

CABINET
20 NOVEMBER 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of Flintshire County Council held in the Clwyd Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 20th November 2018.

PRESENT: **Aaron Shotton (Chairman)**

Councillors: Chris Bithell, Derek Butler, Christine Jones, Billy Mullin, Ian Roberts and Carolyn Thomas

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Housing and Assets), Chief Officer (Social Services), Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Corporate Finance Manager, Revenues Manager and Team Leader – Democratic Services.

APOLOGY:

Councillor Bernie Attridge.

OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Patrick Heesom.

255. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

256. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd October 2018 were approved as a correct record.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

257. 2019/20 COUNCIL FUND BUDGET: UPDATED FORECAST AND STAGE 1 AND 2 BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Chief Executive introduced the 2019/20 Council Fund Budget: Updated Forecast and Stage 1 and 2 Budget Proposals report which set out solutions for those stages. Stage 1 covered budget solutions for corporate finance with Stage 2 covering budget solutions for the service portfolios.

A recent Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the proposals for both stages, having taken into account recommendations and feedback from the five portfolio Overview and Scrutiny Committees which met during October and November. Comments made at the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee included transport cost efficiencies and reserves and balances. Officers would provide responses to the transports efficiencies and a report would be submitted to a future meeting on

reserves and balances. Members of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee formally supported the campaign, #BacktheAsk.

The Corporate Finance Manager provided details on the updated forecast prior to the provisional settlement and details of new pressures. Table 2 of the report detailed the revised forecast.

The Stage 1 budget proposals had been shared at Member workshops in July and September with proposals totalling £7.937m. Throughout October and November the respective Overview and Scrutiny Committees considered the Stage 2 proposals. Those proposals totalled £0.963m and would contribute £0.630m to the budget once income targets and workforce reductions had been deducted.

Subject to the success of campaigning for an improved Local Government Settlement and having taken into account the proposals made for Stages 1 and 2, the remaining gap for the Council Fund Budget for 2019/20 was in the region of £6.7m.

Councillor Shotton added that the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), with the full support of its membership, was resolute that the Provisional Settlement was grossly inadequate to meet the evidenced funding needs of local government in Wales. As a low funded Council per capita, and a low funded Council in the annualised formula-based settlement for 2019/20, Flintshire was particularly exposed to the risks of inadequate funding for local government,

To offset the need for a far higher than normal annual rise in Council Tax the Council was invited to renew its campaign for fairer funding for local government by pressing for the following from Welsh Government (WG):

- The extra £30m being held for social care in Wales to be paid out to Councils (worth an estimated £1.3m for Flintshire);
- The extra £15m being held for schools in Wales to be paid out to Councils (worth an estimated £0.800m for Flintshire and its schools);
- An extra £13m to be found so that no Council faced an annual reduction in their government grant (worth an estimated £1.9m for Flintshire); and
- The extra £33m 'consequential' funds coming to Wales as a result of the recent Chancellor's budget to be paid out to Councils as committed by WG (worth an estimated £1.6m for Flintshire).

The Chief Executive said Stage 3 of the budget setting process would involve setting a balanced budget with knowledge of the Final Local Government Settlement. The final and balanced budget was due to be set by the Council on 19th February 2019. In the meantime, attention should be concentrated on the campaigning activity.

Councillor Bithell thanked the WLGA, the Chief Executive and the Leader for the high profile campaign that they had led to get WG to understand the positions of local authorities.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Stage 1 – Corporate Finance budget solutions for 2019/20 having taken into account any feedback from the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee be adopted;
- (b) That Stage 2 – Portfolio budget solutions for 2019/20 having taken into account any feedback from the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the feedback and recommendations of the portfolio Overview and Scrutiny Committees, be adopted; and
- (c) That the Council be formally invited to support the renewed campaign for fairer funding for local government in Wales and for Flintshire.

258. DIGITAL CUSTOMER OVERVIEW

Councillor Mullin introduced the Digital Customer Overview report which provided details on the creation of a single contact centre for the Council.

