

EXECUTIVE
16 NOVEMBER 2010

Minutes of the meeting of the Executive of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 16 November 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor A. Woolley (Chairman)

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors: K. Armstrong-Braun, J.B. Attridge, S.R. Baker, J.C. Cattermoul, A.J. Davies-Cooke, F. Gilmore, P.G. Heesom, R.B. Jones, D.I. Mackie, C.A. Thomas and A.P. Shotton.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Director of Environment, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Legal & Democratic Services, Head of Finance, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, Head of ICT & Customer Services, Head of Development and Resources and Committee Officer.

133. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 19 October 2010 were confirmed.

Matters Arising

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB)

The Executive Member for Social Services commented that she had understood that Mary Burrows, Chief Executive of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, was providing a written response to the questions raised during the meeting. Councillor Woolley said that a set of questions had also been put forward by Councillor H.J. McGuill and she had sought an assurance that answers would be provided. The Chief Executive advised that Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board was to provide a further presentation to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and he expected that comparable questions would be raised again. He expected that an overall written response would be provided following the meeting.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Tourism expressed concerns over the shortfall of hospital beds in Holywell, Ruthin and the Royal Alex in Rhyl. He also highlighted the difficulties experienced by patients and their families when people were moved from one hospital to another. The Chief Executive advised that the matters raised would be added to the list of questions to be forwarded to the BCUHB.

134. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Executive Member for Leisure and Health and Safety declared a personal non-prejudicial interest on agenda item number 13, Transport to Denominational Schools.

135. VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman indicated that there would be a change in the order of the agenda and the item on Transport to Denominational Schools would be brought forward.

136. TRANSPORT TO DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS

Councillor R.P. Macfarlane introduced the report which sought to propose an amendment to the school transport policy to provide free travel to faith schools only for those pupils who could demonstrate an adherence to the denominational faith of the school in question. He referred to the work of the School and College Transport Review Task Group which had been set up to review educational transport issues and proposed the recommendations contained in the report.

The Executive Member for Education referred to the alternative recommendations which had been distributed to Members. He proposed that the alternative recommendations were considered by the Executive and thanked the Task and Finish Group for their work which would assist with the ongoing work of the School Transport Policy. Councillor R.P. Macfarlane supported the alternative recommendations which had been put forward.

The Executive Member for Leisure and Health and Safety left the meeting whilst a vote was taken on the proposed alternative recommendations.

The Director of Lifelong Learning paid tribute to the work of the Task and Finish Group which had addressed a number of issues concerning equitability, legality and denominational entitlement. He referred to the sustainability of the present transport policy and advised that it was envisaged that the wider School Transport Policy would be submitted to a meeting of the Executive in December. He continued that after initial consideration it would be followed by an assessment of recommendations from the regional transport policy review currently underway, a period of consultation with all stakeholders on the proposed changes, and a further report on the outcome of consultation to be considered prior to final decisions being taken.

The Executive Member for Leisure and Health and Safety returned to the meeting.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Transport Task and Finish Group be thanked for their work and recommendations in relation to denominational transport;
- (b) That the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group for denominational transport be considered with other aspects of transport policy entitlement as part of a wider policy review; and
- (c) That a further report on School Transport Policy be brought forward to set out the terms for further work.

137. ALTERNATIVE LANDLORD MODEL

The Executive Member for Housing proposed that the item be referred to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration and that any recommendations arising then be submitted to a special meeting of the Executive prior to final submission to County Council on 7 December. The Executive Member for Social Services seconded the proposal.

The Chief Executive referred to the work of the Landlord Choice Working Group which had unanimously recommended to the Housing Ballot Project Board that the principle features of the alternative landlord should be as outlined in the report. He referred to the project plan agreed with the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and Deputy Minister for Housing and advised that the model that had been put forward was supported by all concerned.

RESOLVED

That the item be deferred pending consideration by the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

138. PROPOSAL TO EXTEND THE CLWYDIAN RANGE AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Tourism introduced a report which informed Members of the proposed extension of the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its current ongoing consultation. He advised that the Countryside Council for Wales was currently considering whether to extend the Clwydian range south-wards to include Ruabon Mountain, Esclusham Mountain, Llantysilio Mountain, the Vale of Llangollen and parts of the Dee Valley. The proposal did not extend further into Flintshire but the Authority and Denbighshire County Council worked in partnership to manage the area.

