

## **ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**9 JULY 2014**

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 9 July 2014

**PRESENT: Councillor Hilary Isherwood (Chair)**

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Chris Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, David Evans, Veronica Gay, Cindy Hinds, Ray Hughes, Joe Johnson, Colin Legg, Nancy Matthews, Paul Shotton and Carolyn Thomas

**SUBSTITUTES:** Councillors: David Cox (for Ann Minshull) and Mike Reece (for Peter Curtis)

**APOLOGIES:** Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection & Leisure and Cabinet Member for Economic Development

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors: Christine Jones and David Wisinger

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Chief Officer (Planning & Environment), Chief Officer (Organisational Change), Energy Manager and Interim Public Protection Manager

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

### **9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**

Councillor Carolyn Thomas declared the following personal interests on Agenda Item 4 - Year End Service Performance Report:

- Husband employed by P&A Mold who had entered into partnership with the Council's Building Control to check applications for the building of timber-framed classrooms;
- As Secretary of Treuddyn Community Association, applied and received grant funding for Treuddyn Fun Day event;
- Interim Chair of Areas of Natural Outstanding Beauty (AONB) Joint Action Committee; and
- Director of Cadwyn Clwyd (not appointed by the Council) and member of Flintshire Rural Partnership - Rural Development Plan funding - managing schemes and grants listed, assessed applications for Cadwyn Clwyd Flintshire Enterprise project and Community Key Fund.

### **10. ENERGY SWITCHING SCHEME UPDATE**

The Energy Manager introduced the report to update the Committee with information on the Welsh Government's (WG) sponsored collective switching scheme called 'Cyd Cymru'.

Following reports submitted to the Committee in March and September 2013, it had been agreed not to take up the scheme in Flintshire at that time due

to concerns on costs. However, support from WG for a scheme developed by Cardiff City and Vale of Glamorgan Councils and confirmation of funding for the foreseeable future had led to renewed interest by Flintshire. The two fuel switches which had taken place to date had proved successful, with the first enabling 870 households to achieve average savings of £155 each by switching suppliers. The second switch had collected 1,962 registrations of which 34% had switched suppliers, representing a significant achievement, and a third switch was anticipated for the Autumn 2014. A report was being produced by Cardiff City Council, indicating that a combined 1,500 households had achieved an average saving of £180 per household as a result of the two fuel switches.

The Energy Manager said that whilst the initiative aimed to help achieve savings, the energy efficiency measures were of great importance to safeguard households from fuel poverty. Given the minimum resource implications and with support from WG, it was the Council's intention to sign up to the scheme, with no cost implications other than officer time and a small amount of funding taken from the existing budget for engagement packs to be promoted by Members and officers.

In response to a question from the Chair on the cost of producing the engagement packs, the Energy Manager estimated these to be around £2K but agreed to provide confirmation when available.

Councillor Paul Shotton said that the initiative was well-intentioned but commented on the take-up rate and suggested that loft/wall insulation and a different approach by energy companies may be more beneficial to households. In responding, the Energy Manager confirmed that the scheme was open to low-income households with pre-payment meters.

Councillor Nancy Matthews acknowledged the increased number of households which had achieved savings from the second fuel switch and asked if interested residents could seek advice by telephoning the Energy team or were able to receive assistance in registering online at Flintshire Connects offices. The Energy Manager explained that this was a specialist area and that the Energy team, through agile working, could advise residents or refer them to the Energy Advice Centre where appropriate. Officers would work alongside the Centre to help promote the scheme, with engagement packs to be made available at local events and to Members and Town and Community Councils.

Councillor Chris Dolphin commented that the scheme may not suit everyone but that those with pre-payment meters should be encouraged to participate. He felt that promotion of the scheme should emphasise that this was a Council initiative to encourage greater take-up by residents and that the services and help available at Flintshire Connects offices should be more widely publicised to the general public. The Energy Manager advised that 50% of the 5,373 households registered for the first fuel switch were outside Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan, with approximately 70 from Flintshire. A copy of the report from the fuel switch would be shared with the Committee.

