

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

23 JUNE 2015

Minutes of the meeting of Flintshire County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 23 June 2015

PRESENT: Councillor Ray Hughes (Chairman)

Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Glyn Banks, Haydn Bateman, Marion Bateman, Chris Bithell, Helen Brown, Clive Carver, David Cox, Peter Curtis, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Rosetta Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Brian Dunn, Jim Falshaw, Veronica Gay, Robin Guest, Alison Halford, Ron Hampson, George Hardcastle, Cindy Hinds, Dennis Hutchinson, Hilary Isherwood, Joe Johnson, Rita Johnson, Christine Jones, Kevin Jones, Richard Jones, Colin Legg, Phil Lightfoot, Brian Lloyd, Richard Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Hilary McGuill, Mike Peers, Vicky Perfect, Neville Phillips, Mike Reece, Gareth Roberts, Ian Roberts, David Roney, Tony Sharps, Aaron Shotton, Paul Shotton, Ian Smith, Nigel Steele-Mortimer, Carolyn Thomas, Owen Thomas, David Williams, David Wisinger and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Alex Aldridge, Amanda Bragg, Paul Cunningham, Derek Butler, Alan Diskin, Glenys Diskin, Chris Dolphin, Carol Ellis, David Healey, Billy Mullin, Sharon Williams and Matt Wright
Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Organisational Change) and Chief Officer (Planning & Environment)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Officers for Governance, Organisational Change, Social Services, Education & Youth and Streetscene & Transportation; Policy & Performance Manager, Economic Development Manager; Enterprise Manager; Corporate Finance Manager, Member Engagement Manager; Policy Advisor (Equalities & Cohesion) and Committee Officer

13. PRESENTATION

The Chairman welcomed Richard Heaton from Read Construction, together with Council officers David Friend, Paula Vogt and John Wilkinson, in recognition of the award to Read Construction in the Best Regional Educational Project category of the North Wales Local Authority Building Awards for the newly constructed Ysgol Tŷ Ffynnon in Shotton.

As Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Bernie Attridge congratulated all involved on their achievement and praised the company's best practice approach to waste management on the site and commitment to maintaining high quality standards, particularly in regard to health and safety. He went on to speak about the continuing excellent relationship between the company and the Council's Building Control section throughout the process.

14. PRESENTATION OF LONG SERVICE AWARD

The Chairman congratulated Councillor Tony Sharps on his award for achieving 44 years of local government service and made reference to his “first class” leadership whilst at Delyn Borough Council.

In celebrating the achievement, Councillor Aaron Shotton paid tribute to the contributions made by Councillor Sharps to public and civic life and expressed his gratitude that this was continuing. He referred to changes in the Council over the years and spoke of Councillor Sharps being a driving force during times of significant challenge and his integral role in gaining support for the enterprise zone and improving housing conditions across the county.

In accepting the award, Councillor Sharps reflected on his time at Holywell Rural District Council through to local government re-organisation and his achievements on the enterprise zone and housing modernisation scheme.

Councillor Mike Peers praised Councillor Sharps on his achievement in serving on the different councils since 1968, adding that he and many other councillors had benefited greatly from Councillor Sharps’ knowledge and advice over the years.

Councillor Gareth Roberts paid tribute to the numerous achievements by Councillor Sharps, particularly during his leadership at Delyn Borough Council, and said that Councillor Sharps was admired by all for the right reasons.

Congratulations were also added by Councillor Chris Bithell who was pleased that Councillor Sharps had finally received his well-deserved award. He spoke about Delyn Borough Council and Councillor Sharps’ achievements on the leisure service programme and on housing improvements which was a significant development at the time.

In paying his tribute, Councillor Clive Carver referred to Councillor Sharps as a local character and a household name.

This was echoed by Councillor Robin Guest who remarked on Councillor Sharps’ commitment to local government service and said that his achievements whilst at Delyn Borough Council were greatly appreciated in Mold. He went on to say that it had been a privilege working with Councillor Sharps and hoped that this would continue.

Councillor Marion Bateman also paid tribute to Councillor Sharps and conveyed her gratitude that he was being honoured for his service.

Councillor Ian Roberts added his personal thanks for all that Councillor Sharps had done for Flint retail park and for all his advice and support.