The Chief Executive supported the proposal and agreed that this would potentially enhance the development of tourism in Flintshire.

RESOLVED

That the consultation and the principle of extending the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty be supported.

139. PERSONAL STATEMENT

The Leader invited the Executive Member for Regeneration and Tourism to make a personal statement regarding Headland Foods in Flint. The Member said that he considered it appropriate, in view of recent press coverage, to refer to the significant number of staff redundancies which had been proposed at Headland Foods. He referred to discussions which had taken place between the Regeneration Officers and JobCentre Plus to ensure that all relevant processes were in place and reported that he would be meeting with the Chief Executive to offer further support to the workforce.

140. CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY 2010 – 2013 – PROGRESS REPORT

The Head of ICT and Customer Services provided Members with an update on the progress made towards the implementation of the Customer Service Strategy. He provided background information and referred to the Flintshire Futures programme which took an overview of projects that had been identified as a priority in order to release efficiencies. He advised that whilst an action plan for the Customer Service Strategy had been prepared, in some cases the Flintshire Futures programme now drove the implementation of the Strategy and set the priorities. He gave an overview of the Flintshire Futures projects which were detailed in the report and which would contribute to the implementation of the Customer Service Strategy and be given priority.

In summary the Head of ICT and Customer Services advised that updates would be submitted to the Executive on a quarterly basis.

RESOLVED

That the priority projects identified to implement the Customer Service Strategy, taking account of Flintshire Futures and national projects, be endorsed.

141. PROPOSED MERGER OF FLINTSHIRE AND WREXHAM LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARDS

The Executive Member for Social Services presented a report to brief Members of the proposed merger of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) of Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council and to seek approval for the merge and for the intention to recommend Flintshire as the host for the joint board.

The Executive Member for Social Services asked Members to support the recommendations outlined in the report. She explained the reason for the merger which had developed following inspection of all LSCBs in Wales in 2009 when the self assessment and inspection of the Flintshire LSCB highlighted

areas of concern for the Board's operation. She reported that meetings had been held involving officers of each local authority and partner agencies and the intention was to move to a joint LSCB in April 2011.

The Chief Executive expressed his support for the proposed merger and referred to the potential benefits of a joint Board and the efficiencies for funding, capacity and resources which would be achieved.

RESOLVED

- (a) That work progresses on the merger of the two Boards and an update is brought to Executive in due course to report on progress;
- (b) That Flintshire acts as lead authority for this arrangement to share the load with our neighbouring authority; and
- (c) Collaborative arrangements across local authority borders should lead to efficiencies of funding, capacity and time. That the new Board considers how such efficiencies are to be achieved and quantified.

142. TRAFFIC CALMING

The Executive Member for Environment introduced a report to seek Member approval for a policy on the provision of new traffic calming measures and a method of dealing with concerns raised regarding existing traffic calming schemes.

The Executive Member referred to some level of dissatisfaction in certain communities over the current provision of traffic calming measures. He commented that the Authority's commitment to review those schemes for which complaints had been received provided an opportunity to consider if any changes could be recommended to the traffic calming measures and layout at particular sites to maintain an appropriate, effective and acceptable road safety solution.

RESOLVED

That the proposed Policy be adopted.

143. ENERGY POLICY UPDATE

The Executive Member for Environment introduced a report to request Executive approval for the Updated Energy Policy and Action Plan 2010. He advised that adoption of the Energy Policy and Action Plan would reinforce the ongoing energy awareness campaign message and with solid foundations for energy saving and carbon reduction already in place it was considered unlikely that there would be additional costs in the future. He also highlighted the £112k which was saved from the energy revenue budget for public buildings last year.

The Director of Environment advised that the revisions to the Energy Policy and Action Plans had been specifically designed to address the challenges identified in the four elements of the Carbon Reduction Strategy and referred to good housekeeping across the Council, Energy Efficiency, investment in energy saving measures in Asset Management, and Renewable Energy. He commented that Asset Management was a key part of the Flintshire Futures Programme and referred to the rationalisation and better use of buildings.