The Energy Manager agreed to take forward to the Project Board the suggestion made by Councillor Joe Johnson to extend the scheme to include a switching model for mobile telephones and broadband.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the initiative be supported; and
- (b) That Members utilise the engagement packs (when available) to promote the Cyd Cymru fuel switching scheme, and promote energy efficiency when doing so.

**11. YEAR END SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Committee received a report to note and consider the 2013/14 Year End service performance report produced under the adopted business model of the Council. The responsible officers each gave a short presentation on performance, outlining work which had been undertaken to improve performance and areas where improvement was needed, as outlined within the report.

**Public Protection**

Councillor Paul Shotton welcomed the appointment of two additional Environmental Crime Officers and intelligence on dog fouling received from members of the public, but felt that more could be done on education. He noted the significant increase in fixed penalty notices issued during 2013/14 and asked about the 'Doggy Do' presentations at schools. The Interim Public Protection Manager confirmed that presentations at local schools were part of the long-term strategy to help educate pupils to encourage their parents on responsible dog ownership.

On work to tackle domestic violence, the Chair said that a DVD highlighting this issue had been well received at a meeting of the Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee and gave her view that appropriate discussion on this topic should take place in schools to raise awareness about behaviour from a young age. The Interim Public Protection Manager replied that the 'Cat's Paw Theatre' company were delivering an annual presentation to high schools and that this had been well received last year.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment reminded Members that the Council was the first in Wales to sign up to the White Ribbon campaign to tackle domestic violence and that a Cabinet Member from each Authority would be appointed as an ambassador.

Clarification was sought by Councillor David Evans on fly tipping on private land, particularly rented properties. The Chief Officer (Organisational Change) agreed to follow this up with the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) but said that communication channels should be in place to ensure that any fly tipping identified by Council officers was appropriately reported to engage with relevant outside bodies.

The Chief Officer (Planning & Environment) advised that the Council had legislative powers to serve Section 215 Notices to owners of untidy land. The Chair felt that all Members should be made aware of this.

The Interim Public Protection Manager agreed to provide separate clarification on a query from Councillor Ray Hughes on whether action could be taken if incriminating evidence was found on fly tipping on private land.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas pointed out that the increase in fixed penalty notices issues related to litter as well as dog fouling, and that it was important to enforce both.

In response to queries raised by Councillor Haydn Bateman, the Interim Public Protection Manager expanded on work undertaken by the Substance Misuse Co-ordinator to tackle discarded needles and the partnership between the Council and P&A Mold.

Following a question from Councillor Cindy Hinds, it was noted that the Community Safety team included an anti-social behaviour officer who worked in partnership with Police and other agencies. Alternatively, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment said that Members could report any specific issues to the Interim Public Protection Manager to pass on to the Neighbourhood Wardens who were able to collect evidence whilst on patrol.

### Regeneration

Councillor Shotton welcomed the significant increase in new jobs created within the Deeside Enterprise Zone (DEZ), praised the Dragon's Den project and requested an update on funding for Phase 2 of the North Wales Advanced Manufacturing Skills & Technology Project. Having only recently taken responsibility for Regeneration within her new portfolio, the Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) was aware from recent discussions that the second phase had been commissioned and that locations were under consideration. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment advised that an announcement on funding was expected shortly and it was hoped that Flintshire would be successful in securing the Centre.

Councillor Thomas pointed out that reference made in the report to the Flintshire Enterprise Project and Community Key Fund had not indicated the partnership working with Cadwyn Clwyd. She went on to mention the availability of funding from Cadwyn Clwyd for innovation projects.

In response to a question from Councillor Mike Reece, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment agreed to clarify the availability of grant funding for businesses (eg cafes, public houses, etc) where toilet facilities were available to the public.

