

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
22 JANUARY 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Wednesday, 22 January 2014

PRESENT:

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Peter Curtis, Chris Dolphin, David Evans, Veronica Gay, Ray Hughes, Colin Legg and Nancy Matthews

SUBSTITUTES:

Councillors: Glyn Banks for Ian Dunbar, David Wisinger for Cindy Hinds, Ron Hampson for Ann Minshull and Alex Aldridge for Paul Shotton

APOLOGIES:

Councillors Matt Wright and Carolyn Thomas

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor Bernie Attridge was present as an observer

CONTRIBUTORS:

Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure and Director of Environment
Head of Streetscene for minute number 56
Head of Regeneration and Regeneration Officer for minute number 57

IN ATTENDANCE:

Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

53. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

The Member Engagement Manager indicated that neither the Chairman nor Vice-Chairman were able to attend today's meeting. Therefore, he sought nominations for a Chairman for the meeting. Councillor David Evans was nominated by Councillor Ron Hampson, which was duly seconded.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor David Evans be Chairman for this meeting.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

No declarations of interest were made.

55. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 December 2013 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Matters Arising

Councillor Nancy Matthews indicated that she had tried to sign on to Superfast Cymru but had been advised that it was not available in the area. She said that she would try again and would provide an update in the future.

RESOLVED:

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

56. THE COUNCIL'S HOUSEHOLD WASTE COLLECTION POLICY

The Head of Streetscene introduced a report to inform Members of the proposals to review and update the Council's Waste Collection Policy.

He detailed the background to the report and explained that recycling was still a significant challenge for the authority. The municipal waste target for 2015/16 was 58% and this year the Council was currently achieving 57%. The Head of Streetscene reminded Members that the cost of not achieving the targets was extremely high and that failing to meeting the target by 1% could result in infraction charges of £400,000 for that year alone. The Sustainable Waste Management Grant was decreasing each year and the targets were increasing so it was good practice to review the processes and policies in place. The following were reported as changes to the policy:-

- Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) had now been incorporated into the policy
- curtilage collections
- restricting garden waste bins to two per property
- continuation of side waste
- provision of a new HRC site in Sandycroft resulting in the closure of Saltney and Queensferry once it opened
- opening times amended to take account of footfall levels at the sites
- van owners with a Van Permit limited to Greenfield and Mold sites

The Head of Streetscene explained that areas which had high amounts of side waste would be monitored and where issues were identified, an action day would be set up in the area to educate residents on what could or could not be recycled to encourage them to recycle. Visits from officers may also be required and enforcement action would be undertaken as a last resort. He explained that plans for the new site in Sandycroft, which now did not include steps, would be submitted to Planning in March 2014.

Councillor Nancy Matthews expressed concern about side waste and queried whether reports could be submitted to future Committees about the levels of side waste to allow the Committee to monitor whether it was reducing. She welcomed the provision of the van permit scheme at two sites and queried whether the permits would be available at the Alltami depot in future. The Head of Streetscene advised that he could provide a summary about side waste in his six monthly performance report to the Committee. It was intended that the van permits would be available at Alltami and that renewals could then be undertaken through the Contact Centre.

Councillor Colin Legg raised concern about the number of complaints he had received from residents about collections of waste during the Christmas period. He also asked if a smaller bin for residents who lived alone could be considered and queried why other authorities such as Liverpool asked that all waste be placed in one bin and not separated into recyclable/non-recyclable waste. Councillor Legg also asked that thanks from residents be passed on to the refuse collectors.

In response, the Head of Streetscene said that the number of complaints during the Christmas period was very low, which was encouraging, and that a 99.3% collection was now being achieved. Processes were in place for missed collections but he reminded Members that the Council was not always to blame for missed collections. He said that the suggestion of a smaller bin could be explored. The Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure said that there had been a significant number of changes over the past 12 months and he highlighted that supervisors would be allocated responsibilities for rounds and HRC sites to ensure that they were dealt with appropriately. On the issue of separating waste, the Head of Streetscene said separation of recycling by residents was the preferred option from Welsh Government and that it was likely to become a legal requirement for Councils to ask residents to do it.

