

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 JUNE 2013

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, 26 June 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Matt Wright (Chairman)

Councillors Derek Butler, Peter Curtis, Chris Dolphin, David Evans, Veronica Gay, Cindy Hinds, Ray Hughes, Joe Johnson, Colin Legg, Nancy Matthews and Paul Shotton

SUBSTITUTES:

Councillors: George Hardcastle for Haydn Bateman and Ian Dunbar for Ann Minshull

APOLOGY:

Councillor Carolyn Thomas.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors: Jim Falshaw and Carolyn Thomas

CONTRIBUTORS:

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Director of Environment and Head of Assets and Transportation

Head of Streetscene and Head of Planning for minute number 12

Acting Engineering Service Manager and Project Engineer for minute number 13

Traffic Services Manager for minute number 14

Head of Regeneration for minute number 15

IN ATTENDANCE:

Housing and Learning Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

No declarations of interest were made.

11. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 May 2013 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

The Chairman suggested that the bullet points before the resolution on page 7 be amended to read:-

- DVD – to promote what Flintshire had to offer for tourism
- Gladstone Library – a major attribute of great interest

Councillor Paul Shotton also suggested that the following bullet point on page 7 be amended to read:-

- Linking paths – links from coastal paths to other major paths in particular the Heritage Trail leading through to Wepre Park

RESOLVED:

That subject to the suggested amendments, the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12. QUARTER 4 AND YEAR END SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORTS

The Chairman introduced a report to request that the Committee consider the 2012/13 Quarter 4/Year End service performance reports, note the draft year end position of the Strategic Assessment of Risks and Challenges (SARC) and note the performance made against the Improvement Targets contained within the performance report.

Streetscene

The Head of Streetscene gave a short presentation on the performance within Streetscene, outlining work which had been undertaken to improve performance and areas where improvement was needed, as outlined within the report.

Councillor Paul Shotton referred to the benefits of Saturday collections and asked whether the number of missed collections had reduced. He welcomed the work on the resurfacing programme. He also referred to Environment Visual Audits (EVA) and in explaining that he had attended two in his ward, queried whether all wards were participating in EVAs. The Head of Streetscene responded that missed collection rates had improved dramatically and the rate was now 30 to 40 per 100,000 collections which was less than half the national average. On the issue of EVAs, he said that most wards had had at least one and that he would provide information on where EVAs had occurred and where they had not.

Councillor Ian Dunbar said that his residents had asked for their thanks to be passed on for the reduction in missed collections. He also welcomed the improvement in the answering of calls to the contact centre. In response to a query from Councillor Dunbar on whether Community Payback was a new initiative, the Head of Streetscene said that work on graffiti cleaning had always been undertaken as part of the scheme but it had been extended to cover other areas such as cleaning unadopted roads. Councillor Derek Butler asked if consideration could be given to using people on Community Payback to clear the gardens of elderly Council tenants.

Councillor Chris Dolphin asked that his thanks be passed on to Dan Arden, Harvey Mitchell and Ian Williams for their work. He raised concern about the lack of resurfacing in Whitford and the problems faced by the residents of Holywell due to the change of day in their recycling collections to a Saturday. He also felt that some areas required additional gully cleaning as problems had occurred when they overflowed. In response, the Head of Streetscene explained that all roads in Flintshire were inspected for required resurfacing works to ensure that the worst affected areas were resurfaced first and added that a further review

would be undertaken in September or October 2013. On the issue of gully cleaning, he said that all gullies were cleaned on an annual basis but asked that Members let him know of any specific areas that they felt were a problem. The number of areas having Saturday collections was increasing but it would be managed and would be phased to enable it to be reviewed following its implementation. Maps detailing collections for all areas of Flintshire were on display at Alltami Depot and the Head of Streetscene explained that if Members wanted to see them they could call to arrange a visit.

Councillor George Hardcastle welcomed the report and the reduction in the number of missed collections in his ward. In response to a query from Councillor Hardcastle, the Head of Streetscene said that a demonstration of devices to identify assisted collections had been carried out at the previous meeting of the Committee. He asked Members to let him know if problems were still being experienced by residents. Councillor Hardcastle also asked why the risks for CD07 (Depot Review) and CD27a (Waste Management Targets not met) had increased. The Head of Streetscene explained that the risk was still amber but the completion date for the depot review had changed to December 2013 from October 2013. For CD27a, he explained that waste management was an ongoing piece of work but the risk was still reported as amber. Councillor Hardcastle asked that his thanks be passed on to Harvey Mitchell and Kevin Edwards for their assistance with an issue in his ward.

In response to a query from Councillor Nancy Matthews about whether residents could collect recycling bags from Alltami Depot, the Head of Streetscene said that the depot was not a public building but it was the intention to make bags available at Household Recycling Centre sites and the Flintshire Connect Centres.

