

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

28 JANUARY 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Flintshire County Council of Flintshire County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Tuesday, 28 January 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Carolyn Thomas (Chair)

Councillors: Alex Aldridge, Bernie Attridge, Glyn Banks, Haydn Bateman, Marion Bateman, Chris Bithell, Amanda Bragg, Derek Butler, Clive Carver, David Cox, Peter Curtis, Adele Davies-Cooke, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Brian Dunn, Carol Ellis, Jim Falshaw, Veronica Gay, Robin Guest, Alison Halford, Ron Hampson, George Hardcastle, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Hilary Isherwood, Joe Johnson, Christine Jones, Kevin Jones, Richard Jones, Brian Lloyd, Richard Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Hilary McGuill, Billy Mullin, Tim Newhouse, Mike Peers, Neville Phillips, Mike Reece, Gareth Roberts, Tony Sharps, Aaron Shotton, Paul Shotton, Ian Smith, Nigel Steele-Mortimer, Owen Thomas, Sharon Williams, David Wisinger, Arnold Woolley and Matt Wright

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Helen Brown, Ron Davies, Glenys Diskin, Cindy Hinds, Stella Jones, Colin Legg, Phil Lightfoot, Ann Minshull, Ian Roberts and David Williams

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Director of Environment, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Finance and Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Director of Community Services and Older People's Strategy Co-ordinator for minute number 75

73. PRESENTATION

The Chair welcomed members of the Property and Design Consultancy Team who had been awarded the Consortium of Local Authorities Wales (CLAW) 2013 Commendation Award, in recognition of work at Ysgol Cae'r Nant, Connah's Quay. She detailed some of the works that had been undertaken and welcomed the impressive and excellent learning environment for the children.

As Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Bernie Attridge congratulated the team on the award and said that he had been privileged to attend the ceremony when the award was presented. He commented on the quality of the new school and its learning environment, and added his thanks to the team.

74. SIGNING OF THE DUBLIN DECLARATION ON AGE FRIENDLY CITIES AND COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE 2013

The Director of Community Services introduced Eileen Spence, the Older People's Strategy Co-ordinator, to Members.

He explained that every Council in Wales had been invited by the Welsh Local Government Association to make a public declaration by becoming signatories on the Dublin Declaration.

The Dublin Declaration reaffirmed commitment to adopt best practice, to collaborate with regional and international stakeholders, to communicate with regional and international stakeholders, and to communicate through local and regional channels to stimulate and promote equal rights and opportunities for older people living within communities. The Dublin Declaration did not constitute a legally binding contract, however by becoming a signatory the Council would be pledging a commitment to the aspirations and principles referred to in the Declaration.

The Chief Executive advised that Declaration would be signed by the Chair, the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Social Services and Chief Executive following this meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the signing of the Declaration be noted.

75. COMMEMORATION AND TRIBUTES TO THE LATE COUNCILLOR TED EVANS

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to Councillor Ted Evans and said that he was a great ambassador for Flint and the whole county. He spoke of Councillor Evans' loyalty, dedication, commitment and selflessness and the fact that he had become known as 'Supersub' for the Labour Group due to him always volunteering to substitute on Committees to ensure the Group had its full attendance at meetings. He had put a significant amount of time and dedication into representing the Council and had taken a great deal of pride in serving on the Clwyd Pension Fund and on the Deeside College Board. The Leader felt that many Members would remember Councillor Evans for his keen eye for detail, particularly when highlighting grammatical errors or corrections to figures in reports and said that the Council had lost a good friend. He spoke of Councillor Evans' dedication to his family, faith and the way he always put the community first. He was certain that his family would take great strength in the high regard that Councillor Evans was held in and concluded that he was proud to have known him.

Councillor Alex Aldridge spoke on behalf of Flint Members and thanked the Chief Executive, officers and the many Members who had attended the funeral, which had been a celebration of Councillor Evans' life. Councillor Aldridge said that Councillor Evans' standards were high and he never had a bad word to say about anyone. He felt that Mrs. Evans would have found immense solace in the numbers that had attended the funeral.

Councillor Hilary Isherwood added to the tributes and referred to the work Councillor Evans had undertaken for the Community and also his religious beliefs. She said that he was a wonderful and generous man and she had been privileged to know him.

Councillor Mike Peers spoke of the well thought of and respected man who came across as a gentleman. He referred to his persistence and said that his lasting image would be of Councillor Evans leaving County Hall and walking across to the bus stop, despite his illness, which showed his commitment.

Councillor Tony Sharps agreed with all that had been said and stated that they had served together on Delyn Borough Council. He referred to the death of Councillor Evans' son and said that he felt that he never got over his loss. He said that Councillor Evans was a wonderful man who would be greatly missed and that he should be seen as a role model to all.

