

CABINET
16 OCTOBER 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 16 October 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Aaron Shotton (Chairman)

Councillors Bernie Attridge (Deputy Leader), Chris Bithell, Helen Brown, Derek Butler, Christine Jones and Kevin Jones

APOLOGY:

Councillors Billy Mullin.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Organisational Change), Chief Officer (Planning and Environment), Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Corporate Finance Manager, Policy and Performance Manager and Team Manager, Committee Services

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor Dave Mackie

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance said agenda item number 7, Regional Safeguarding Children's Board Proposal, would be brought forward and considered after agenda item number 4.

60. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2014 had been circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

61. PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT

The Corporate Finance Manager provided details of the Provisional Welsh Local Government Settlement 2015/16 which had been announced by Welsh Government (WG) on 8 October. The consultation period was open until 19 November 2014. At this stage, the figures were provisional only with the final Settlement expected on 10 December 2014.

Flintshire's Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) had decreased by 1.5% over 2014/15 to £251.255m, which equated to a reduction of £3.886m. The Council's allocation of Aggregate External Finance (AEF) had decreased by 3.4% for 2015/16 which was the same average decrease across Wales.

The report provided details of the damping mechanism (floors), transfers into the settlement and transfers out of the settlement.

As in previous years the Settlement included protection for Education funding equivalent to 1% above the uplift for the WG's revenue funding allocation from the UK Government which equated to 0.6%. An additional £10m across Wales had been included in relation to Social Care services.

The Settlement did not provide full details on specific grants although the following points were made:

- Eleven Education grants had been amalgamated into one Education Improvement Grant for schools which appeared to be a reduction in overall funding of between 10% - 15%.
- There were notable reductions in relation to Supporting People Grant (7.5%) and the Sustainable Waste Management Grant (3%)
- Some grants had increased – Pupil Deprivation Grant (15.2%), Flying Start (10.1%) and the Substance Misuse Action Fund (21.2%)
- Twelve grants were still to be announced (totalling £160m for 2014/15) most notably the post 16 provision in Schools grant

Within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), the Council had been planning for a reduction in AEF in the range of 1.5% - 4.5% for 2015/16, which equated to a budget gap in the range of £12m - £18m. The reduction of 3.4% for Flintshire equated to a revised budget gap of £16.4m.

Member workshops were being arranged to share the details on the proposals and to discuss a budget strategy for dealing with the significant shortfall.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance said the authority was in an unprecedented situation with the severe reductions it faced, with such cuts never been encountered before. He raised his grave concerns for the future of services provided by the Council following the austerity measures for the next financial year.

Although future Settlement figures had not been provided, the Leader said if the current financial trajectory continued, a reduction figure of £50m for the next three years could be faced.

Whilst he respected the decision of Wrexham County Borough Council not to enter into an early voluntary merger following the Public Services Commission, he hoped they would enter into discussions with Flintshire on the possibility of shared services in the interests of residents in Flintshire and Wrexham.

Cabinet Members concurred with the views of the Leader.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the details of the Provisional Settlement be noted; and

- (b) That the impact on the 2015/16 budget, current position and plans for Member engagement be noted.

62. REGIONAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD PROPOSAL

The Cabinet Member for Social Services introduced the report and sought views on the implementation of Regional and Local arrangements for safeguarding children.

The Welsh Government (WG) announced in 2011, as part of the Social Services and Well-being Act (2014), the three sub-regional Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCB) would take greater steps to promote integration and collaboration and move towards a regional structure. From 23 September 2014 the North Wales Safeguarding Children's Board (NWSCB) would be formally constituted, and with a strong commitment towards a local presence, the LSCB would formally cease and be re-convened as safeguarding delivery groups based on sub-regional locations.

Within the North Wales context, the revised structure would also address the following concerns which were noted during the development of the new model:

- That local needs, culture and language be supported via the Local Safeguarding Delivery Boards
- Statutory Directors of Social Services could continue to report to elected Members in their respected local areas
- Local and Regional structures would allow different representatives at different levels, reducing the pressures on senior management
- The Regional Board would be able to make decisions and promote more effective and timely process

Following a question from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, the Chief Officer (Social Services) said the implementation of the North Wales Safeguarding Children's Board would be cost neutral.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed structure for the Regional Safeguarding Children's Board to be known as the North Wales Safeguarding Children's Board be approved;
- (b) That the temporary host authority (Conwy) be confirmed until a permanent arrangement is confirmed for April 2015; and
- (c) That it be agreed that the minutes of the Regional Safeguarding Children's Board be shared with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and the Cabinet Member for Social Services and regular, initially twice yearly, update reports on the work of the Board be provided to Cabinet and the Social and Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the Chief Officer, Social Services.

63. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2013/14

The Policy and Performance Manager introduced the Annual Performance Report for publication of which a revised copy had been circulated.

The Report must be published by 31 October each year and it accounted for the organisation's previous year's performance against its Improvement Priorities.