Councillor Peter Curtis felt that the Saturday collections had been successful and that any initial problems had been overcome. He said that a gully in Pen y Ball Hill was a concern and asked that it be cleaned more often. The Chairman asked that Members let officers know of any areas in their ward where they felt that gully cleaning should be undertaken more frequently. Councillor Curtis also raised concern about the amount of fly-posting being undertaken in Flintshire. The Head of Streetscene explained that guidance on the Enforcement Policy for issues such as fly-posting would be submitted to the September meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Veronica Gay referred to areas in her ward where footpaths were not cleaned and grass was not cut and added that she had reported the problems in the past. Councillor Butler said that it was important for Members to discuss any concerns or problems in their ward with their local officers. Councillor Chris Dolphin requested a copy of the gully cleaning schedule.

Planning

The Head of Planning gave a short presentation on the performance within Planning, outlining work which had been undertaken to improve performance and areas where improvement was needed, as outlined within the report.

The Head of Planning also advised that the performance indicators for determination of Householder applications and other applications and resolving enforcement cases had improved significantly in quarter 1 2013/14 when compared with the reported quarter 4 information.

The Chairman welcomed the improvements and reminded Members that Planning would be the subject of a report to the 23 July 2013 meeting of the Committee. He said that it was important to sustain the improvements and queried how staff changes were being addressed. The Head of Planning responded that the structure that was being considered would allow staff to move around the department when required but said that it was important to have the correct processes in place and have the right culture. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment said that he received monthly updates from the Head of Planning on caseload and he was confident that processes were being put in place.

In response to a query from Councillor Paul Shotton about the opposition from the House Builders Federation to the identification of adequate land supply in the County, the Head of Planning said that this was due to how the land availability was calculated and he explained about the two methods of calculation. The Council had to provide a five years supply but the method used by the Inspector had resulted in a calculation of 4.5 years supply. It was felt that the calculations had not been applied consistently and officers had raised the issue with Welsh Government (WG). It was hoped that a meeting with WG could be arranged before 18 July 2013.

Councillor Ian Dunbar welcomed the work being undertaken to look at Section 106 agreements in detail and also the amalgamation of the Development Plans Panel and Planning Protocol Working Group to form the Planning Strategy Group. He said that it was important to keep Town & Community Councils involved in the Local Development Plan. In response to a query from Councillor Dunbar about whether any progress had been made on mobile working within the Planning Department, the Head of Planning explained that work was progressing. An audit of section 106 agreements was being worked through on an area by area basis and the Head of Planning explained to Members that reports to Planning & Development Control Committee had recently been amended to advise that if an application was granted subject to a section 106 agreement and it was not signed within six months, then an option was included to refuse the application.

Councillor Cindy Hinds raised concern about the lack of feedback for issues of enforcement and said that she had not seen the design of the plan for the areas of Penyffordd and Penymynydd. The Head of Planning said that matters of enforcement could take several months to complete but appreciated that Members needed to be kept informed. On the issue of design, he said that the Design Commission had contributed to the scheme but that the issues raised by Councillor Hinds were ongoing.

In response to a query from Councillor Derek Butler about the downturn in performance in Enforcement, the Head of Planning said that earlier in the 2012/13 year officers were concentrating on the backlog of cases, but in quarter 4 they concentrated on current cases.

On the issue of mobile working, Councillor Nancy Matthews felt that broadband strength was of concern across the county. The Chairman suggested that it could be an item for consideration at a future meeting

Public Protection

On the issue of dog fouling, the Director of Environment said that Neighbourhood Wardens, Enforcement Officers and Police Community Support Officers would increase patrols of 'hotspot' areas during the school holidays. He asked Members to advise of any problem areas in their wards.

Regeneration

Councillor Veronica Gay asked for an update on the One-stop shop in Saltney. The Chairman suggested that a formal response be provided to Councillor Gay following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That the comments/observations of the Committee be fed back to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee who are responsible for the overview and monitoring of improvement targets.

13. DRAFT FLOOD MANAGEMENT STRATEGY & FLOODING ISSUES

The Head of Assets and Transportation introduced Mr. R. Barry (Project Engineer) and Mr. I. Wellwood (Acting Engineering Services Manager) to the Committee.

The Head of Assets and Transportation introduced the report to seek comments on the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy prior to the formal submission to Cabinet and then Welsh Government (WG).

The strategy identified the responsibilities of the Council and other risk management partners in terms of flood risk and what communities could do to involve themselves. The Head of Assets and Transportation detailed the background to the report and explained that wide consultation had taken place but only 14 responses had been received. Other authorities had indicated that they had received a similar number of responses to the consultation exercise. Work was now required to develop and implement the strategy which would be considered by Cabinet before being submitted to the Minister for consideration.