Councillor Robin Guest echoed the comments made and said that Councillor Evans had been a man that nobody could fall out with. He spoke of the admiration felt by many for Councillor Evans following the loss of his son and said that he was a delightful man who would be missed and that he would remember him for his musical ties and his cheerful grin.

The Chair concurred that he had been a great role model and added that he had been kind to her when she first became a Councillor.

76. NOTICE OF MOTION

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that none had been received.

77. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that none had been received.

78. COUNCIL MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 29 October, 12 November and 10 December 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

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

79. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In response to a query from Councillor Neville Phillips about the need to declare an interest in agenda item 15 – Update on Single Status, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that those who had declared an interest on Single Status previously would be noted as declaring an interest at this meeting. However, he asked that those Councillors also complete a Declaration of Interest form.

The following Councillors had previously declared an interest in Single Status:-

Councillors: Alex Aldridge, Bernie Attridge, Amanda Bragg, Adele Davies-Cooke, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Hilary Isherwood, Kevin Jones, Hilary McGill, Billy Mullin, Neville Phillips, Aaron Shotton, Paul Shotton, Ian Smith and Carolyn Thomas.

Councillor Mike Lowe declared a personal interest in Item 14 – Council Tax Reduction Scheme and had disclosed the nature of that interest to the Monitoring Officer.

80. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

A copy of the Chair's communications had been circulated to all Members before the meeting.

The Chair highlighted some of the events that she had attended and provided further details of forthcoming events.

81. PETITIONS

None were received.

82. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS ON COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that none had been received.

Councillor Chris Dolphin queried whether the Minute Book could be sent to Members electronically instead of by paper copy. The Chair asked that Members inform the Democratic Services Team if they would prefer to receive it electronically.

Following a comment from Councillor Peter Curtis about having to receive all agendas by paper copy, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that a review of the Member requirements for agendas could be undertaken.

Councillor Richard Jones queried why a Minute Book had to be produced at all. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that it was because all Committees undertook work on behalf of the County Council and this was the forum in which the Council could hold the committees to account by asking questions on the minutes.

RESOLVED:

That a review be undertaken on whether Members want to receive their agendas and Minute Book electronically or by paper copy.

83. QUESTIONS

The following questions had been submitted by Councillor Tony Sharps:

Are any of the following actions being pursued to unlock the full financial potential of the Enterprise Zone:-

- (a) Simplified planning arrangements
- (b) Improving the road infrastructure
- (c) Improving the power supply
- (d) Making representations to the Welsh Government to alter the grant status from tier two to tier one, so that Flintshire will not be disadvantaged in seeking job creation and investment in comparison with Anglesey, Conwy, Gwynedd, Denbighshire and other significant parts of South Wales which have tier one status.

A copy of the response to the questions, provided by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development is attached at Appendix 1 to the minutes.

Councillor Sharps thanked the Cabinet Member for Economic Development for his reply but detailed his concern about paragraph 3 of the response and the section about the Deeside Enterprise Zone.

84. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEAR REPORT 2013/14

The Head of Finance introduced the report to present to Council the Treasury Management Mid Year Report for 2013/14 for approval.

The report reviewed the activity and performance of the treasury management operations during the period 1st April to 30th September 2013 and compared them with the Treasury Management Strategy. The Audit Committee and Cabinet had considered the report and the key points of the report were detailed. The Head of Finance advised that work on developing the Treasury Management Strategy for 2014/15 was well advanced and the draft strategy was to be considered at the meeting of Audit Committee the following day.

Councillor Mike Peers referred to the treasury management training that had been provided recently where the Council's long term borrowing of £172.1m had been described as significant. It accrued interest payments of £9.306m per year with an average interest rate of 5.41%. Councillor Peers queried whether restructuring of some of the loans could be considered to reduce the interest payments to reduce the cost to the Council in view of the financial challenges facing the Council and asked if the Chair of Audit could raise the issue in Audit's consideration of Treasury Management. The Head of Finance recognised that £172.1m was a significant sum but it was important to balance this with the value of the Council's asset portfolio and be mindful that it was there because of previous policy decisions. The Head of Finance went on to explain that restructuring of debt was considered where appropriate but reminded Members that repaying loans through restructuring would result in fees for early repayment of the debt which could overall increase the short term burden on the revenue account. She added that the borrowing had been undertaken to invest in infrastructure as part of Flintshire and predecessor Council's Capital Programme decisions and that the payments for the majority of loans were supported through the revenue support grant by funding from Welsh Government.

As Chair of the Audit Committee, Councillor Alison Halford thanked officers for the treasury management training and confirmed that she would speak to Councillor Peers about the points he had raised.

In response to a query from Councillor Nancy Matthews on the investments with the Icelandic banks, the Head of Finance said that the current expectation was that the principle borrowing of £3.7m made by the Council would be returned. Councillor Matthews also asked whether the debt maturity profile shown in the report showed each column as a separate loan. The Head of Finance explained that loans would have been for a number of projects in the capital programme and the profile showed when the loans were due to mature.