The key principles in the design of a combined contact centre team were:

- To increase resilience within the team to cope with absence and allow resources to be more effectively targeted when incidents which generated high contract volumes occurred;
- To increase Welsh language provision within the team;
- To provide customers and citizens with the choice to access information and services easily online; and
- To provide customers and citizens with the ability to access multiple services via their Customer Account in a user-friendly and intuitive way as more services moved into the contact centre.

The Chief Officer (Governance) explained that three posts had recently been appointed to for the project, which were Digital Customer and Community Resilience Programme Manager, Customer Transaction Officers, and Income and Marketing Programme Manager.

Go live for phase 1 was planned for mid-March 2019, but Chief Officers would review the technical and staff readiness position one month in advance to make the final decision about whether to proceed at that time. This would ensure that they had confidence that services would be delivered with no degradation of quality as a result of the move.

Councillor Thomas said the new IT software had experienced recent problems with it not being operational on three occasions. The Chief Officer (Governance) explained that the software company had been taken over by a larger company and the Council had been required to use a different product at short notice. The back-up system of that software had not been installed which had resulted in the incidents referred to by Councillor Thomas. This had now been rectified and he provided assurance that regular testing would be carried out between the main system and the back-up system.

In response to a request from Councillor Thomas that Streetscene contact centre staff be involved in the Programme Board, the Chief Officer (Governance) said that would take place, along with contact centre staff from housing also being involved. He also suggested that as the relevant Cabinet Members, Councillors Attridge and Thomas, also be part of that process.

On a further question about Invest to Save, the Chief Officer (Governance) provided assurance that the aim of the Digital Strategy was to see a reduction in call volumes. Until that was evident resources would remain the same.

Councillor Thomas also said that when the introduction of garden waste charges was introduced, 85/90% of residents opted to pay over the phone. The Chief Executive said this was possibly due to it being a new charge but that figure should reduce as payments were renewed year on year.

In response to a comment from Councillor Roberts, the Chief Officer (Governance) said that the website needed to be worked on to ensure it was user friendly. In addition, a new payment portal was in the process of being purchased which would take residents direct to payment options.

RESOLVED:

That the design principles underpinning the creation of a single Contact Centre be noted, and the progress made towards delivering the Digital Customer theme of the Digital Strategy be endorsed.

259. SCHOOL TRANSPORT - SIBLING ENTITLEMENT

Councillor Thomas introduced the School Transport – Sibling Entitlement report which, following formal resolutions from Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, addressed the issue of sibling entitlement.

Following consideration of the matter, full details of which were outlined in the report, it was proposed that siblings should not have an automatic entitlement to transport and that provision of transport for an older sibling should not create any precedent for younger siblings.

It was proposed that each application be considered afresh and on its own merits and, if the School Transport Policy had changed since any older sibling received free transport, then the young sibling would be subject to the Policy in force at the time of the latter's application and anticipated start date.

Councillors Bithell and Roberts supported the recommendation, despite it being a difficult decision, commenting that there was no statutory right to free transport for siblings and that Flintshire had been the only authority to provide such a service.

RESOLVED:

That it be approved that sibling entitlement will not apply for the school transport service provision.

260. SCHOOL TRANSPORT – TRANSPORT ANOMALIES

Councillor Thomas introduced the School Transport – Transport Anomalies report following a report submitted to Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2018 to identify options for managing some of the non-statutory transport arrangements. Cabinet had subsequently approved the manner for dealing with the anomalies in July 2018.

Given the challenges facing the Council in respect of budgets, it was now proposed that the historical anomalies should be withdrawn from July 2020 with 12 months' notice to be given to parents/carers and schools of the withdrawal, which would allow sufficient time for alternative travel arrangements to and from school to be made.

Councillor Thomas said this was a difficult recommendation to present as she understood the effect of the decision, particularly on transport in rural areas. However, there was a need for consistency which was addressed within the report.