Councillor David Wisinger welcomed the report but asked how many van permits had been issued (743) and indicated that he would have preferred the two sites to be Greenfield and Queensferry not Greenfield and Mold. The Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure said that the sites had been chosen because of their spatial ability but that the issue would be monitored and would be reviewed 12 months after implementation. In response to a question from Councillor Wisinger, the Head of Streetscene said that residents would be notified if any bins were crushed or lost during the collection of waste. Councillor Wisinger requested that Queensferry and Saltney HRC sites remain open for a period of time following the opening of Sandycroft until such time that he was satisfied with it but the Cabinet Member stated that it was neither possible or appropriate to keep all the sites open beyond the opening of Sandycroft. The Head of Streetscene advised that he would make enquiries about the number of van permits issued.

Councillor Chris Dolphin asked questions about the provision of replacement green food bags and the returning of bins to their point of origin and suggested that the noting and monitoring of properties that put out side waste should be undertaken by the supervisors. The Head of Streetscene advised that the properties leaving out side waste were recorded onto a device in the cab and were fed back to supervisors automatically. He agreed that supervisors should take more control and have a greater role in the area that they were responsible for.

Councillor Peter Curtis welcomed the report and the changes proposed to the policy including curtilage collections. He raised concern about shopkeepers in town centres that put out their waste on a Saturday for early morning collections on a Monday and asked if collections could be undertaken later on Mondays so that the waste could be put out that morning instead of over the weekend. On the issue of Christmas collections, he said that information was

issued about changes during that period and he welcomed the collection rate in his area. Councillor Curtis also welcomed the inclusion of Disability Living Allowance in the list of benefits that householders could receive to qualify for up to two free collections per year of bulky household waste. The Head of Streetscene advised that he would look at the issue of town centre waste collections.

On the issue of black bins, Councillor Ron Hampson said that they were not big enough for some families and therefore the issue of side waste would continue; he queried whether the bins used in Chester were larger. The Head of Streetscene responded that a significant amount of time and effort had gone into deciding the correct size for the black bins. The Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure said that it was hoped that the amount of side waste would continue to reduce and therefore the Council would continue to use the size of bin that was currently in place.

In referring to the comment that bins would be returned to their place of origin once emptied, Councillor Veronica Gay asked that the lids be put on the bins. She also welcomed the proposals to not include steps at the Sandycroft HRC and asked if advertising would be undertaken to prepare the public for the closure of the sites at Saltney and Queensferry. Councillor Gay also suggested that figures be published to raise awareness about which areas were better at recycling than others. She commented on the 'bring sites' and asked if these were located in the correct sites across the county. The Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure said that the situation of 'bring sites' would be monitored and reviewed if necessary. In response to the subject of lids on bins, the Head of Streetscene advised that the lids should be closed once the bin had been emptied.

Councillor Glyn Banks congratulated the officers for the report and felt that a presentation on what could or could not be recycled would be welcomed in his ward. On the issue of collections, he said that Talacre had a Saturday collection whilst the rest of area had their waste collected on a Monday; this was an area of concern and Councillor Banks asked if it could be reviewed. The Head of Streetscene responded that areas that received presentations were chosen because of their high rate of side waste and he added that the Local Members would always be invited if such an event took place in their ward. There were currently no plans to change the rounds but the issue of collections in Talacre could be reviewed.

In response to a question from Councillor Haydn Bateman about black bags no longer being able to go to landfill, the Head of Streetscene said that the Environment Act was being reviewed and it referred to residual waste not being permitted in landfill so was not referring to the use of black bags. Following a further query from Councillor Bateman, the Head of Streetscene said trade waste was only permitted into the Greenfield HRC site with the necessary permit.

