

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
12 SEPTEMBER 2012

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Wednesday, 12 September 2012

PRESENT: Councillor Matt Wright (Chairman)

Councillors Haydn Bateman, Peter Curtis, Chris Dolphin, David Evans, Veronica Gay, Cindy Hinds, Joe Johnson, Colin Legg, Nancy Matthews, Paul Shotton and Carolyn Thomas

SUBSTITUTES: Councillors Ian Dunbar (for Ann Minshull) and Mike Reece (for Derek Butler)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Dennis Hutchinson.

ALSO PRESENT: Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Finance and the Cabinet Member for Social Services

CONTRIBUTORS: Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Environment, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Leisure, Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Waste & Recycling, Director of Environment, Head of Regeneration, Interim Public Protection Manager and Economic Development Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor C.A. Thomas declared a personal interest in the following agenda items due to her involvement with the Flintshire Rural Partnership and Cadwyn Clwyd, not as a representative of the County Council.

- Agenda Item 5 - Town Centre Action Planning
- Agenda Item 6 - Quarter 1 Performance Reports 2012/13 (Planning)

23. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2012 had been circulated with the agenda.

Matters Arising

North Wales Residual Waste Treatment Project - the Chairman reported on the postponement of the suggested seminar due to Jasper Roberts from the Welsh Government being unavailable and said that this would be re-arranged.

RESOLVED:

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

24. HANSON CEMENT INVESTIGATION REPORT

The Chairman welcomed Mr Andrew Jones and Ms Jackie James, Executive Director and Principal Practitioner of Public Health Wales, to the meeting and invited them to deliver a presentation on the Hanson Cement Investigation Report.

Mr. Jones outlined the background to the report and the investigation methods used to ensure thorough examination of all data prior to the sharing of results which showed no convincing evidence that Hanson Cement had harmed the local community's health. He went on to refer to engagement with local communities and representatives throughout the process and said that recommendations made by Public Health Wales had been accepted by the local Health Board.

Councillor C.A. Thomas expressed her concerns about the higher levels of cancer diagnoses in some areas of the county but acknowledged that other issues such as healthy eating also had an effect on health. Councillor C. Hinds thanked Mr. Jones for the report and welcomed the informative and detailed meetings on this matter which had taken place and in particular, the technical experts who had been present.

Mr. Jones stressed the importance of openness and honesty in any industrial process, adding that Hanson Cement had been co-operative throughout the investigation. He spoke of the importance of involving community representatives and said that Public Health Wales would continue to work with Local Authorities to help people understand the range of lifestyle choices which could impact on health.

On air quality regulation standards, Councillor W.P. Shotton asked if particulate matter standards below PM_{2.5} had been looked at. The Leader of the Council, who was present in the public gallery, asked if it was the case that there were no regulations in the UK which monitored/assessed data on particulate matter below PM₁₀ and asked if this had been done as part of the investigation.

Mr. Jones was aware that some of the technical reports had included data on very small particles to ascertain air quality and what would contribute to this, for example local industry and transport. He agreed to seek a response from the technical experts and provide a response separately to identify where the information was located within the report.

The Chairman highlighted the extensive consultation process and said that lessons could be learned from this. In speaking about the role of the Committee, he said that the report had been brought at a late stage and referred to the potential for earlier involvement. Mr. Jones said that this could be reflected on. In response to a question from the Chairman, Mr. Jones spoke of the difficulty in drawing comparisons with other cement sites due to different scenarios, however the information had been widely publicised.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the presentation be noted; and
- (b) That the Executive Director of Public Health Wales provide a response to the question on particulate matter standards below PM₁₀.

25. TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLANNING

The Head of Regeneration delivered a presentation on the Flintshire Town Action Plan Programme and drew attention to a range of information on display on a sample of forthcoming events/activities.

He made reference to the decline in town centres across the UK and the increasing number of shops closing, a situation which was not unique to Flintshire. This was recognised by the Council as a strategic risk and challenge and would need to be addressed by a long-term programme of actions. The Economic Development Manager went on to detail progress and outcomes to date, giving examples of a number of 'quick win' and longer term projects, together with future actions aimed to attract investment and generate interest.

Councillor P.J. Curtis wished to thank the Regeneration team and in particular, Clare and Mike Madders who had helped to make the recent Well Inn Festival in Holywell such a success. He said that the positive feedback had generated interest in a similar event next year and that even small amounts of funding were welcomed. He also commented that more could be done to boost markets in Holywell.