15. COUNCIL MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 14 April and 12 May 2015 had been circulated with the agenda.

14 April 2015 - Minute number 127: Welsh Government White Paper - Devolution, Democracy and Delivery - Reforming Local Government: Power to the People

Councillor Chris Bithell asked Councillor Hilary Isherwood if she would be willing to withdraw her comments which had been made in response to his remarks on Assembly Members. He explained that his remarks emanated from his long-held views about the method used for electing Assembly Members and that he had made no reference to any specific individual. He added that he had not had the opportunity to respond to this effect to Councillor Isherwood at the meeting.

Councillor Isherwood stated that she wished her comments to remain. Although no names had been given, she felt that the intent was otherwise.

Councillor Bithell reiterated that his comments were about the system and not any individual Assembly Member.

Councillor Aaron Shotton said it was disappointing that the comments could not be withdrawn, however the minutes reflected the comments made by Councillor Isherwood at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

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

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

17. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

A copy of the Chairman's communications had been circulated to all Members before the meeting. In presenting the paper, the Chairman thanked all those who had attended the Civic Sunday event which had raised £500. He also thanked Councillor Carolyn Thomas who had taken part in a 17 mile sponsored walk to raise funds for Gobaith Cymru.

18. PETITIONS

The Chief Officer (Governance) confirmed that none had been received.

19. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chief Officer (Governance) confirmed that none had been received.

20. QUESTIONS

The following questions had been submitted by Councillor Chris Bithell:-

“In relation to Planning Application Number 052377 regarding proposed redevelopment at Bank Farm, Lower Mountain Road, Penyffordd, which was dealt with by the Planning & Development Committee on 17 December 2014. Can you please provide the following information:

- (i) Who made the decision to refer the handling of this application to an external planning consultant?
- (ii) Why was this course of action felt to be necessary in this case given that we have a fully qualified paid staff to deal with planning applications and who do so with all other similar applications?
- (iii) What did this course of action cost Flintshire CC?
- (iv) Will this course of action be taken with all other applications from this particular applicant and will other applicants be afforded and allowed the same course in the determination of their applications and if so in what circumstances?”

Copies of the response to the question, provided by the Cabinet Member for Environment, had been circulated to all Members before the start of the meeting. Councillor Bithell advised that he had no supplementary questions.

The following questions had been submitted by Councillor Rosetta Dolphin:-

“The Greenfield Dock and other areas within Flintshire had in April been occupied by Travellers. The coastal path was used as an open air public convenience. The Greenfield Dock area is a local attraction for residents and promoted as a tourism destination.

- (i) Can the Council supply figures for all the financial costs associated with the individual cleansing of the Greenfield Dock area and the total cost across the whole of the County for the last financial year.
- (ii) Will the Council also comment on the accrued costs and environmental harm deriving from such encampments?”

Copies of the response from the Cabinet Member for Environment had been circulated to Members before the meeting.

On the response to her first question, Councillor Dolphin asked whether the costs included officer time of the Policy, Performance & Partnerships team members along with that of the Legal team, Bailiffs, Streetscene operatives and the cost of protecting the site from unauthorised encampments. She went on to express her appreciation to the officers for their hard work in helping to restrict unauthorised access to sites and asked if details of the costs could be made available if they were not already included.

The Chief Officer (Governance) explained that the figures shown in the response did not reflect these additional costs which were not currently recorded.

21. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS ON COMMITTEE MINUTES

None had been received.

22. NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin had submitted the following Notice of Motion:

“At present the Council must follow lengthy procedures to remove unauthorised encampments and those delays increase the cost and disruption to local residents. Once evicted, travellers are free to return to the site after a relatively short period has elapsed meaning that officers must begin the process over again.

The Council therefore seeks an urgent review of the legal process to evict Travellers from all Council, public and private owned sites. Thus, the Council directs the Deputy Leader and Chief Executive to lobby the Flintshire MPs, new Westminster government and Welsh Government to address the local and national problem of trespass and environmental damage created by Travellers.”

