referred to some Members concerns on the County Council's Transport Policy which although separate from admissions could be an influential factor in determining parental preference. The implementation of the Transport Policy was currently being examined in detail with the Members concerned in order to resolve these issues.

The Director of Lifelong Learning referred to the school admission arrangements and the statutory annual consultation before submission of a report to the Executive and then the County Council to approve admission arrangements by 15th April, 2010. As mentioned by the Executive Member, work was being undertaken with individual Members on transport issues. In conclusion, he reported that Flintshire was very successful in meeting parental preferences first choice.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the proposed admission arrangements for September 2010 as set out in the report, be used as the basis for consultation; and
- (b) That a report on the outcome of the consultation be presented to the Executive and subsequently to the County Council in order that the admission arrangements are determined by 15th April, 2010.

224. PROPOSED FLINTSHIRE HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

The Leader welcomed Councillor David Mackie to the meeting of the Executive and explained that he was “standing in” for Councillor Helen Yale. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained the position and provisions in the Constitution. The Constitution was silent on the provision of deputies for Executive Members. Accordingly, he explained that only Members appointed by the Leader could make executive decisions. He indicated that Councillor David Mackie had been asked by the Leader to assist the Executive Member and the Executive and to attend meetings which would normally be attended by Councillor Helen Yale.

The Director of Community Services presented the report with an update on the proposed establishment of a Flintshire Housing Partnership. She referred to a contribution of the Executive Member for Environment and Regeneration and Tourism as there was a strong connection between his portfolio and the Housing Management and Function Portfolio.

The establishment of a Flintshire Housing Partnership would close a key gap in partnership arrangements in place within the County and the formation of a Partnership would assist both the County Council and the wider Local Service Board (LSB) to meet their responsibilities. The establishment of a Partnership would create a forum for consultation on a broad range of strategic housing matters including the provision of affordable homes, housing renewal and regeneration and would provide opportunities for constructive dialogue with key representatives of the housing and related sectors active in Flintshire.

The Director emphasised that the membership of the Partnership would be extended to include the key representatives of the housing sector within Flintshire. The proposed membership was set out in paragraph 3.04 of the report and this would include participation from other appropriate organisations where particular expertise may be required. The draft terms of reference was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Executive Member for Environment and Regeneration and Tourism moved the recommendations of the report. He also reported that he would be meeting with the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council following the meeting of the Executive to progress the partnership.

The Chairman in seconding the recommendation referred to the anti-poverty impact in the report and the need to give consideration to affordable housing.

RESOLVED

That the establishment of the Flintshire Housing Partnership be supported.

225. HOUSING RESIDENT WARDENS IN SHELTERED HOUSING

Councillor D. Mackie introduced the Director of Community Services report which presented further work on the implementation of the County Council's recent decision on the practice of contracting resident wardens as service tenants. He reminded the Executive that a previous report had been considered at its meeting on 17th November and had been the subject of a Scrutiny Call-In with further consideration at the Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1st December. This was then considered by the County Council on 17th December and had resolved that "the practice of contracting resident wardens as service tenants is ended, were appropriate, with full consultation on all alternative models of service delivery with Members who are affected".

The Executive Member for Social Services formally moved the recommendations of the report and thanked the Director for a report which clarified any concerns that Members may have had. It was also intended that the sheltered housing wardens role would be developed and improved; that their right to housing be maintained; that residents to have an enhanced service and to expand the service eventually.

The Director of Community Services thanked the Executive Members for their support and emphasised that the report was as a result of a committed team and contained the best professional advice on how to implement the County Council's decision. She reported that there were 69 designated sheltered housing schemes in Flintshire, 43 of which were supported by resident wardens living on site and it was these 43 schemes which now need to be considered in the light of the County Council's decision.

The Director reported that a consultation process would be undertaken and this would be on a scheme by scheme basis to ensure that the needs of each local situation were taken into account. A report on the outcome of the individual scheme consultation would be provided by the respective Neighbourhood Housing Manager. The outcome report would be considered by the Head of Housing and the Executive Member and a decision made on the service model to be followed. The appendix to the report provided a draft policy on defining employees rights to housing following cessation of a service tenancy arrangement; this was being discussed with Human Resources and set out what had been undertaken informally for a number of years.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the approach outlined in the report to the review of service tenancies following consultation as set out in the report be endorsed;
- (b) That the proposed procedure for dealing with housing needs of former service tenants be endorsed; and
- (c) That the Executive receives regular progress reports on the outcomes being achieved.