The requirements of the Measure were met through the "forward-looking" documents of the Improvement Plan 2013/14 and the Council (Plan) Governance Framework which set out the vision and priorities for the Council.

The complex document, required by Welsh Government (WG), had many components that had already been published, in particular, the year-end Improvement Plan monitoring reports in June. Whist meeting WG guidance, it was recognised that the detailed report may not be the best way to engage the public and workforce. Next year the format of the Annual Performance Report would be simplified by signposting to existing documents. However, an Executive Summary had been provided with the report this year which could be shared with partners, workforce and the public.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance said he was particularly pleased to see the details on housing provision and extra care. Similarly, the Cabinet Member for Economic Development welcomed the fully successful outcome on Growth and Sustainable Jobs.

RESOLVED:

That the 2013/14 Annual Performance Report be endorsed for publication.

64. OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2013/14 - ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE

The Policy and Performance Manager presented the end of year position of progress against the Outcome Agreement for 2013/14.

The current Outcome Agreement was a three year agreement based on five strategic themes from the Welsh Government's (WG) Programme for Government.

The annual assessment of the Outcome Agreement was no longer based solely on the achievement of outcomes. The structure of the current Outcome Agreement framework comprised two distinct components: Part 1 – outcomes; and Part 2 – corporate governance. The Outcome Agreement would also be split into two parts; 70% for the delivery of better outcomes and 30% based on standards of corporate governance arrangements within the Authority.

For assessment of achievement of Part 1, the authority was required to provide a self-assessment report to the extent to which it had delivered against agreed outcomes. The authority was not required to make a submission for assessment of Part 2; this was based on standards of corporate governance as reported by the Auditor General for Wales.

The first year's performance of the Outcome Agreement was complete and a self-assessment of performance against the actions and measures had been undertaken. The assessment was that all five themes were fully successful. Give that assessment, it was expected that Flintshire County Council would achieve the maximum ten points and be awarded the full grant of approximately £1.458m.

WG had confirmed that they would recommend to the Minister that 100% of the grant be paid and that they were satisfied with the revised content of the Outcome Agreement for year two.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made against the Outcome Agreement for 2013/14 and the Welsh Government's recommendation to the Minister be noted.

65. PRIORITISATION OF HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES AND TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER VARIATIONS

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment introduced the evaluation matrix for use to assess and prioritise all Highway Improvement Schemes. Also presented was the evaluation matrix for assessing and prioritising Traffic Regulation Order related requests.

The authority had a list, compiled over many years, of highway locations which had been the subject of requests for highway improvements from various sources. These schemes had been logged but were not subjected to any prioritisation or evaluation.

It was proposed to apply the evaluation matrix to quantify both the scale of the current problem and to calculate the benefits of the improvement. The matrix would produce a numerical assessment or value for the schemes allowing a true comparison and subsequent prioritisation of the various projects across the County to be produced. This would ensure the scheme in most need was carried out, subject to the availability of budgets.

Following adoption of the Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) powers in 2013, there were constant demands from local Members, Town and Community Council's and residents to review, relax or provide new Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) to control parking on various streets and roads across the County.

There was currently no mechanism to prioritise those requests for TRO amendments and this had resulted in frustration for the individual or organisation requesting the change. With restrictions on funding, no indication of the likely date for considering requests could be provided and the scheme would be added to a long list of similar requests.

It was proposed that a second evaluation matrix be introduced to evaluate each enquiry in order to produce a defined priority order for TRO variation requests. This would also produce a numeric score for each of the proposals to allow a true comparison and priority list to be produced.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Highway Improvement evaluation matrix which will be used to evaluate and prioritise future Highway Improvements bids to Welsh Government (WG) and the Council's own capital works programme be approved; and
- (b) That the Traffic Regulation Order evaluation matrix which will be used to prioritise Traffic Regulation Order amendment, variations and requests to provide new Traffic Regulation Orders be approved.

66. LARGE SCALE RENEWABLE ENERGY OPPORTUNITIES

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment provided details of the opportunities available to Flintshire County Council in respect of large scale freestanding renewable energy systems.

In recent months both the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) had been investigating ways to assist local authorities to move from installing relatively small scale renewable schemes to much larger commercial scale developments.

Flintshire County Council had considerable land assets, ranging from Council farms to landfill sites, parks and woodland, and a wide variety of other parcels of land. Many had potential, either to develop as energy schemes or contribute to developing a more sustainable and profitable future.

The Council's Carbon Reduction Strategy had four primary strands to achieve the 60% reduction target for carbon emissions from County buildings by 2021. One of the most significant elements was the development of large scale renewable generation, which would be essential for the Council to meet the target.

The Welsh Government (WG) were also investigating ways to promote and encourage large scale renewable development in local authorities, and potential funding had been suggested although how that would be accessed, or what criteria would be necessary, was uncertain.