Councillor Ian Dunbar referred to the difficulties of residents in flood risk areas to get insurance for their properties and asked whether residents would be able to secure insurance for a reasonable premium once the strategy was implemented. The Project Engineer said that flood maps affected insurance and different insurance companies used different mapping tools but some did use the maps provided by Natural Resources Wales, formerly the Environment Agency. The strategy would allow for categorisation of areas into low, medium or high risk areas for flooding which should assist residents with obtaining insurance at a

realistic cost. He added that individuals could also obtain information about flood risk areas from Natural Resources Wales.

The Head of Assets and Transportation said that the strategy would support officers in undertaking detailed mapping and identification of specific areas of flooding.

Councillor Derek Butler raised concern about issues which were previously the responsibility of the Environment Agency but which had been passed on to local authorities with no funding to carry out the works. He also spoke of planning applications being permitted on flood areas which he felt was a concern. The Director of Environment recognised the issues raised and said that it was reported that for 2014/15 and beyond, WG had confirmed that the level of funding allocated was likely to be £90k minimum for the foreseeable future, which would be provided through the Revenue Support Grant provision on an annual basis to all local authorities. He added that in the current financial climate, this would be a challenge. The Head of Assets and Transportation said that certain activities had not been implemented yet so there could be further demands on the Council.

Councillor Nancy Matthews referred to the issue of gullies and also asked if the Planning and Development Control Committee would be given specific training on the strategy. The Head of Assets and Transportation responded that the issue of gullies would form part of the assessment of risk. He explained that the strategy was a complex issue and advised that he would discuss the suggestion about training with colleagues in the Planning Department.

Councillor Colin Legg apologised for not submitting his response to the consultation exercise but indicated that he would do so as soon as possible.

Councillor Veronica Gay raised concern about the cost of maintenance of areas such as the Balderton Brook in Saltney and sought assurance that a programme would be put in place and would be delivered. The Project Engineer responded that the brook was classed as a main river and was therefore the responsibility of Natural Resources Wales (NWR) but that NWR had a regime in place to monitor it twice a year. Councillor Gay asked for the details of a contact in NWR so that she could discuss her concerns about cross border water from Chester Business Park.

The Head of Assets and Transportation suggested that regular updates on the strategy be provided to the Committee. The Chairman suggested that the Facilitator liaise with the Director about the most appropriate time to receive an update on the strategy.

RESOLVED:

That the Flood Risk Management Strategy be noted.

14. SPEED LIMIT REVIEW

The Head of Assets and Transportation introduced the report to inform Members of the conclusions of the speed limit review covering the 'A class' and 'B class' road network within the Authority.

He detailed the background to the report explaining that initial proposals were presented to the Committee in November 2012. It was agreed that following consultation with local Members and Town & Community Councils, the findings would be reported back to Committee for comment before being submitted to Cabinet for consideration. He advised that any approved changes would require the support of the North Wales Police, and would also be subject to full statutory consultation to meet the requirements of the procedures for introducing Traffic Regulation Orders. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment said that the review had given Members the opportunity to comment on the proposals and that further comments made at this meeting would be considered by Cabinet.

Councillor Chris Dolphin welcomed the report and thanked the Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Environment and the officers for their work on the issue. He referred to proposal 17 for the A5026 in Lloc and said that he felt that a 40 mile per hour (mph) speed limit would be supported if a footway was considered for the remainder of the road. The Director of Environment said that the suggestion would be considered but added that resources needed to be prioritised.

Councillor Ray Hughes also welcomed the report and thanked officers for the proposals for speed limits in his ward. Councillor Cindy Hinds referred to proposal 1 for the A5104 in Pontblyddyn and said that a reduction to 40mph had been requested as the road was dangerous due to the difficult exit out of Stryt Issa onto the A5104. The Head of Assets and Transportation felt that this would be too slow a speed for the road and advised that the proposals would reduce the limit from the current 60mph to 50mph. He added that the whole of the route had been assessed which had resulted in the proposed reduction in the speed limit to 50mph. The Traffic Services Manager concurred that 40mph was too low a speed for all of the route and advised that signs could be erected to address the individual hazards on the road. The Chairman suggested that further information on the decision to not reduce the speed limit to 40mph be forwarded to Councillors Hinds and Hughes. In response to the comments made, the Director of Environment said that officers worked closely with the Traffic Police and considered accident statistics and other issues before making a recommendation for the speed limit for the section of road.

Councillor David Evans queried whether a timetable was in place to carry out the proposed changes. The Director of Environment responded that the guidance had indicated that any changes should be implemented by 31 December 2014 but it had been agreed that the new speed limits would be in place by 31 March 2015. Work would be required to identify phasing of the required works taking into account the proposals and costs involved.