RESOLVED

That the Energy Policy and Action Plan 2010 be approved.

144. ADOPTION OF THE SHORELINE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2

The Executive Member for Environment presented the report to formally adopt the North West England and North Wales Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) review (SMP2) which set the Management Policy for Flintshire's coastline for the next hundred years.

The Director of Environment reported that the original SMP was undertaken over ten years ago and this first review commenced in 2008. He advised that Flintshire was part of the Coastal Cell 11, which ran from the Great Ormes Head Llandudno to the Solway Firth in the Scottish Borders and Flintshire's coastline within this process extended from Gronant to Saltney. He reported that Blackpool Council had been the Lead Authority in the SMP2 process on behalf of the Coastal Authorities within Cell 11. He continued that the SMP2, which had been undertaken in stages, gave four possible policy options which were outlined in the report. He also advised that set out in Appendix B to the report were the recommendations for the areas of shoreline throughout Flintshire.

In conclusion the Director of Environment advised that the adoption of the SMP2 would enable the Council to continue to apply for Grant Aid from the Welsh Assembly for Flood and Coastal Protection Schemes. It would also enable the Council to deliver sustainable development, flood and coastal erosion risk management over the long term.

RESOLVED

That the Shoreline Management Plan 2 for the coastline of Flintshire be adopted.

145. WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2009-10

The Executive Member for Education presented the Council's Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report for 2009-10 and the response of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to the report. He advised that the Council's submission was attached as Appendix A and the WAG response as Appendix B to the report.

The Executive Member for Education provided background information and advised that the Council had achieved 11 of the 14 Standards in full and was partly achieving a further 2 Standards. He continued that the WAG assessment of the Performance Indicators noted improved or largely sustained performance by the Council over the last year, and in comparison with other authorities. The Authority also performed well in terms of investment in stock and the assessment had commended the Authority on its planning and scrutiny processes and steady improvement in 2009/10. Members were informed that the average number of Standards being met by Welsh library authorities was 9. The Executive Member for Education expressed his congratulations to the Head of Libraries, Culture and Heritage and team on a commendable outcome despite the challenges presented through reduced staffing.

The Director of Lifelong Learning reiterated the comments expressed by the Executive Member and reported on the high level of achievement gained by the Library Service in Flintshire. Members were asked to approve the Welsh Public Library Standards Report for 2009/10 and endorse the proposal outlined in 3.03 of the report to enable the Council to continue to improve its performance against the Standards.

The Chief Executive commented that in times of economic pressure there will be expectations from National Government and regulators that will present a challenge. Therefore the flexibility to perform at a lower level and continue to provide a good standard of public service was essential and commendable.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Welsh Public Library Standards Report for 2009-10 was approved and the response of the Welsh Assembly Government noted; and
- (b) That the proposal outlined in 3.03 of the report to enable the Council to improve its performance against the Standards be endorsed

146. DRAFT PLAY STRATEGY

The Executive Member for Leisure Health and Safety introduced a report to invite Members to authorise the attached draft Play Strategy documents for the purposes of consultation. He drew Members' attention to page 238 in the draft play strategy and the reference to "managing risks not eliminating them all." He referred to the benefits to children's development of play and the need for children and young people to have adventurous play experiences. He also referred to objective 6.1 on page 241 of the draft strategy which related to risk management for play across the County.

The Director of Lifelong Learning reported that Flintshire was fortunate to have a number of play settings and services that were recognised as models of good practice. He advised that with the new Play Strategy it was intended to build on this success and ensure that Flintshire remained a front-

runner in the development and provision of play. He made reference to asset management, investment, and training and development for playworkers. He advised that the draft Play Strategy documents would form the basis for wide consultation until the end of February 2011 and that a further report would be submitted to Members in Spring 2011. He continued that a report on the Play Survey would be submitted to a meeting of the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December.

RESOLVED

That the Play Strategy documents as the basis for consultation and a subsequent report back be approved.

