

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 APRIL 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 14 April 2016

PRESENT: Councillor Clive Carver (Chairman)

Councillors: Paul Cunningham, Peter Curtis, Andy Dunbobbin, Brian Lloyd, Vicky Perfect, David Roney, Nigel Steele-Mortimer and Arnold Woolley

SUBSTITUTION:

Councillor: Haydn Bateman for Marion Bateman

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor Marion Bateman attended as an observer for the latter part of the meeting

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Robin Guest, Ron Hampson, Richard Jones and Richard Lloyd

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Aaron Shotton – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Chief Executive and Corporate Finance Manager, Regional Service Manager for minute number 98

IN ATTENDANCE:

Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

96. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

No declarations of interest were made.

97. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 March 2016 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Matters Arising

On the issue of the 101 service presentation, the Member Engagement Manager advised that the Local Sergeant had put plans in place to ensure that additional officers in Saltney were to be trained on the use of the CCTV laptop.

The Chief Executive referred to page 7 on the Use of Consultants and advised that work was being carried out to provide assurance on Value for Money and this would be submitted to the June meeting of the Committee. Detailed analysis by the Corporate Service Manager and his team on the £2.831m coded as consultancy spend was also being undertaken and this information would be circulated to Members shortly.

RESOLVED:

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

98. EMERGENCY PLANNING SERVICE UPDATE

The Chief Executive introduced Mr. Neil Culff, the new Regional Service Manager, to the Committee. He explained that information would be provided on what the service does for Flintshire and an update would also be given on the three Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations (COMAH) sites in the county.

The remit of this Committee included a role on the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act and the Chief Executive explained that reports had previously been considered by the Committee on regional emergency planning. The service, which had covered Flintshire and Denbighshire Councils was the only region in Wales to have a fully integrated service. Flintshire was the lead authority and the Project Board included representatives from each of the six North Wales constituent authorities.

The Regional Service Manager explained about his background before taking on this role. On the issue of the Civil Contingencies Act, he reminded Members that the responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Act lay with each individual local authority.

The Regional Service Manager provided a detailed presentation which covered the following areas:-

- Purpose of presentation
- Overview
- Service Overview
- Current work within Flintshire
- Future activity
- Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations, 2015
- COMAH – detail
- COMAH plans

The Chief Executive commented on the internal structure referred to in the presentation and explained that tasks were allocated based on the required skills and knowledge in each area. Councillor David Roney referred to the Warwick Chemicals site in Mostyn and commented on a high powered gas pipeline through Rhewl, which he had been unaware of until recently. He commented on regular meetings held with Mold Councillors about the Synthite site and asked where Local Members fitted into the structure. The Chief Executive advised that the structure shown in the presentation was for the internal Corporate Emergency Management Team. He added that if Councillor Roney had concerns about assurance of security issues at the Warwick site, this could be raised with the relevant people to ensure that meetings such as those with Local Members near other COMAH sites could take place.

In response to a further query from Councillor Roney about training, the Chief Executive commented on the different types of training that was carried out

such as scenario planning and said that Member briefings which had been held in the past could be reconsidered; he added that a debrief on training exercises could also be provided for Members. He spoke of reassurance and community engagement which he said was always a priority.

Councillor Peter Curtis commented on the importance of testing and Councillor Arnold Woolley sought clarification on the protection of utilities, particularly water supplies. The Regional Service Manager said that Welsh Water had robust arrangements in place if the water supply became contaminated and the Local Authorities were in a position to provide support in the delivery of such supplies. He went on to explain that statutory agencies were classed as Category 1 responders and services such as utilities were Category 2 responders and he commented on the multi-agency arrangements that were in place. In response to a query from Councillor Woolley on the issue of communication, the Regional Service Manager said that it was the duty of Welsh Water to provide water to homes with the Council providing support where needed but the issue of communication was the responsibility of the service provider. The Chief Executive advised that following a training event or major incident, a detailed evaluation was undertaken to learn from any mistakes and to share good practices.

Councillor Paul Cunningham expressed his thanks for the work of the Emergency Planning Team and said that he had every confidence in what they did. Councillor Woolley sought clarification on whether enough information was available on the vulnerable and disabled residents in a community in the event of an incident. In response, the Chief Executive said that communication was always a challenge but progress had been made and added that even though training events were well planned, there were always lessons to be learned.

In response to a question from Councillor Haydn Bateman about the bomb scare that took place at County Hall earlier in the year, the Chief Executive said that the Council had reacted well to the event but advised that there were areas that could be improved on.

Following a query from the Chairman, the Regional Service Manager spoke of the importance of sharing public information before, during and after an event and spoke of the ongoing work with the Corporate Communications Team. He also referred to a Community Risk Register for North Wales and commented on other workstreams which were being worked on such as Business Continuity, Resilience Direct and revisiting the Rest Centre plan. The Regional Service Manager commented on the Exercise Centurion Shield event that had taken place in Buckley which had provided vital information on the identify of local vulnerable people in the area which could ensure that a targeted plan was put in place if such an incident occurred. The Chief Executive said that it had been an invaluable exercise to highlight local knowledge of those in the community who were vulnerable which would allow the appropriate support network to be put in place if required.