Councillor Veronica Gay referred to the retention of the speed limits on the A5104 from Broughton to Saltney Ferry Road and said that the change from 50mph to 30mph created problems and asked whether the 30mph area could be extended. The Traffic Services Manager explained that the visibility on the road was good and that there would be no benefit to moving the 30mph area back. He added that pre-warning signs were also not required as they were only erected when there was insufficient sighting of the primary signs which was not the case

on this road. The Chairman suggested that it be reconsidered and discussed with Councillor Gay.

Councillor Colin Legg appreciated the work that had been undertaken but asked if 20mph zones could be put in place for all schools in Flintshire, highlighting proposal 31 for the B5123 in Halkyn. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment indicated that he had requested that work be undertaken to identify the cost of implementing 20mph zones for all schools. The work was ongoing and would be the subject of a report to a future meeting.

Councillor Peter Curtis referred to the Holywell to Bagillt road and the reduction in speed limit from 60mph to 50mph. He said that Holywell Town Council had requested a reduction to 40mph due to the concerns about the amount of traffic using the road, in particular double decker buses. Councillor Chris Dolphin agreed with suggestion to reduce the limit to 40mph due to low hanging trees making the surface of the road slippery. The Head of Assets and Transportation advised that it could be reconsidered.

In response to a query from Councillor Nancy Matthews about 'C roads', the Director of Environment said that the authority had a duty to look after 'A and B roads' first but that once this had been completed, work would be undertaken to review 'C roads'.

The Chairman reminded Members that this was a phased approach but requested that a timetable with an indication of priorities be provided when it was available. He also suggested that the speed limit review be reconsidered by Committee in 12 months.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposals set out in Appendix A of the report be noted; and
- (b) That the comments of the Committee on the proposals be presented within the final Cabinet report.

15. MERSEY DEE ALLIANCE

The Head of Regeneration introduced a report to advise Members of progress regarding the work of Mersey Dee Alliance (MDA).

He detailed the background to the report and explained that the MDA was one of the key strategic partnerships for the Council and involved neighbouring Councils, Mersey Travel, Glyndwr University, Taith and University of Chester. The MDA reflected the fact that the area was the only part of the United Kingdom divided by a national boundary but the boundary was not recognised by local businesses or local communities in day to day life. He detailed the considerations in the report and indicated that key MDA work areas included:-

- The Dee Region – bid for City Region status
The bid had not been accepted but the Minister had accepted the need for greater formation of the cross border working arrangements in the MDA and discussions were ongoing.

- **M56/A55/Innovation Corridor**
A study of the potential for a North Wales/North West England 'corridor' based on the better integration of service and advanced manufacturing assets had been prepared. A range of high tech/R&D facilities were in place and the sub-region also had substantial assets in advanced manufacturing in the aerospace, automotive, electronics, creative and fibre optic sectors.
- **MDA Think Tank**
Key regional employers who employed from both sides of the border were being approached with a view to forming an economic 'think tank' to advise on issues that affect the area's competitiveness.

The Chairman felt that the report did not provide enough detail on priorities and deadlines of the MDA and suggested that this information be included for future reports.

Councillor Paul Shotton expressed his disappointment at the Dee Region not being awarded City Region Status and spoke of a presentation provided by Glyndwr University at a recent meeting of Community Profile and Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee. He also referred to local and regional employers and commented on the importance of having employees with the appropriate skills.

The Head of Regeneration explained that the MDA was a non-statutory body and that the skills issue was critical along with labour market planning. In response to a query from Councillor Cindy Hinds about the Deeside Enterprise Zone, he said that it had started on 1 April 2012 and that there had been 400 net jobs in the first year which he welcomed. He felt that the progress would be more significant in this financial year but added that more work needed to be undertaken.

Councillor Derek Butler also expressed his disappointment at not gaining City Region status and in referring to the unique area said that the sustainability and ensuring employers stayed in the area was important.

Councillor Nancy Matthews queried whether discussions were still ongoing with the MDA and Network Rail about a travel link to Liverpool airport. The Director of Environment spoke of a report on the issue of transport in the area from the Integrated Transport Task Force which was to be submitted to the Minister later this week for consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

16. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Housing and Learning Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator introduced a report to consider the Forward Work Programme of the Committee.

The Facilitator detailed the items for consideration at the 23 July 2013 meeting and reminded Members that a Forward Work Programme planning workshop was scheduled to be held at 10am on 18 July 2013 to allow Members the opportunity to populate the Forward Work Programme for the remainder of the year.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be agreed.

17. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were 2 members of the press and 2 members of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.33 pm)

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Chairman