Councillor Ray Hughes referred to the collection of waste during the Christmas period, which he welcomed, and queried whether the weekly collection of black bins during this period could be extended to the end of January. The Head of Streetscene responded that the brown bin service was suspended for four weeks to allow weekly black bin collections during the Christmas period and

it was felt that this was a sufficient timeframe. Councillor Alex Aldridge felt that the diligence of residents should be highlighted as the Council would not achieve its targets without them. He asked if regular visits were made to schools to educate children as he felt that this was essential and the Head of Streetscene confirmed that these were undertaken. Councillor Aldridge raised concern about areas in the county where litter including cans and bottles were left and asked how those responsible for this were dealt with.

The Chairman referred to rows of terraced properties where the bins were left out all week as there were no areas to store them and said that he felt that the residents needed to be educated about this. On the issue of bulky waste collection, he asked if this applied where a child in the property was in receipt of Disability Living Allowance. The Head of Streetscene responded that it was intended to apply to householders in receipt of the listed benefits so the service would not be free if only the children in the property were in receipt of the benefits listed.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed changes to the Council Waste Collection be endorsed; and
- (b) That the Cabinet Member and Officers be requested to have regard to the comments made by Members during the discussion.

57. TOWN CENTRES, HIGH STREETS AND RETAIL AREAS

The Member Engagement Manager introduced the report to consider how the Committee can undertake a review of Town Centre and High Street regeneration.

Following a request from the Committee in July 2013 to give further consideration to exploring new ways to enhance town centres and high streets, a meeting had taken place where it had been agreed that a considerable amount of good work was already taking place across Flintshire. The report identified the work that had been undertaken since May 2013 and the updates that the Committee had received as part of the Quarterly Performance Report for Regeneration. The group that met on 12 December 2013 felt that a joined up approach was needed across the Council including planning, housing, social enterprise and working with the many stakeholders which were listed in the outline project plan which was attached as an appendix to the report.

Councillor Alex Aldridge expressed his support for the proposals and said that it was important that all areas were given the same opportunity to put suggestions forward. He asked if information including anecdotal evidence would be provided for all areas so that the Committee could have an overall view of the town centres and high streets across the County.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development indicated that he had attended the meeting in December 2013 and said that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman had suggested that the Committee needed to be made aware of what was taking place in town centres and then prepare a mini strategy to take forward as good practice for all areas. Councillor Aldridge believed that a 'bottom up'

approach was required. The Head of Regeneration said that it was important to work with local communities and that each town would have different priorities and would require a different solution. The project plan approach adopted by the County Council was about developing a strategy that was appropriate for the local communities.

Councillor Chris Dolphin agreed with more involvement of Overview & Scrutiny in Town Centres but said that ideas that he had tried to put forward for Holywell Town Centre regeneration had not been welcomed. The Chairman felt that there was a need to look at the County as a whole and not at individual wards.

Councillor Nancy Matthews referred to two issues that affected small businesses which were rent and business rates. Councillor Peter Curtis said that the Clerk of the Town and Community Council could be contacted if there were certain projects that other Town and Community Councils wanted to submit an opinion about. He also referred to the Holywell Partnership Board. The Head of Regeneration said that the partnerships referred to were not formally constituted bodies, they were open meetings and decisions on attendance were a matter for the bodies themselves. On the issue of business rates and rents, he said that these were collected by the Council but were set by Welsh Government and he spoke of a review in Wales about rate relief for small traders. He also commented on a small shop scheme which he detailed but he said that the County Council had been unable to reach agreement with any shop. On the issue of wider strategic approaches, he felt that it made sense to undertake a joined up approach and suggested working alongside whatever other major initiatives were operating in the area, for example, the Deeside approach was closely linked to the Deeside Enterprise Zone Board.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development reinforced what the Chairman of the Committee had said at the group meeting on 12 December 2013 that this Committee needed to be apprised of what Town and Community Councils were doing to allow the collection of information to identify good practice within the ward which could be considered as a solution for other areas.