On the issue of COMAH sites in the County, the Regional Service Manager advised that there were three sites in Mostyn, Mold and Sandycroft, all of which were upper tier sites. The Chief Executive explained that the Euticals site had been a COMAH site in the clean-up stage but no longer had this

designation. The Regional Service Manager said that a multi-agency plan and exercise schedule was in place; the Chief Executive suggested that these documents could be shared with Members but added that these would be redacted versions of the plans. Councillor Woolley welcomed the plans in place for each of the COMAH sites but sought clarification on areas that were 'down-wind' of these sites that could be affected in the event of an emergency. The Regional Service Manager explained that advice would be sought and the issue dealt with depending on the information that was available and spoke of the good working relationships in place with the COMAH operators and Competent Authority.

Councillor Brian Lloyd commented on the quarterly meeting held with the Managing Director of the Synthite Limited site in Mold. Councillor Roney said that he would contact the Management Team at Warwick Chemicals about setting up similar meetings.

On behalf of Councillor Richard Jones who had been unable to attend this meeting, the Member Engagement Manager asked how contact numbers were kept relevant and suggested that job titles rather than names should be shown in the list. Councillor Jones had also suggested that an audit of the plan should be carried out at least once a year. The Regional Service Manager said that an updated contact list was being reviewed and he agreed that it should reflect job titles not names. The Chief Executive suggested that both could be used and advised that the plan was reviewed frequently.

The Member Engagement Manager said that during earlier discussions it had been requested that the following documents be circulated to the Committee following the meeting:

- Community Risk Register
- Redacted COMAH plans
- Exercise schedules for the sites

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee thanks the Chief Executive and the Regional Service Manager for the presentation and is assured by the update;
- (b) That the Committee shall receive future reports on the preparedness of the Council to plan for emergencies and specific follow up reports to any major local or regional emergency events to which the Council has had to respond or exercises which have taken place; and
- (c) That a pack, comprising such material as the community risk register, suitable redacted versions of the COMAH plans and the exercise schedule for sites, be circulated to Members in due course.

99. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2015/16 (MONTH 10)

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced a report to provide Members with the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2015/16 (Month 10) for the Council Fund

and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which was to be submitted to Cabinet on 19 April 2016.

For the Council Fund, the projected net in-year expenditure was forecast to be £1.110m lower than budget. Appendix 1 detailed the movements from Month 9 which included an efficiency of £0.116m in Governance that would not be achieved in 2015/16 and a projected under-recovery of contribution to the pension fund of £0.178m in Central & Corporate Finance; both of these figures had been offset by an underspend in Social Services and in Central & Corporate Finance.

Appendix 3 provided details of the latest position of the programme of efficiencies and it was projected that £10.628m (83%) would be achieved resulting in a net underachievement of £2.246m. On the issue of inflation, it was anticipated that £0.064m for food inflation would not be required and there was a surplus of £0.061m remaining from inflation set aside for pay. Therefore £0.125m was now projected to underspend and the balance of 2014/15 inflation and £0.110m from the in-year inflation had been included as an efficiency within the 2016/17 budget. Taking into account previous allocations and the current underspend at Month 9, the balance on the contingency reserve at 31 March 2016 was projected to be £4.746m. The Corporate Finance Manager advised that various requests to carry forward funding into 2016/17 had been identified and details were shown in appendix 6; all were recommended for approval.

The Month 10 Monitoring Report for the HRA was projecting in-year expenditure to be £0.092m lower than budget and a projected closing balance as at 31 March 2016 of £1.329m was 4.3% of total expenditure which satisfied the prudent approach of ensuring a minimum level of 3%.

Councillor Haydn Bateman asked whether appeals as a result of Single Status had been budgeted for. In response, the Corporate Finance Manager said that a closure report on Single Status had previously been submitted to Cabinet and added that there were some outstanding elements such as appeals but a provision had been included in the budget for this.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2015/16 (Month 10) report be received;
- (b) That the Committee confirms that it is not making any formal recommendations to Cabinet on this occasion.

100. VARIATION IN ORDER OF AGENDA ITEMS

The Member Engagement Manager suggested that the Forward Work Programme item be brought forward whilst the Committee awaited the arrival of the Regional Director for BT.

RESOLVED:

That consideration of the Forward Work Programme report be brought forward.

101. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

He detailed the items for consideration at the 12th May 2016 meeting and advised that a report on the Use of Agency Workers would also be submitted to that meeting. In providing details of the reports to be considered at the 16th June 2016 meeting, he added that a report on the Use of Consultants would be submitted to that meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme, as amended at the meeting, be approved; and
- (b) That the Member Engagement Manager, in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and officers, be authorised to vary the work programme between meetings.