In response to a question from Councillor N.M. Matthews about the sharing of good practice, the Economic Development Manager said that Town Centre Manager meetings during the year and the Regeneration Conference in February provided opportunities for this.

Councillor C.A. Thomas asked if residents had been surveyed to ascertain what types of shops were required and whether there was potential for shops to be let on a short-term basis prior to leasing. She also stressed the need for consultation with residents to establish what they needed and for Rural Development Plan (RDP) grant funding to be utilised.

The Head of Regeneration said that residents were consulted and agreed that events put forward by communities were more likely to succeed: this was a sustainable approach which would continue to be taken.

In response to comments by Councillor C. Legg on bus operators in Flintshire and the need for clear bus routes to market towns, the Chairman pointed out that transport issues were due to be considered by the Committee in January 2013. The Director of Environment advised that a national review of services and grant funding was being undertaken which included the Local Transport Services Grant and Bus Services Operators' Grant and that following a Ministerial decision in October 2012 the Council would need to review the changes to grants to ensure best value for services. He welcomed involvement

by the Committee in the Council's review and agreed that work with bus operators could help to improve clarity of bus timetables.

Councillor V. Gay commented on the lack of partnership working in Saltney and felt that the Pathfinder project had not proved value for money, also remarking on bus services in Saltney. The Head of Regeneration said that resources were aimed at tackling eight town centres in Flintshire and would discuss further outstanding ward issues with Councillor Gay outside the meeting.

Councillor G.H. Bateman asked about the maintenance of projects such as the Queensferry roundabout and cycle route from Mold to Flint, commenting on the condition of the latter. The Director of Environment explained that initiatives introduced would be maintained to ensure sustainability and incorporated into the Streetscene regime. He agreed to liaise with the Head of Streetscene on the comment about the cycle route and asked that any similar issues be reported. In relation to the coastal path and in particular the Dock Road area in Connah's Quay, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment spoke of the need for a joint approach between Regeneration and Streetscene.

Councillor P.J. Curtis gave information on the appointment of a new Community Support Officer in Holywell in place of a Town Centre Manager and Councillor A.I. Dunbar raised concerns about the empty shops on the 'Deeside strip'. The Director of Environment said that a recently held meeting with Deeside Councillors had been set up to look at initiatives in the area and possible links with the Enterprise Zone.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Leisure spoke of strategic policy to meet the needs of local people and his continued willingness to meet with local communities to discuss any concerns. Responding to a question by the Chairman, the Director of Environment referred to previous discussion by the Committee on a 'Local Asset Backed Vehicle' and agreed to discuss with the current administration with a possible report to the Committee at a later stage.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the progress in developing and implementing Town Action Plans across Flintshire be noted;
- (b) That the Director of Environment progress Councillor Bateman's comment on the cycle route with the Head of Streetscene; and
- (c) That the Director of Environment discuss the option for a Local Asset Backed Vehicle, with the current administration.

26. QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORTS 2012/13

The Committee considered the 2012/13 Quarter 1 service performance reports produced at the Head of Service level under the adopted business model of the Council. The position of the Strategic Assessment of Risks and Challenges (SARC) and progress made against the Improvement Targets were also contained within the performance reports.

The Heads of Service for Regeneration and Public Protection each gave a short presentation on the performance within each of the service areas, outlining work which had been undertaken to improve performance and areas where improvement was needed, as outlined within each report.

Regeneration

Following a comment by Councillor W.P. Shotton, the Director of Environment stated that the £750,000 funding from the Welsh Government (WG) was for human resources and ancillary related work to help deprived communities with initiatives aimed at improving their health, welfare and employment opportunities and could not be spent on town centre action initiatives.

Councillor C.J. Dolphin asked what was being done to help rural areas and Councillor C.A. Thomas asked if officers would consider transport from rural areas to business parks. The Head of Regeneration said that the Rural Development Plan had delivered Business Plan 1 and was on track with Business Plan 2, as detailed in the report, and noted the latter comment.

Councillor P.J. Curtis said that the role of Communities First was to assist communities to help themselves and raised concerns about the attitude of some Members towards Communities First officers.

In relation to Enterprise Zones, the Chairman suggested that advantage should be taken of any investment opportunities. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Leisure suggested that the Committee may wish to invite Askar Sheibani, the Chairman of the Enterprise Zone Board for Deeside, to a future meeting to explain more about the subject.

Public Protection

During his presentation, the Interim Public Protection Manager gave an update on the vacant posts within the section, reporting on the recent appointment of a temporary Trading Standards Officer and Environmental Health Officer. The remaining vacant posts had not yet been filled due to difficulties in attracting qualified candidates, however these would be resolved around the end of the year.