Councillor Richard Jones referred to the breach of the investment criteria as a result of an investment of £7m and asked what was in place to ensure that this did not happen again. The Head of Finance referred to paragraph 7.03 where the breach was reported and explained that more stringent procedures and training had been put in place to ensure that this did not reoccur.

In response to a query from Councillor Clive Carver about maturing loans, the Head of Finance advised that she would ask the Finance Manager to provide a response following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Treasury Management Mid Year Report 2013/14 be approved.

85. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

The Head of Finance introduced a report to explain the requirement for the Council to adopt the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2014/15 by 31 January 2014.

The report had been considered at Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet where the proposals as set out in the report were supported. The scheme was no different to the scheme in place for 2013/14 which also included the discretionary elements as reported in appendix 1. The Head of Finance detailed the estimated additional cost of the scheme for the Council of £0.633m which had been built into the budget proposals for 2014/15.

Councillor Richard Jones asked if the proposals could be agreed in principle subject to the approval of the 2014/15 budget. The Chief Executive explained that the Council had a legal requirement to adopt the scheme by 31 January 2014 and that this decision was not reversible and therefore this part of the budget would be committed at this meeting if Members agreed to adopt the scheme. The Head of Finance explained that if the scheme was adopted then it would revert to the 'fall back' scheme which did not include any discretionary elements.

In response to a query from Councillor Clive Carver about the consultees detailed in the report, the Head of Finance said that the consultation process

allowed Councils to decide who it consulted and those listed, which included strategic partners, had been asked for their comments.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the making of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations (“the Prescribed Requirements Regulations”) by Wales Government on 26th November 2013, as amended by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 be noted; and
- (b) That the Council Tax Reduction Scheme discretionary elements as outlined in Appendix 1 be adopted.

86. UPDATE ON SINGLE STATUS

The Chief Executive provided a verbal update on Single Status. He thanked Members, the workforce and the Unions for the way that the Single Status outcome had been handled following the October 2013 County Council meeting. Implementation was still on track for 1 April 2014 and officers were confident of a ‘yes’ vote in the Union ballot expected in February 2014 Subject to the timely conclusion of the Equal Pay negotiations which were running.

RESOLVED:

That the update be received.

87. 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 2.00 pm and ended at 3.03 pm)

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Chair

**QUESTION TO COUNCILLOR DEREK BUTLER
AT COUNTY COUNCIL ON 28TH JANUARY 2014**

Question by Councillor Tony Sharps

Are any of the following actions being pursued to unlock the full financial potential of the Enterprize Zone:-

- a) Simplified planning arrangements
- b) Improving the road infrastructure
- c) Improving the power supply
- d) Making representations to the Welsh Government to alter the grant status from tier two to tier one, so that Flintshire will not be disadvantaged in seeking job creation and investment in comparison with Anglesey, Conwy, Gwynedd, Denbighshire and other significant parts of South Wales which have tier one status.

Answer

- a) The Council has been successful in securing funding through Welsh Government's Planning Improvement Fund to consider developing a Local Development Order (LDO) for the Enterprise Zone area. An LDO can identify types of development that would not require planning permission within the specified area, thereby making it more attractive to any potential developer.
- b) The DEZ Board has supported and facilitated discussions between Welsh Government and the land owners of Northern Gateway to provide infrastructure to open up the combined sites owned by two neighbouring land owners/developers. Discussions are advanced and Welsh Government are about to procure a contract for major coastal/fluvial flood prevention and alleviation works to protect the sites in readiness for their combined industrial and residential development. Reserved matters planning applications for infrastructure for the Northern Gateway development should be received later in 2014.

The Board has supported the upgrading of traffic management systems to better improve traffic flows in the immediate area and a bid for funding to achieve this forms part of the Business Plan. The Board has also supported a package of major transport improvements in the area, including improving facilities at Hawarden Bridge station, electrification of the North Wales Coast line, improvement of the Wrexham-Liverpool service, together with implementation of the Shotton Curve (providing direct access to Liverpool) and the Halton Chord (providing a direct link to Liverpool Airport) and upgrading of Aston Hill.

- c) This is a key part of the DEZ infrastructure plan and an upgrade of power infrastructure including additional electricity sub-station provisions is part of the Business Plan for the DEZ submitted by the Board which is subject to full Welsh Government approval
- d) Tier 1 designation in Wales applies only to the Convergence Area. Such designation is intended to address areas of severe economic need and/or where standards of living are abnormally low. Currently, income levels in Convergence Areas must be at or below 75% of the EU average, way below that of this County. Tier 2 designation (which currently applies in parts of Flintshire) is intended to address areas of acute labour market need. .

Flintshire cannot make a case for Tier 1 designation under these rules. However, the County's manufacturing strength makes this area one of national and European significance for Tier 2 designation.