Councillor Veronica Gay asked how this issue was linked with Flintshire Connects and commented in particular about the proposals for Saltney. The Cabinet Member for Economic Development said that the issues were not related. Councillor Aldridge disagreed and said that there was an intrinsic link and highlighted the Flint Connects office which would also house the Police and the Jobcentre as well as officers delivering Council services.

Councillor Glyn Banks asked how tourism fitted into the scheme and commented on the areas of Talacre and Gronant. The Director of Environment felt that Tourism was a separate issue and felt that this could be included in the Forward Work Programme for discussion at a future meeting.

Councillor Curtis queried whether the Partnership Board meetings were open to the public and said that he understood that people were invited to attend but that the meetings were not public meetings. The Head of Regeneration said that the boards were unconstituted bodies and confirmed that they were not closed meetings and that they had initially been set up as open meetings.

The Chairman agreed with the recommendation in the report but added that he would like the issue to be included on the Forward Work Programme and brought to the next meeting for discussion in more detail.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee agree in principle to undertake a scrutiny review of Town Centres and High Streets, as identified in the report; and
- (b) That the Project plan be further developed for consideration at the next meeting.

58. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Member Engagement Manager introduced a report to consider the Forward Work Programme of the Committee.

He explained that a report on the North Wales Residual Waste Partnership was due to be considered at the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 26 February 2014. The Director of Environment said that a meeting of the North Wales Residual Waste Treatment Project Joint Committee was due to be held the following week and until this meeting had taken place, he could not confirm whether a report would be available to submit to the meeting of this Committee scheduled for 26 February 2014. He suggested that if the report was to be submitted, then it should be the only item for consideration on the agenda for that meeting and that there would be a wide range of information that would be available for Members to view prior to attending the meeting. The report on Streetscene – next steps would not be available due to the forthcoming organisational restructuring and the report on C Roads could be deferred to a future meeting.

The Chairman suggested that an additional meeting be scheduled for April 2014 to ensure that items were not unduly delayed and that the Member Engagement Manager discuss this and the possibility of moving items from the 26 February 2014 meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair.

Councillor Alex Aldridge spoke of the significant challenge ahead on the issue of waste and also commented on the suggestion in the Williams Report to merge Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC). Councillor Nancy Matthews sought further information about the amount of debt WCBC had for the PFI (Private Finance Initiative) and what affect this had on the project. She felt that this issue needed to be sorted before any decision was made on merging Councils and added that there was a need to be prepared that this very important project might not happen because of it. On the issue of the Williams Review, the Director of Environment said that political discussions would take place at all levels and until these had been undertaken, the Authority could only deal with the information before it. He commented on the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA2) which talked of the potential for a local government review and said that there would be the opportunity to look at the document as the process progressed.

In response to a question from Councillor Matthews, the Member Engagement Manager said that an item on Deeside Enterprise Zone could be included in the Forward Work Programme. He also advised that the following had been suggested by the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee as items for consideration by this Committee:-

- Issue of changing legislation on local authorities responding to flood relief
- Responsibilities of a third Dee crossing, and its maintenance

Councillor Veronica Gay suggested that Natural Resources Wales be asked to provide a presentation on their flood maintenance programme. The Chairman indicated that this could form part of the item which was showing in the 'items to be scheduled' section. The Member Engagement Manager suggested that the Facilitator liaise with the Chair and Vice-Chair to be authorised to vary the programme between meetings. Following a discussion on flood strategies for evacuation of residents, the Chairman suggested that a workshop on the subject be held for Members.

It had also been suggested earlier in the meeting that a further report on Tourism in the County be submitted to a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be changed to reflect the discussion which took place at the meeting; and
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair be given authority to alter the Forward Work Programme between meetings.

59. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press and no members of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.15 am and ended at 12.33 pm)

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Chairman