A number of local authorities had already begun the process of building or developing large scale renewable energy projects and details of those authorities were contained in the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That approval be given to officers to identify all suitable large scale renewable energy sites within Flintshire County Council's ownership and undertake initial assessments of their viability, and potential yield. Details of these sites and a development programme to be brought back to Cabinet for comment/approval;

- (b) That the development of a 10 year action plan, detailing options and aspirational targets as a route map to achieving the Council's existing Carbon Reduction Strategy for renewable energy generation, and ultimately the potential to become a net exporter of electrical energy be approved; and
- (c) That a budget of £50k be allocated for the work.

67. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2014/15 (MONTH 4)

The Corporate Finance Manager provided Members with the latest revenue budget monitoring information for 2014/15 for the Council Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) based on actual income and expenditure as at Month 4 and projected forward to year-end based on the most up to date information available.

The projected year end position, as estimated at Month 4 was:

Council Fund

- Net in year non pay expenditure forecast to be £0.019m lower than budget. This did not include any potential effect of variances on pay
- Projected contingency reserve balance at 31 March 2015 of £2.960

Housing Revenue Account

- Net in year expenditure forecast to be £0.038m less than budget
- Projected closing balance as at 31 March 2015 of £1.203m

The report provided details on corporate and functional efficiencies, workforce efficiencies, inflation and monitoring budget assumptions and risks.

On unearmarked reserves and the current projected outturn at Month 4, the projected balance on the contingency reserve at 31 March 2015 was £2.960m, full details of which were contained in appendix 4 to the report.

The position at Month 4 on the HRA was an overall projected underspend of £0.038m and a projected closing balance at Month 4 of £1.203m, which at 4% of total expenditure satisfied the prudent approach of ensuring a minimum level of 3%.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance highlighted the former Euticals site which was identified as a risk in the report and expressed the importance of financial assistance being made available by Welsh Government (WG). The Chief Officer (Governance) said the Chief Executive continued to request financial assistance from Welsh Government (WG) to which the Leader responded that political intervention could take place if WG continued to not respond.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;

- (b) That the projected Council Fund contingency sum as at 31 March 2015 be noted; and
- (c) That the projected final level of balances on the Housing Revenue Account be noted.

68. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2014/15 (MONTH 4)

The Corporate Finance Manager provided Members with the Month 4 (end of July) capital programme information for 2014/15 which detailed the cumulative information relating to each programme as shown in appendix A to the report.

Changes during the period, details of which were provided in the report, had resulted in a net increase in the programme of £3.060m (Council Fund £2.530m, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) £0.530m).

Actual expenditure at the end of July (Month 4) across the whole of the programme was £7.088m. The breakdown of expenditure was detailed in the report which showed that 16.16% of the budget had been spent across the programme (Council Fund 14.45% and HRA 20.38%).

The Early Identified Rollover of £0.276m had been identified which reflected reviewed spending plans across all programme areas. Those combined amounts had been identified as now required to meet the cost of programme works in 2015/16. Information relating to each programme area was contained in appendix B and summarised in the table in the report.

The original estimate for in year capital receipts was £1.250m, of which £0.488m would be used to finance capital expenditure in 2014/15 and £0.762m to address the projected shortfall in capital receipts from 2013/14. The latest reviewed position assumed receipts at the budgeted level of £1.250m, with the largest amount of the receipts anticipated to be received in March 2015. There were no receipts received at Month 4.

The outturn shortfall in 2013/14 was £1.578m, which, together with some minor adjustments and the assumed level of capital receipts, currently indicated a total shortfall in 2014/15 of £0.843m. The first call on any excess receipts, above the budgeted figure of £1.250m, received in the current year would be to address the brought forward shortfall.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted and approved; and
- (b) That the rollover adjustments be approved.

69. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS

An information report on the actions taken under delegated powers was submitted. The actions were as set out below:-

Organisational Change

- Disposal of Land to the Rear of Bromfield Industrial Estate

Community and Enterprise

- Entering into a Number of Private Sector Leasing Agreements in Order to Ensure Flintshire County Council can Provide Adequate Levels of Smaller Accommodation Units to Alleviate and Prevent Homelessness.

RESOLVED:

That the actions taken under delegated powers be noted.

70. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting for the following items by virtue of exempt information under paragraph 15 of Part 4 of Schedule 12 A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

71. REVISED STAFFING STRUCTURE - STREETSCENE AND TRANSPORTATION

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) detailed the proposed staffing structure for the new Streetscene and Transportation Portfolio and provided full background details on the revised structure.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed staffing structures for the new Streetscene and Transportation Portfolio be approved.

72. HIGH LEVEL STAFFING STRUCTURE - PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

The Chief Officer (Planning and Environment) introduced the proposed high level staffing structure for the Planning and Environment Portfolio and provided full background details on the revised structure.

RESOLVED:

That the high level staffing structure for the Planning and Environment Portfolio be approved.

73. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.42 pm)

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Chairman