Following a request from Councillor Thomas that the measuring tool be made available online, the Chief Officer (Governance) said it would be looked into. The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) explained that the School Admissions team spent a lot of time explaining to parents how the measuring tool worked and that would continue. Heads of primary and secondary schools would also be encouraged to be more proactive with providing information on school transport.

RESOLVED:

That the timelines for removing the historical non-statutory school transport arrangements and cessation of subsidised bus services carrying non-eligible learners be approved.

261. MID-YEAR COUNCIL PLAN 2018/19 MONITORING REPORT

Councillor Mullin introduced the Mid-Year Council Plan 2018/19 Monitoring Report which was an exception based report which concentrated on under-performance. A full mid-year performance report would be submitted to Cabinet in December.

The report also provided an update on the requests made at a previous meeting for an illustration of the planning cycle for financial, business and performance planning, and information on the range of performance information which was available for Overview and Scrutiny Committees to draw upon for performance reporting.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the following be noted:
- The overall levels of progress and confidence in the achievement of activities within the Council Plan;

- The overall performance against Council Plan performance indicators; and
 - The current risk levels within the Council Plan.
- (b) That a full detailed mid-year report be submitted in December; and
- (c) That a further report with an illustration of the planning cycle for financial, business and performance planning, and information on the range of performance information which is available for Overview and Scrutiny Committees to draw upon for performance reporting.

262. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2018/19 (MONTH 6)

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2018/19 (Month 6) report which provided the latest revenue budget monitoring position for 2018/19 for the Council Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. The report presented the position, based on actual income and expenditure, as at Month 6 of the financial year if all things remained unchanged.

The projected year end position, without new actions to reduce cost pressures and/or improve the financial return on efficiency planning and cost control, was:

Council Fund

- An operating deficit of £0.222m (£0.303m at Month 5); and
- A projected contingency reserve balance as at 31st March 2019 of £7.469.

Housing Revenue Account

- Net in-year expenditure forecast to be £0.067m lower than budget; and
- A projected closing balance as at 31st March 2019 of £1.165m.

The report covered the Council Fund projected position; projected position by portfolio; out of county placements; tracking of in-year risks and emerging issues; achievement of planned in-year efficiencies; other tracked risks; independent inquiry into child sexual abuse; settlement costs for historic child abuse; income; recycling income; schools – risks and impacts; other in-year issues; reserves and balances and earmarked reserves.

There were no issues raised at the meeting of Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the overall report and the projected Council Fund contingency sum as at 31st March 2019 be noted; and
- (b) That the projected final level of balances on the Housing Revenue Account be noted.

263. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2018/19 (MONTH 6)

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced the Capital Programme Monitoring 2018/19 (Month 6) report which summarised changes made to the Capital Programme 2018/19 since it was set in February 2019 to the end of Month 6 (September 2018), along with expenditure to date and projected outturn.

The Capital Programme had seen a net decrease of £6.105m during the period, which was comprised of:

- Net decreases in the programme of £6.031m (CF £1.264m, Housing Revenue Account £7.295m); and
- Carry Forward to 2019/20, approved at Month 4 (£0.074m).

Actual expenditure was £25.985m.

The final outturn for 2017/18 was a minor funding deficit of £0.068m. There had been a small number of capital receipts in year which, together with a projected shortfall of £8.216m in the capital programme 2018/19 to 2020/21, a request for an additional allocation of £0.500m towards the relocation of services to Unity House and a small increase in capital funding announced in the Provisional Settlement, put the current funding deficit, for the 3 year period, at £8.577m. This was in advance of any additional capital receipts or other funding being realised.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the overall report be approved; and
- (b) That the carry forward adjustments set out in the report be approved.

264. COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2019/20

Councillor Mullin introduced the Council Tax Base for 2019/20 report which highlighted that the Base for 2019/20 had been calculated at 64,317 band D equivalent properties, after taking into account the total number of properties that would be subject to Council Tax, less those which were exempt from Council Tax or where statutory household discounts applied.