Councillor Dolphin thanked Councillor Bernie Attridge, the Cabinet Member for Environment, for the briefing note which had been shared with all Members. She referred to unauthorised encampments as a widespread issue, particularly in Flintshire at the current time, and pointed out the lack of intervention by the Police and legal restrictions which led to additional time and cost implications for the Council. Whilst respecting the rights of Travellers to reside in designated areas, she pointed out the rights of residents not to be disturbed and said that other Authorities should be encouraged to provide their own designated sites as had been done in Flintshire. In submitting the Notice of Motion, she asked that representations be made to grant more powers to Council officers to address the matter more swiftly.

Councillor Attridge said that as explained in the briefing note, the process for dealing with unlawful encampments was not swift or easy and that officers did their best under difficult circumstances. He agreed that representations would be made to local Members of Parliament and Assembly Members to lobby for action to be taken on improving the legal process. He would also request that the Welsh Local Government Association take up the issue of other Local Authorities providing their own designated sites for Travellers.

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion be supported.

23. IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2015/16

The Chief Officer (Organisational Change) introduced the report to seek adoption and publication of the Improvement Plan 2015/16, which was a statutory

requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. He explained that the Plan was about sustaining performance in the current challenging climate and demonstrated a clear performance framework, whilst meeting criteria from regulators such as the Wales Audit Office (WAO). This was better integrated with financial planning, linked to other corporate plans such as the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), Council Governance Framework and the Corporate Resources Plan.

A presentation was delivered, covering the main points:

- How we built up the Plan
- Choosing in-year priorities
- Member consultation
- Benefits of this approach thus far
- Plan for 2014/15
- Plan for 2015/16
- Priorities for Living Well, Skills & Learning and Modern & Efficient Council
- Using the Plan
- Positive feedback from the WAO Corporate Assessment 2015
- Next steps

The consultation process involving a Member workshop and discussion at the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee had resulted in a number of agreed changes and that later in the year, suggestions would be sought from Overview & Scrutiny on sub-priorities for next year's Plan.

As part of an overview of the 2014/15 Plan, the Policy & Performance Manager reported generally positive outcomes and outlined the key highlights in respect of housing, education, extra care facilities and job creation. Out of the 22 sub-priorities, 68% had made good progress in achieving outcomes which the Council had set out to deliver whilst 32% had made satisfactory progress.

The Plan for 2015/16 retained the eight priorities, with a structure of 17 sub-priorities up to 2017, including some new emerging issues and some which had been carried over from the previous year for continued focus. Other sub-priorities had been broadened or merged, or removed as they were time limited. Once the Plan was published, the second appendix detailing how achievements would be measured would be accessible through a hyperlink and used by Overview & Scrutiny to review progress throughout the year.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) detailed the objectives of the sub-priority on safeguarding vulnerable people and children. These involved the creation of a single safeguarding unit under one manager and preparations for the full implementation of the Social Services & Well-being Act which would equip councils with new powers on safeguarding.

On the sub-priority for apprenticeships and training, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) thanked all those involved in helping the Council to secure the highest level of 16 year olds in education, employment or training last year: this was the highest ever achieved by the Council and across Wales. Many of those individuals not included in this group had more complex needs, and work

would be undertaken at an earlier stage to help them through the provision of skilled mentors and maximising access to employment or training opportunities.

On the sub-priority for developing communities, the Chief Officer (Organisational Change) explained the emphasis on supporting communities to become more resilient and continued support for the development of social enterprise, linked to a forthcoming Member workshop on alternative delivery models.

In moving the report, Councillor Aaron Shotton thanked officers and highlighted the importance of the ambitions and priorities within the Plan in view of diminishing resources. He stressed the need for clarity on priorities to demonstrate where the Council could contribute to key issues such as employment and housing which would remain in the Plan, and for the priorities to be viewed and understood by all. In reflecting on concerns raised previously by external auditors, he referred to the comments in the WAO Corporate Assessment which welcomed the Council's clarity on priorities and demonstrated a clear commitment to continuous improvement. Feedback from the consultation process had been taken on board, including the suggestion by Councillor Andy Dunbobbin to reinforce the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Community Covenant.

In response to comments about publicising the Plan, the Policy & Performance Manager explained that this would be highlighted to the workforce on the Council's Infonet and would be shared with managers at the Change Exchange meeting for cascading at team meetings and appraisals.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas welcomed the inclusion of tourism in the Plan which she felt had been overlooked in the past. She thanked officers for working with the Flintshire Tourism Association and felt that a joint approach could help to improve tourism in the area.