### Assets & Transportation

Councillor Nancy Matthews asked if a report on the Flood Alleviation Scheme could be submitted to a future meeting. The Member Engagement Manager would relay this to the Facilitator who had arranged a workshop in September 2014 for Members to populate the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

As a point of accuracy, under the Highways Policy and Strategy work update in the report, Councillor Evans pointed out that the main roundabout was in Queensferry and not Shotton.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Shotton about slippage on work to the Deeside Corridor, the Chief Officer (Organisational Change) stated that mechanisms were in place within the contract to deal with this. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment was aware of these concerns but gave assurances that he was involved in progressing the matter.

Whilst Councillor Colin Legg recognised the financial constraints on transport contracts, he raised concerns at the withdrawal of bus services on Halkyn Mountain which had not been publicised. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment said that withdrawal of commercial services required 56 days' notice but agreed to follow up this query.

On the introduction of 20mph speed limits outside schools, the Chief Officer (Organisational Change) explained that this would only apply to those currently at 30mph. Schools with a higher speed limit would need to reduce to 30mph before they could be brought into line with 20mph. Responding to comments on dangerous cycling routes, he said that the national cycle network was mapped and that a well-defined local cycle network was in place where user judgement could assess safety levels. This was being further developed with the introduction of schemes such as a route from Sandycroft to Airbus.

Councillor Veronica Gay pointed out that the bus timetable on the Council's website did not allow for a user to search for a route by inputting the start point and destination. She asked what steps could be taken to prevent cyclists from travelling on the pavements and incidents of dangerous parking adjacent to a junction within her ward. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member said that these may not be issues for the Council. The Chief Officer (Organisational Change) felt that the junction may lie outside the Flintshire boundary but agreed to discuss outside the meeting.

### Streetscene

The Chair questioned why the relevant officer was not available to present this section of the report. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment said that due to leave taken by the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) and the absence of his stand-in officer, he would take questions and provide a separate explanation to the Committee on the absences. The Chair requested that her extreme disappointment be noted.

In response to a question from Councillor Matthews, it was confirmed that the design of the Household Recycling Centres (HRC) enabled users to access facilities without the need to climb steps.

Following a question from Councillor Bateman, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment explained that a hand-held sweeping device was being trialled to collect small items of litter, which it was hoped would be rolled out across all town centres.

Councillor Gay raised concerns at the potential for fly tipping as the Sandycroft HRC site did not allow for trade waste. Following confirmation that trade waste could be taken to the sites in Mold and Greenfield, Councillor Bateman advised of alternative trade waste recycling facilities available in Sandycroft.

Councillor Ian Dunbar welcomed the Cabinet decision to move the portable toilet facilities from Connah's Quay to Talacre and said that facilities available in the Connah's Quay Flintshire Connects office may encourage greater use of the library.

### Planning

The Chair referred to the enforcement statistics and questioned whether sufficient progress was being made. The Chief Officer (Planning & Environment) explained that the performance measured the percentage of enforcement cases resolved within 12 weeks which may not necessarily have been achieved through prosecution, as often the threat of doing so was enough to reach a satisfactory resolution. The Chair requested that a breakdown of the 77.85% of resolved cases be provided to the Committee, indicating the nature of these issues to distinguish between minor and significant matters.

Councillor Shotton offered his congratulations to the Planning team for their hard work on major developments such as the Northern Gateway and Broughton Park cinema complex. He also commented on the informative training on planning issues which would benefit all Members. The Chief Officer (Planning & Environment) said that all Members were invited to the Planning training sessions and that suggestions on any particular areas of development were welcomed.

Also on Planning training, Councillor Evans said it would be helpful for some training sessions to be scheduled outside the working day. When asked about progress on the Coastal Improvement Programme, he was advised that proposals were likely to be submitted to Cabinet in the Autumn.

Councillor Dolphin spoke about an arrangement previously in place for the Enforcement team to report to Town and Community Councils any issues within their wards and felt that it would be helpful for this to continue with updates on progress. The Chief Officer (Planning & Environment) said that the usual practice was for local Members to be informed of issues in their wards. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment offered to pursue a response for the Committee on the arrangement in place.

Councillor Dunbar thanked officers for the work which had taken place at Wepre Park.