226. PLAYGROUPS IN FLINTSHIRE

The Chairman of the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor R.P. Macfarlane) presented a report on the findings and recommendations of the Playgroup Funding Task Group. He referred to the work of the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Task Group and the support received from Officers. The report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees Playgroup Funding Task Group was appended to the report and whilst this was shown as “draft” it had in fact been adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Macfarlane referred to the changing role of playgroups and to the benefits to young children who attended them. There was a question over their sustainability as they operated in a number of properties and there was a need for certainty on funding and security of tenure. He had pleasure in moving the recommendations of the report which sought Executive approval to the 12 recommendations contained in the Funding Task Groups report.

The Chairman thanked Members of the Task Group for the work undertaken. The Executive Member for Education and Youth Services also welcomed the report and expressed his appreciation of the work undertaken. He was prepared to accept the recommendations but with a caveat in relation to recommendation (II) to the effect that accommodation charges should not be subsidised through the Youth Service.

The Director of Lifelong Learning recognised the importance of early years education and the recommendations linked with the wider work of the School Modernisation Strategy. The Executive Member for Social Services referred to the role of the Children and Young Peoples Partnership and suggested that the report should be submitted for their perusal and the Director, as Chairman of the Partnership, agreed to undertake this request.

RESOLVED

That the recommendations be approved with a caveat in relation to recommendation (II) to the effect that accommodation charges should not be subsidised through the Youth Service.

227. IMPROVEMENT TARGETS REVIEW

The Executive Member for Corporate Management and Strategy introduced the Chief Executive's report and referred to work undertaken the previous day by the Policy, Performance and Partnership Manager and the Vice Chairman of the People and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor R. Jones) which the Chief Executive would make further reference to.

The Chief Executive explained that the report summarised the current position. He referred to the Annual Letter which had been considered earlier in the meeting which had made reference to business processes and the report set out the reclassification of the Council's Improvement Targets. The following targets were included within the Improvement Agreement with the Welsh Assembly Government and these remain as Improvement Targets and were HLS/010a; SCA/007; SCA/042a and SCA/042b. There was also a need to develop specific action plans with end dates for each improvement target. This was recognised as work in progress.

RESOLVED

That the recommendations be agreed subject to the addition of the words "in a consistent format included in the service plans for 2010/11" at the end of the six bullet points in recommendation (a).

228. MID YEAR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE – SUMMARY

The Chief Executive presented a report for the Executive to receive a mid year overview of the progress of the Strategic Partnerships and the priorities for each of the Strategic Partnerships and the key milestones for the year ahead. The report provided a summary of the aims and achievements and he referred to the Flintshire Housing Partnership considered earlier in the meeting which would be included in future performance reports.

RESOLVED

That the mid year review of the Strategic Partnerships be noted and the key priorities and the work programmes to achieve them be supported.

229. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2009/10 (MONTH 7)

The Head of Finance presented a report which provided the most up to date revenue budget monitoring information at month 7 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account in 2009/10. The details of the month 7 report had been taken into account as a base for the budget proposals for the financial year 2010/11.

Members were asked to note the projected position at month 7 which provided a net overspend of £0.322m for the General Fund which compared to an overspend of £0.260m at month 7. The Housing Revenue Account was showing a net overspend of £0.434m which compared with £0.550m at month 6. Section 3.05

of the report provided details of the risks and assumptions that had been taken into consideration and provided further information on each area.

The Head of Finance referred to un-earmarked reserves and to work on the financial effects of phase 1 of the organisational redesign which had been completed and had resulted in additional requirement of £0.091m from the contingency reserve. Work had also been undertaken to assess the initial impact of the phase 2 reviews that were underway. Based on current information the one off costs identified totalled £0.888m and the efficiencies resulting from these one off costs would be built into the overall base budget from 2010/11 and beyond. It was recommended that an allocation of £0.025m was made to enable a feasibility study to be undertaken in relation to Clwyd Theatr Cymru Service Review. Appendix 6 to the report detailed the movements to date on un-earmarked reserves and the level of contingency sum available for allocation by the Executive. As a result of these movements, the current estimated amount available in the contingency reserve at 31st March 2010 was £0.718m. This reserve was specifically set aside to meet organisational redesign and modernisation of services, Invest to Save initiatives and additional costs on ringfenced and/or volatile budgets.

