

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 JULY 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 19 July 2016

PRESENT: Councillor Ray Hughes (Chairman)

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Chris Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, David Evans, Cindy Hinds, Colin Legg, Brian Lloyd and Nancy Matthews

SUBSTITUTES: Councillors: Dennis Hutchinson (for Richard Lloyd) and Mike Peers (for Veronica Gay)

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Alison Halford and Paul Shotton, and the Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Veronica Gay

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Bernie Attridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment; Councillor Kevin Jones, Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection & Leisure; Chief Executive; Chief Officer (Planning & Environment); Corporate Finance Manager; Waste & Ancillary Services Manager; Highways Network Manager and Transportation & Logistics Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

21. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2016 were submitted.

Matters Arising on Minute Number 17 - 12 Month Review of the Council's Car Parking Strategy

The Facilitator agreed to send the information on parking fines, which had been circulated to the Committee on 13 July, to Councillor Peers who had been a substitute at the meeting.

Councillor David Evans sought an update on the removal of a loading bay in Charmleys Lane, Shotton. In recognition of the issues which had been raised, Councillor Bernie Attridge said that a decision had been made to re-instate the loading bay subject to consultation with the Town Council. In response to concerns about unauthorised use of the County Hall car park, consideration would be given to how best to monitor this prior to the introduction of the parking scheme in September/October.

Councillor Evans referred to his request for information on Civil Parking Enforcement and sought a breakdown by wards of on/off street parking fines, identifying roads where there were persistent problems. This would remove the need for a further report in September. The Waste & Ancillary Services Manager agreed to look into whether a detailed breakdown could be circulated outside the meeting.

Councillor Attridge took the opportunity to thank Katie Wilby, the Transportation & Logistics Manager, and her team for their excellent work in arranging cover for bus services following the collapse of GHA Coaches. The Chairman added his personal thanks.

RESOLVED:

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

22. COUNCIL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2017/18

The Chief Executive presented an update on the financial forecast for the 2017/18 financial year. This included budget pressures and proposed efficiencies for Planning & Environment and Streetscene & Transportation for 2017/18 as the third and final year of the current portfolio business planning cycle.

The Committee was asked for its support on the efficiencies set out and to recognise that any further cuts could cause unacceptable risks to services. The approach to budget consultation at this earlier stage had received positive support from other Overview & Scrutiny committees which helped to strengthen the case being made by the Council to the Welsh Government (WG).

A presentation was given by officers covering the following areas:

- Local Context - Planning & Environment and Streetscene
- Current Plans - Streetscene & Transportation
- Comparative Analysis
- Business Plan Efficiencies and Pressures
- Resilience Statements
- Ancillary & Waste Services
- Transportation & Logistics

In summarising the overall financial position, the Corporate Finance Manager highlighted the £14.4m projected gap in the revised financial forecast for 2017/18 based on a number of assumptions including a 1.5% cut in the Revenue Support Grant and 3% increase in Council Tax. Members were reminded of the Council's three part strategy to identify solutions to the financial challenges. Work on this would continue over the summer, however even if the £6.321m of efficiencies and income growth were to be achieved, a projected gap of £8.1m would remain outstanding for 2017/18.

Whilst Councillor Chris Dolphin acknowledged the scale of the financial challenges, he pointed out that many members of the public did not understand the reasons behind the financial pressures and the need for efficiencies. He

commented on the need for more regular gully cleaning and grass cutting services, particularly in rural areas where there could be safety issues. He felt that the delivery of acceptable levels of service should be accommodated within the 24/7 service now provided by Streetscene.

Councillor Bernie Attridge stressed that road safety was a priority of the service and asked that specific safety concerns such as those on grass cutting be raised directly with Streetscene supervisors who were the designated contacts. He gave reassurance that gully cleaning took place at all hours and suggested that those concerns be discussed with the Highways Network Manager following the meeting. Members were able to inspect the gully cleaning work schedule and raise any issues with the supervisors.

Councillor Nancy Matthews agreed that further cuts to the portfolio were a particular concern as these services impacted on all residents. On efficiency plans in Transportation & Logistics to encourage more rail travel by officers, she felt that all options for cheaper tickets should be explored.

When asked about plans to include other plastic recyclables, the Waste & Ancillary Services Manager stated that the future aim was to incorporate mixed plastic recycling as the market was improving. Councillor Kevin Jones spoke about discussions with WG on the potential for plastic recycling facilities in Wales and advised that mixed plastic recycling would be introduced prior to the enforcement on side waste.

In response to comments from Councillor Cindy Hinds on the need for more clarity amongst the public on recycling items, the Waste & Ancillary Services Manager advised that an education campaign would take place.

The Committee supported Councillor Matthews' proposal for an initial workshop to re-educate Members on recycling, as a starting point.