## **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the report be endorsed;
- (b) That the Cabinet Member and officers be invited to take away the comments and provide responses; and
- (c) That the comments/observations of the Committee are fed back to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee who are responsible for the overview and monitoring of performance.

## **12. YEAR END IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee received a report to note and consider elements of the 2013/14 Year End Improvement Plan Monitoring Report relevant to the Committee for the period January to March 2014.

The responsible officers each gave a short presentation on performance within each of the sub-priority areas, highlighting work which had been undertaken to improve performance and areas where improvement was needed, as outlined within each report.

### **Business Sector Growth in Deeside**

On supporting the growth of the existing business on Deeside to safeguard jobs, Councillor David Evans queried the year end outturn in comparison with the target. The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) explained the need to review this performance target due to a reduction in the number of businesses facing challenges in the current climate, which impacted on the 'RAG' status showing the level of work by the Council to safeguard jobs. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment commented on the impact of interventions by the Welsh Government (WG) and the Council to help some businesses.

### **Town and Rural Regeneration**

The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) agreed to check that information on the forthcoming meeting on Town Centres had been circulated to all Members. She gave assurances that Town Centre Action Plans were under review including those in rural areas.

### **Social Enterprise**

No queries were raised.

### **Apprenticeships and Training**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment questioned whether this sub-priority area should be under the remit of the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee, as the lead officer was the Chief Officer (Education & Youth). The Member Engagement Manager agreed to ask the Facilitator to look into this.

## Traffic and Road Management

The Chief Officer (Organisational Change) provided explanation to Councillor Cindy Hinds on a 40mph speed limit warning sign located near a bend near Pen-y-ffordd.

Councillor Ian Dunbar thanked the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment for his support of the reduction of speed limits outside schools. It was reported that generally signage would be located on the approach to schools.

Following a query from Councillor Haydn Bateman on the increase in failures of lamps and photocells during Quarter 4, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment said that this may have been due to a batch of rogue lamps which had subsequently been replaced, but would ask officers to clarify and respond to Councillor Bateman and the Chair. He was not aware of any cost implications arising from the fault.

On the review of speed limits on A and B roads, Councillor Chris Dolphin referred to previous discussion on the possibility of reviewing adjacent C roads at the same time, as this would be more cost-effective. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment was unable to give a commitment that this would be looked at, due to financial constraints and other priorities. He added that any issues on specific C roads would need to be considered on their own merits with consideration of cost implications. The Chief Officer (Organisational Change) said that it had been clear that the speed limit review applied only to A and B roads, and that interconnections with C roads would need to be dealt with separately as resources were limited.

Officers agreed to investigate comments by Councillor Veronica Gay that there appeared to be an increasing number of "day burner" street lights, particularly along the Broughton to Saltney route.

## Transport Infrastructure and Services

In response to a question from the Chair on the cessation of TAIH, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment was unaware of the rationale behind the Ministerial decision, despite representations being made. However, the six North Wales Councils continued to work together to support community transport. It was agreed that officers would provide a written update on future regional transportation arrangements to the Committee following a forthcoming regional board meeting.

## Carbon Control and Reduction

The Chief Officer (Organisational Change) provided clarification to Councillor Bateman on the work carried out by the Carbon Trust to address concerns over the ventilation systems in school kitchens.



**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Committee endorse the Improvement Plan progress together with those elements to be addressed, and look forward to the responses on matters of detail which had been offered; and
- (b) That the comments/observations of the Committee are fed back to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee who are responsible for the overview and monitoring of performance.

**13. CLOSING REMARKS**

Following discussion earlier in the meeting, Members were reminded of the meeting on Town Centres to be held at Clwyd Theatr Cymru on the morning of 14 July 2014.

The Member Engagement Manager also gave a reminder of the workshop in September 2014 to consider the Committee's Forward Work Programme and sought agreement that the Facilitator would liaise with the Chair and Vice-Chair on items to be submitted to the next scheduled meeting on 17 September 2014.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Facilitator liaise with the Chair and Vice-Chair to schedule items for the next meeting of the Committee on 17 September 2014.

**14. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.15 pm)

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**Chair**