102. PRESENTATION BY REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF BT

The Chairman introduced Miss Alwen Williams, the Regional Director of BT to the Committee.

Miss Williams provided a detailed presentation which covered the following areas:

- Wales Progress
- Flintshire Progress
- Local Authority Coverage
- And what about those not covered by Superfast Cymru
- New Residential Developments

The Chairman referred to businesses on the Hawarden Business Park and raised concern about problems that were being experienced because of lower speed of broadband than other locations also on the Hawarden Exchange. He said that this appeared to be because two services could not operate the same service in the same place and he spoke of a housing development on the other side of the road that had fibre to the cabinet enabled. In referring in particular to Cabinet 26 on the Hawarden Exchange, he asked when the Cabinet would go live. Miss Williams confirmed that public money could not be used to overbuild where other publicly funded networks were already available and advised that she would discuss the concerns raised with the Superfast Broadband Development Team.

The Chairman also commented that he was aware of some areas where developers had put in a broadband service as part of a development which locked in the householders to the developer's choice of broadband provider. He went on to raise the issue of nuisance telephone calls which could be alleviated by the use of a device which identified the caller and prevented such calls

reaching the recipient. However he explained that a problem with this was that any calls from Flintshire County Council would show as 'number withheld' and therefore these could not be identified. Miss Williams said that nuisance calls were an increasing issue and recent changes had been put in place such as the development of devices to remove such calls but added that she would need to discuss the issue of calls from organisations such as the Council with the appropriate BT team. She also provided details of a service which could assist in the removal of nuisance calls by asking the caller to record their name to let the receiver of the call know who was calling; any calls that could not give a name would not be connected to the receiver.

Councillor Arnold Woolley sought clarification on whether any guidance was available from Welsh Government (WG) for Local Authority Planning Committees on the inclusion by developers of the provision of a broadband service within major housing developments. Miss Williams advised that developers could now work with Openreach to include fibre connectivity as part of their housing development. If the developer did this, the householder then had the choice to pick their own service provider to provide their fibre broadband service. . In response to a further comment from Councillor Woolley, Miss Williams spoke of regular meetings that WG held about broadband exploitation and of a five year programme by BT that was in place to ensure that enough guidance and information was available for businesses to make the correct choice about the connectivity solutions that were available.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin welcomed the presentation and asked for further information on the resilience of the materials used in the installation of fibre broadband connectivity. In response, Miss Williams advised that the benefit of fibre was that it was waterproof and she spoke of copper and aluminium, both of which could degrade over time. She added that the final connection to a property would be copper so a consistent programme of upgrades to avoid degradation of the material was in place. Fault reports were also monitored as part of a proactive fault reduction programme to identify whether there were any patterns in the reasons for the faults; this was an ongoing programme. Miss Williams spoke of the BT research facility in Adastral Park Ipswich and of a g.fast programme that was being trialled in Swansea which was effectively providing between 300 to 500 mbps and it was anticipated that this would be available for 10 million properties by 2020. She advised that BT now owned the mobile provider EE and the extended use of mobile technology such as 5G was progressing. She added that BT were keen to explore how fibre networks could be used to extend the provision of 4G and broadband to properties that coverage previously did not reach.

In response to a question from Councillor Haydn Bateman about Openreach, Miss Williams said that BT owned Openreach and spoke of the benefits of this. She explained that she worked closely with Openreach on service delivery but understood from customer complaints that the standard of service needed improving. A new Chief Executive for Openreach was in place and capital spend to improve the core network had been committed. Miss Williams spoke of 1,000 jobs that had been repatriated from India to provide front end customer service and added that 750 people were employed by EE in Merthyr Tydfil who were now part of BT in Wales.

The Chairman allowed Councillor Marion Bateman, who was an observer at the meeting, to ask a question. She referred to an issue where BT had given an end date for a service but this had not been kept because Openreach had not completed the work that was required. Councillor Bateman asked whether this issue could be raised with Openreach by BT. In response, Miss Williams confirmed that as BT was a customer of Openreach, if a delivery date was not achieved by Openreach which would mean the terms of the contract had not been met, then BT could speak to Openreach to discuss possible options. She spoke of superfast broadband contracts and commented on problems that had occurred such as with civil engineering works but added that BT worked closely with Openreach to provide feedback to them to ensure that they were aware of any issues that arose.

Councillor Aaron Shotton indicated that he had suggested that Miss Williams be invited to attend a meeting to allow the Committee to raise any issues or areas of concern with her. He welcomed the close working between BT and the Council.

The Chairman thanked Miss Williams for her presentation and her technical knowledge.

RESOLVED:

That Miss Alwen Williams, the BT Regional Director for Wales be thanked for her attendance and the detailed presentation which she delivered to the Committee.

103. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the public or press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.24 pm)

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Chairman