Councillor Richard Jones thanked officers, in particular the Policy & Performance Manager and Performance Team Leader, for their work and highlighted the need for Members to scrutinise the Plan. He said that the document should inform the Medium Term Financial Plan and that any failures would have a consequence. He also commented on reference to the rollout of broadband on which he said the Council would have no influence.

Councillor Jones pointing out the number of references to Deeside within the Plan, saying that services should be supported equally and without bias and that it should not be assumed that other areas of the county would benefit from investment in Deeside. On this basis, he said that he was unable to support the Plan.

Councillor Mike Peers raised issues on the presentation of the draft document in respect of page numbering and wording on the number of priorities at the start of the document. He said that clarity was needed on which were the shared priorities with partners and that the priority for 'improving the choice and quality of local housing' was referred to later in the report as an 'impact'. On the sub-priority for appropriate and affordable homes, he referred to the action to 'stimulate the growth of affordable housing' being linked to Section 106

Agreements and that the sub-priority on business sector growth should clarify the categories of jobs to be created. On community safety, he commented on the loss of funding with local partners for CCTV provision.

A small number of copies of the coloured printed version of the Plan were circulated at the meeting to demonstrate how the final document would be presented. The Policy & Performance Manager explained that the draft version was due to be finalised following the meeting and would be proof-read and page numbers cross-referenced prior to publication.

In response to comments on the sub-priority for town and rural regeneration, the Economic Development Manager provided explanation on the £6.024m grant funding through the Vibrant and Viable Places Programme in which the bidding process had to include a specific case for the regeneration of Deeside. He agreed to respond separately on the provision of match-funding, of which the largest element was drawn from the existing funding for Deeside for the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

Following a request by Councillor Jones for details and locations of the four solar farms, the Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) agreed to clarify this. He advised that approval had been granted by Cabinet to the general principle of investing in solar farms as a mechanism for future sustainable energy. Each example was being reported to Cabinet for approval prior to submitting a business case and Cabinet had recently given outline approval to the next stage business case for two landfill sites in Buckley (Brookhill and Standard). The Chief Officer (Governance) agreed to establish the cost details of the five community asset transfers planned for 2015/16 and provide a response.

On the sub-priority for sustainable development and environmental management, Councillor Clive Carver remarked on the future action to secure planning approval for the four solar farms. The Policy & Performance Manager said that this was one of the actions that the Council intended to do to develop large scale renewable energy schemes, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report. The Chief Officer (Governance) said that if the Council failed to secure planning consent, this would be a fail on that indicator.

On business sector growth, Councillor Carver referred to improving access to broadband and said that no mention had been made of the Welsh Government (WG) fibre-speed service currently operating in Hawarden. He suggested that businesses based in Manor Lane, Hawarden - which were not well served by broadband - could be encouraged to access the fibre-speed broadband.

The Enterprise Manager provided information on different workstreams to support the wider implementation of superfast broadband and to promote this in the Deeside Enterprise Zone. Following comments from Councillor Carver on the differences between fibre-speed and superfast broadband, the Chief Officer (Organisational Change) said that officers would liaise with him outside the meeting.

In response to Councillor Jones' closing comments, Councillor Aaron Shotton said that the Improvement Plan set out the ambitions for job creation in the Deeside Enterprise Zone and that this investment would benefit the whole of

the county. He pointed out that the document included a number of issues relating to other areas of Flintshire including investment in housing across the county.

On being put to the vote, the proposal was carried.

RESOLVED:

That the Improvement Plan 2015/16 be adopted.

24. WEBCASTING PROTOCOL

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented the proposed protocol for webcasting future meetings which had been recommended for adoption by the Constitution Committee and Cabinet. The protocol had been developed using similar protocols in operation at other Authorities where webcasting had been introduced. The report detailed the legal issues relating to the protocol and its use.

As Chairman of the Constitution Committee, Councillor Robin Guest proposed that the protocol be adopted to assist the Council in implementing webcasting in line with other Authorities. This duly seconded and supported.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed Webcasting Protocol be adopted.

25. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

One member of the press and one member of the public were present.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.05 pm)

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Chairman