147. TARGET SETTING REVIEW

The Executive Member for Corporate Management presented a report to re-endorse the way in which targets are set and used to measure the performance of services against performance indicators. He drew attention to the review of targets in November and advised that it would include consideration of the 'in-year' target for 2010/11, a provisional target for 2011/12, and a longer term 'aspirational' target where applicable such as for national standards. The Executive Member also reminded Members that a Corporate Resources Workshop would be held on 22 November, to consider target setting.

The Chief Executive referred to areas which required some further improvement. He commented that the workshop was an important part of the process outlined in the report and on the need to challenge the targets set to ensure they were stringent enough and gave an indication of the Authority's current performance. He advised that a further report would be submitted to the Executive in January.

The Chief Executive advised that the Council was currently finalising the Outcome Agreement with the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) which included some additional targets for improvement. The Chief Executive advised that the final Outcome Agreement would be submitted to WAG by the end of December and any additional targets for improvement would be reported in the New Year. The Outcome Agreement would replace the current Improvement Agreement which was forecast to attract a final year performance-related grant of £1.482M in 2010/11. The Outcome Agreement was likely to continue to attract similar levels of funding.

RESOLVED

That the systematic and disciplined approach to target setting and reporting be endorsed.

148. COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL SERVICE BOARD – MID YEAR REVIEW

The Executive Member for Corporate Management introduced a report to seek endorsement of the work of the Flintshire Local Service Board.

The Chief Executive provided background information and reported that a Scrutiny Committee had been set up and would receive regular reports regarding regional working in North Wales. He referred to the work of the Flintshire Local Service Board and advised that carbon reduction and the impact of poverty within the County had been identified as key issues to be addressed collectively. He also made reference to the complex and specialised work being undertaken in relation to the strategic partnership governance framework.

The Chief Executive referred to the North Wales Partnerships Review and the work in progress. He explained that the Review was seeking to determine a vision for partnership working across North Wales with a commitment to saving management time, reducing the number of meetings and considering more regional engagement at a strategic level whilst focussing local interaction on operational delivery.

RESOLVED

That the work of the Local Service Board as outlined in the report be supported and endorsed.

149. COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2011 – 12

The Head of Finance presented a report to approve the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2011-12. She explained that as the provisional local government settlement would be published later this year due to the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Assembly would incorporate the Council Tax base information in the provisional settlement as opposed to the final settlement. She reported that the deadline for submitting the information to the Assembly had been brought forward to 10 November.

The Head of Finance advised that the Council Tax Base for 2011-12 was shown in the appendix to the report and indicated an overall increase of 0.27% which was a marginal increase on the previous year but within the financial parameters that the Authority had been planning for sometime.

To provide further clarification the Chief Executive advised that the information provided was about the property base and not the Council Tax rate which was set by the Authority.

RESOLVED

That the Tax Base of 60,692 chargeable Band 'D' equivalent properties (as shown in Appendix A) for 2011-12 be approved.

150. MATRIX CONTRACT UPDATE (MANAGED AGENCY STAFF SOLUTION)

The Executive Member for Corporate Management introduced a report to provide an update on the contract for the provision of agency workers. The report identified quarter 2 of 2010-11 savings and provided further information on the development of procedures to maximise efficiencies and improve practice in relation to the use of agency workers.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development provided background information. She referred to the revised process for the extension of temporary agency staff beyond 6 months and reported that there was a decreasing trend based on last year and that the numbers of agency staff who had been in the organisation for longer than 6 months had decreased since the last quarter. However, this was an area which still required ongoing consideration.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development gave an overview of the measures which had been implemented to improve efficiencies and achieve direct and indirect cost savings. She referred to the further options which were being explored to improve practice in relation to the use of agency workers, reduce costs, and maximise savings for the Authority. She advised Members of the projected savings approved for the financial year 2010-11 and the net savings for the second quarter.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development referred to the statistical information provided in the report regarding the number of agency workers, and length of placements by Directorate. She said that further work was to be undertaken corporately and by Directorates to ensure that agency workers were used only for limited periods, and that only true temporary opportunities were filled using this method. She advised that employees who were at risk of redundancy must be given the opportunity to be considered for any vacant posts to mitigate and avoid compulsory redundancies. In conclusion she reported that a further update on progress on this work would be provided in the next quarterly report.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted and the approaches being taken to manage the use of agency workers more closely and to explore further options for increasing efficiency savings for Flintshire be endorsed.

151. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS

An information report on the actions taken under delegated powers was submitted.

The actions taken were as set out below:-

Chief Executive's

- Welsh Church Acts Fund 2010/11 – 5/10/2010

Finance

- Business Rates Write Offs 2009/10

Environment

- Disposal of 147 Metres of Land by Lease for Purpose of the Eirgrid Interconnector
- Procurement of Traffic Signal Maintenance Contract

RESOLVED

That the actions taken under delegated powers be noted.

152. 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 for the following items by virtue of exempt information under the paragraphs 12 and 15 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

153. CORPORATE SERVICES ADMINISTRATION REVIEW

The Head of ICT and Customer Services presented a report to update Members on the progress of the Corporate Services Administration review and the intention to commence consultation with those employees effected by phase two of the review in line with the Council's Organisational Change and Redundancy Policy.

Referring to the purpose of the Administration review the Head of ICT and Customer Services advised that the outcome of phase one had produced a new service model which reflected the needs of services based on the tasks and services to be provided in the future. He reported that the model introduced had the potential to be applied to other Directorates within the Authority. He explained that Job Design and staffing had been the focus of phase two where the project team had considered the skills, knowledge and experience required to implement the new service model. He informed Members that job descriptions and person specifications had been created for new posts in the service model and Job Evaluation Questionnaires had been submitted to the Single Status Team for evaluation. He advised that consultation with staff and Trade Union colleagues had been undertaken and was ongoing. The outcome of the review would reduce the size of the current workforce and the change would be managed within the Council's Organisational Change and Redundancy Policy.

The Chief Executive commented that the Review was a good example for the improvement of administrative practice in general across the Authority. He referred to the importance of taking time to ensure that such initiatives

were conducted thoroughly to achieve lasting change, improve efficiency and remove duplication within the Authority.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the progress of the Corporate Services Administration review be noted; and
- (b) That the outcomes to date, including the potential for redundancy, be endorsed.

154. FINANCE FUNCTION REVIEW PHASE 2

The Head of Finance presented a report to advise Members of the outcome of the Finance Function Review (FFR) Phase 2 and to seek support for revised service models for the four functions within the Finance Division and approval of revised staffing structures in each area. Members were also asked to consider the outcomes of the consultation on the FFR service models by Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny (Corporate Finance, Revenues and Benefits Reviews), Audit Committee and the Clwyd Pension Fund Panel and with Staff and Trade Unions. Members were also advised of the recommendations from the Audit Committee to draw up a contract to be let for the management of Internal Audit from 1 April 2011 for two years, with the option to extend for one year.

The Head of Finance provided background information and advised that the new Senior Management Structure for the Finance Division was shown in Appendix 1 of the report. She reported that the Phase 2 Review had considered the resources, capacity and capability to deliver the full range of financial services across the Council to meet current and future needs and advised that the aims and objectives of the Review had been achieved.

The Head of Finance explained that consultation on all of the proposed service models had been undertaken with staff and Trade Unions and they had been considered in the relevant Member forums. She commented that a high level of support had been received for the proposals. In summary she referred to the total efficiency savings achieved in Finance through Phases 1 and 2 and reported that, subject to Members' approval of the service models and staffing structure, work would be undertaken with Human Resources to implement the proposals. She advised that the Finance Division would continue to seek further efficiencies to contribute to the current target of £29M of efficiency savings to be achieved by the Authority in the next three years.

The Chief Executive commented on the thoroughness and inclusiveness of the Review which had been well supported by all the groups involved. The Chief Executive provided clarification to the Executive Member for Environment on a query raised relating to the proposals for the Pension Administration Section.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the proposals for the revised service models and staffing structures for the four functions within the Finance Division be approved;
- (b) That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Finance in conjunction with the Executive Member for Finance to make minor amendments to the structure following consultation with staff and the outcomes of implementation and post implementation review; and
- (c) That the timetable for the tender for the management of Internal Audit be noted.

155. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 9.30am and ended at 11.30a.m.

156. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were 3 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: 16 NOVEMBER 2010
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MEMBER	ITEM	MIN. NO. REFERS
NO DECLARATIONS WERE MADE		