The Head of Finance referred to the programme of efficiencies and that the 2009/10 budget contained a number of specific efficiencies and an unspecified £1.0m efficiency target. Appendix 8 to the report showed the progress made against the achievement of and inclusive of this target. The total amount of efficiencies to be achieved in 2009/10 was £4.441m of which £4.046m had either already been achieved or was projected to be achieved at this stage. The £4.441m was made up of £2.803m in the original budget and a further £1.638m identified in a report to Executive on 21 April 2009. The £1.638m provided detail of the £1m which was unspecified in the 2009/10 budget plus a further £0.638m of efficiencies. From the remaining efficiencies of £0.395m, £0.274m had been included as a pressure in the budget proposals reported to the Executive on 22nd December, 2009 with the remaining £0.121m of efficiencies deemed achievable in 2010/11 through Service Reviews and other management action. It was explained that the figures in appendix 8 demonstrated that £1m efficiency target had been exceeded by £0.541m in year and this was in the base budget.

The Chief Executive referred to appendix 8 of the report and to the achievement of exceeding £1m efficiency targets. He then referred to the reference to winter maintenance and that the cost of this service would be met with no budget "cap" imposed.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the overall report be noted;
- (b) That the allocation of £0.025m in respect to the Clwyd Theatr Cymru review be approved;
- (c) That the General Fund contingency sum available as at 31st March, 2010 be noted; and

- (d) That the projected final level of balances on the Housing Revenue Account be noted.

230. FLINTSHIRE'S PORTFOLIO PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT – DEVELOPMENTS

The Executive Member for Education and Youth Services introduced the Director of Lifelong Learning's report, on developments with the structure and management of Flintshire's Portfolio Pupil Referral Unit.

The Executive Member referred to the inspection of the Unit in December 2008 and to a number of recommendations which were being addressed and further reports would be made to the Executive in due course but the report made reference to two recommendations which needed to be addressed at this stage. Particular reference was made to inconsistencies in the quality of accommodation identified by the inspection team which were as a result of the closure of the Llwyn Onn site in Holywell and the Referral Unit temporary location to Arosfa, Mold and the inadequacies of the room hired at the Daniel Owen Centre, Mold. The unit had been temporarily relocated to the site of the now closed Ysgol Delyn, Mold pending the Pupil Referral Unit Commissioning Strategy envisaged in the wider School Modernisation Strategy.

The Director of Lifelong Learning referred to the School Modernisation Strategy and work being undertaken to provide adequate environments and the new special schools had provided excellent facilities. Further work was needed for other user groups such as the Pupil Referral Units and this was an interim report before the first Commissioning Strategy was reported.

RESOLVED

That the temporary use of the Ysgol Delyn site as an element of the Flintshire Portfolio Pupil Referral Unit, pending completion of the wider Commissioning Strategy, be approved.

231. NOMINATIONS PROCESSES FOR LEA GOVERNORS

The Executive Member for Education and Youth Services presented the Director of Lifelong Learning's report, the purpose of which was to consider the Nomination Processes for LEA Governor appointments in schools. However, in view of a number of concerns expressed he asked that this report be withdrawn, reviewed and referred to the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration purposes and for a further report to be made back to the Executive in due course.

RESOLVED

That the report be withdrawn, reviewed and referred to the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration purposes.

232. 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 set out below:-

Chief Executive – approval of application to the Community Chest 2009/10 – Round 2.

Lifelong Learning – Greenfield Valley Heritage Park – charges for 2010 season.

Community Services – approval of a temporary post of Accounts Payable and Received Officer to undertake duties arising from the transfer of responsibilities from the former Education, Children’s Services and Recreation Directorate (temporary post pending the outcome of the Corporate Finance Review).

233. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 – TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting to allow the consideration of exempt information by virtue of paragraphs 12 and 15 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

234. NORTH EAST WALES SCHOOLS LIBRARY SERVICE – PROPOSED NEW STAFFING STRUCTURE

The Executive Member for Education and Youth Services presented the Director of Lifelong Learning’s report which advised on the need to restructure the North East Wales School Library Service and to seek approval to declare two posts redundant and to create one new post.

RESOLVED

- (a) That authority be given to the proposal to restructure the North East Wales Schools Library Service as outlined in the report;
- (b) That approval be given to declare two posts redundant; and
- (c) That approval be given to create one new post.

235. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and ended at 11.05 am.

236. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were two members of the press 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: 5th JANUARY 2010
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MEMBER	ITEM	MIN. NO. REFERS
NO DECLARATIONS WERE MADE		