The Interim Public Protection Manager agreed to respond separately to queries by Councillor C. Hinds on warranty repairs to Rofft Development housing in Penyffordd and whether a service was provided for the treatment of hornets' nests.

In response to a question by Councillor P.J. Curtis on the Holywell Task Group, it was noted that the forthcoming location of the mobile stadium at the old bowling green would not be permanent.

Councillor W.P. Shotton called for joint working with Wirral and the Environment Agency Wales to support cockling licence holders. When asked if there had been any convictions to date, the Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Waste & Recycling replied that there had been three in the current

season and that more resources were required in Wirral to ensure that only licence holders were active.

Councillor Thomas requested information on legislation relating to the burning of items in gardens. She commented on the filling of vacant posts in Environmental Health as asked about the possibility of employing apprentices to train as Environmental Health Officers. The request was noted and in relation to the latter, the Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Waste & Recycling spoke of the difficulty as Single Status had not yet been implemented. He agreed with career progression of internal candidates to ensure that graduates remained with the Council and the Director added that this was also a broader Council initiative.

Councillor A.I. Dunbar asked about the scattering of ashes in a garden of remembrance at Connah's Quay Cemetery. The Interim Public Protection Manager referred to consultation on this for Hawarden Cemetery which would be replicated for other areas.

In response to a request by Councillor V. Gay for a progress update on pollution issues at River Lane in Saltney, the Director of Environment agreed that this would be reported back to her.

Planning

The Director of Environment agreed to forward to Councillor D. Evans a copy of the Green Infrastructure action plan for the Lower River Dee.

Following concerns by Councillor C. Hinds on enforcement outcomes, the Director acknowledged the need to keep Members informed wherever possible at an appropriate stage of the process. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment encouraged Members to report to him any planning enforcement issues to enable him to pursue a response.

In response to a query raised by Councillor G.H. Bateman on the Mold Flood Alleviation Scheme, the latest position on development proposals had been reported at Mold Town Council and public meetings during early Summer. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment went on to say that planning applications on a proposed scheme would be submitted at a later stage.

Councillor N.M. Matthews asked what was being done to attract new small businesses into buildings owned by the Council and the potential for offering a period of reduced rent and Councillor V. Gay felt that the process of transferring leases was too lengthy. The Director explained that this issue covered Assets and Estates and that a report on Community Asset Transfers was due to be submitted to Cabinet for community related groups, including social enterprises, to take on buildings. He went on to explain that the Council had a large industrial estate on which lettings generated a significant percentage return on its value and that the Council's estates were actively managed. The Chairman pointed out that the Council's estates and assets had been identified as an item to be scheduled into the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance spoke about the Council's recognition to be proactive in supporting valued community groups wherever

possible, which would feed into the Improvement Priorities to be set later in the year.

The Director agreed to pass on thanks expressed by Councillor Dunbar to the officer who had helped secure Heritage Lottery funding to enhance Wepre Park.

Streetscene

The Chairman wished to thank Streetscene officers who had volunteered at short notice to help respond to calls following the heavy rainfall in on 29 April 2012 and also commented on the excellent work in clearing gutters.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the Environment & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator collate the comments made by Members and forward them to the Performance Unit and Directorate;
- (c) That the Facilitator pursue the suggestion for the Chairman of the Enterprise Zone Board for Deeside to attend a future meeting of the Committee;
- (d) That the Interim Public Protection Manager provide a response to Councillor Hinds on the treatment of hornets' nests and social housing in Penyffordd;
- (e) That the Director of Environment report back to Councillor Gay on progress with issues at River Lane in Saltney;
- (f) That the Director of Environment forward to Councillor D. Evans a copy of the Green Infrastructure action plan for the Lower River Dee; and
- (g) That the Director of Environment pass on Members' thanks to officers.

27. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Facilitator introduced the report which gave Members the opportunity to consider and update the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

Members' attention was drawn to the minutes of the Forward Work Programme workshop on 3 July 2012 which were attached to the report and included some items yet to be scheduled.

The Facilitator advised that the workshop on street lighting was to be arranged and had previously written to the Committee giving details of the workshop on Civil Parking Enforcement to be held on 5 October 2012.

The Chairman reported on the forthcoming departure from the Council of the Facilitator, Samantha Roberts, and on behalf of the Committee expressed

thanks for her efforts in her role on the Committee. This was echoed by Members who passed on their best wishes.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be amended on the basis outlined above.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.30 pm)

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Chairman