Councillor Ian Dunbar welcomed the controlled efficiencies made in the service. He suggested that information could be shared with Members on hotspot areas for side waste and that lengthy delays in the pest control service should be addressed. On the latter point, the Chief Officer was unaware of these delays and advised that a new addition to the team would help to deal with telephone calls to the service. Future plans for the pest control service were included in the presentation. In response to a query on planning fees, it was explained that the introduction of the new regime mid-year in 2015/16 meant that the Council only partially benefited from the increased income. This applied where planning applications were determined within timescale or subject to agreement by the applicant. On the potential to explore electric-powered vehicles at the Alltami depot, Councillor Jones spoke about the need to first determine and agree on values of the electricity generated by the solar farms, and the possibility of also utilising that power at County Hall. Councillor Dunbar welcomed the involvement of Town/Community Councils on the review of subsidised bus services but relayed complaints about the withdrawal of a service in Shotton. Councillor Jones explained that the establishment of the scheme would require support from nominated representatives and would be piloted in Holywell, Mold, Buckley and along the Deeside strip.

Councillor Mike Peers referred to the amber risk levels in the portfolio and asked about the implications if these were to change to red. The Chief Executive spoke about the expectation to work towards the full target of efficiencies next year and questioned whether the resilience rating on Streetscene should be amber rather than green. He added that the amber risks supported the case to the WG for a national debate on funding. The Chief Officer referred to the implications of a red risk level for resilience as failure to meet key performance indicators and deliver Improvement Plan Priorities, along with negative customer feedback.

Councillor Peers also asked whether the £2.105m of efficiencies within the portfolio for 2017/18 represented the expected 30% target. The efficiencies for Planning and Environment were 27.6% of its budget, extending to 30% over the three years, with those for Streetscene & Transportation as a whole at 34%. Councillor Jones referred to the challenges in achieving these levels of efficiencies whilst maintaining services.

In response to questions from Councillor Haydn Bateman, Councillor Jones gave an explanation on the levels of gas to be produced from the former landfill sites. On the enforcement of side waste, the Waste & Ancillary Services Manager pointed out that the vast majority of residents complied. He summarised the approach to be taken to enforcement involving education targeted at specific areas, the ceasing of collections and use of stickers and barcoding, with fixed penalty notices as the last resort.

In summary, the Committee indicated no objections to the efficiencies and recognised that further cuts would cause unacceptable risk.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Members of the Committee note the report;
- (b) That the Committee recognises that finding future efficiencies of any scale, beyond the adopted business plan, will be limited without seeing significant impacts on service frequency and quality; and
- (c) That a workshop is arranged in the Autumn for all Members on recycling.

23. REVIEW OF THE HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CENTRE PROVISION

Councillor Kevin Jones presented a report to update the Committee on progress made in the future provision of Household Recycling Centre (HRC) sites following discussion at the meeting in May 2016. He reminded Members of the background to the issue and advised that the Welsh Government (WG) had confirmed its intention to commit funding to develop the current facilities in Nercwys and Buckley. A further bid for the potential provision of a new facility in Flint/Connah's Quay would be presented later in the year to WG who had given tentative agreement subject to determination of a location and profile. Amongst the criteria set by WG was the target to achieve 90% recycling at all the facilities, which would require a programme of education to the public. Provisional drawings being prepared for the sites in Nercwys and Buckley would require

support from the Town and Community Councils and local Members prior to the planning application stage.

In respect of the proposed single facility in Flint/Connah's Quay, early discussions had commenced on a particular site and once agreed, would be subject to consultation with the Town Councils and local Members. In the interim, operations would continue with the potential to extend the current arrangement with Flintshire Refurbs to undertake all bulk waste collections. Plans for each site would be shared with the respective Town/Community Councils as well as through the Committee and via the planning process. It was noted that each site would close separately to allow for the necessary work. In conclusion, Councillor Jones hoped that the Committee and the public would support these outcomes which demonstrated that the concerns and views expressed had been heard and acted upon.

The Chief Executive advised that there would be no further proposed reduction in the HRC core budget with the objective being to make savings from reduced landfill charges through improved recycling rates.

The Chairman and Members of the Committee spoke in support of the positive outcomes achieved through the significant efforts of Councillor Jones as Cabinet Member. Councillor Mike Peers commented on the contribution of the Committee and the need for all Members to do their best to encourage use of the HRC sites in order to achieve the targets. Councillor Jones thanked the officers involved for their input in reaching this position.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the progress made to review the HRC provision and requests a full report on the preferred location and individual site layouts to be provided to the October Committee meeting.

24. PERFORMANCE REPORT 2015/16

The Committee received a report analysing the Council's progress towards the national indicators set by the Welsh Government (WG) during 2015/16. The information included trend analysis for indicators relevant to the Committee together with an overall view across the organisation.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee, having considered the 2015/16 Performance Report, has no concerns to feedback to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

25. IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2015/16 YEAR-END PROGRESS

An update report was received to consider progress towards the delivery of the impacts set out in the 2015/16 Improvement Plan, focussing on the areas of under-performance relevant to the Committee during the fourth quarter/year end. No issues were raised.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee, having considered the Improvement Plan 2015/16 Year-end Progress report, has no concerns to feedback to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

26. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

In presenting the current Forward Work Programme for consideration, the Facilitator advised that new items had been scheduled in consultation with the Chief Officers. The following changes were agreed:

- Following earlier discussion, the report on Civil Parking Enforcement would be removed.
- The item on Proposed Changes to Waste Vehicles and Recycling Opportunities to be brought to a special meeting of the Committee, if needed, subject to the timing of consideration by Cabinet.
- Item on speed limits on 'C' roads to be scheduled, as requested by Councillor Nancy Matthews.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be amended as necessary; and
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

27. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.55 pm)

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Chairman