The Revenues Manager explained that the number of properties had increased by 482 which was mainly due to new builds. It was recommended that a 'nil discount for properties falling within any of the Prescribed Classes (A, B, or C), for the whole of the County area, and a 50% Premium for long term empty property and second homes falling into the Council Tax Premium scheme, continue to be set.

Councillor Bithell asked if the 50% Premium for long term empty properties could be increased to encourage owners to bring properties up to a standard where they could be used. The Revenues Manager explained that this was something that was, and would continue to be, kept under review.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Tax Base of 64,317 band D equivalent properties for the financial year 2019/20 be approved;
- (b) That a 'nil' discount continue to be set for properties falling within any of the Prescribed Classes (A, B or C) and for this to apply to the whole of the County area; and
- (c) That a 50% Premium continue to be set for long term empty properties and second homes falling into the Council Tax Premium scheme.

265. REVIEW OF PEDESTRIANISATION ORDER – HOLYWELL HIGH STREET

Councillor Thomas introduced the Review of Pedestrianisation Order – Holywell High Street report which followed a trial period whereby the traffic restriction on the Street had been removed to allow a measured and objective assessment of the long term benefit of removing the Order to be undertaken.

The impact of the trial had been assessed and it concluded that there was both a local benefit and local support to remove the Order permanently.

There were no funds available to make the necessary permanent changes to the streetscape to accommodate the new traffic arrangements, with the cost of the permanent work being significant, estimated at £800,000. Staff from the Council's Enterprise and Regeneration team would now work with the Town Council and local businesses to identify potential funding sources for the final scheme.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposal to remove the Pedestrianisation Order from High Street, Holywell be supported and a long term aim of reconstructing the highway layout to safely and permanently facilitate traffic movements, once external funding sources can be found for the scheme, be committed to; and
- (b) That officers be requested to work with the Town Council to explore all options to provide the necessary funding to construct the permanent scheme.

266. OUTDOOR CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS

Councillor Roberts introduced the Outdoor Children's Play Areas report which highlighted two recommendations from Aura to the Council. These were based on the Council's match-funding revenue budget and capital allocations to meet all expressions of interest received from Town and Community Councils, and to sustain the existing network of play areas by improving sites considered to be in the poorest condition.

Councillor Thomas welcomed the report which, following the establishment of a Task and Finish Group some 8 years previous, resulted in the culmination of over 100 play areas in the County receiving investment. Councillor Bithell

concluded and commented on the examples of good collaboration with Town and Community Councils to secure the areas for children now and into the future.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That all 23 expressions of interest received for the 2018/19 match-funding programme be supported and that the oversubscription of cost of £0.063m is met from the remaining £0.140m year 2 capital allocation; and
- (b) That the remaining £0.077m of the year 2 capital programme, together with the remaining circa £0.040m of Year 3 (£0.200m minus circa £0.080m-£0.100m for Bailey Hill and £0.060m for the replacement of two 3G pitches at Deeside Leisure Centre) is utilised to improve the play area sites identified in the appendix to the report.

267. REVIEW OF HIGHWAY AND CAR PARK SAFETY INSPECTIONS, INTERVENTION CRITERIA AND RESPONSE TIMES POLICY

Councillor Thomas introduced the Review of Highway and Car Park Safety Inspections, Intervention Criteria and Response Times Policy report which was submitted following the implementation of the new Code of Practice in October 2018.

The Highway and Car Park Inspection Policy defined safety inspection intervals on all of the classifications of carriageway, footway, cycleway and the car parks maintained by the Council and also defined identification criteria and set out the timescales for completing any required remedial work.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) explained that safety inspections were an important means of keeping the highway safe and vitally important in court cases for providing evidence that the Council took a responsible attitude to its duties as a Highway Authority. If a member of the public had an accident which could be attributed to the condition of a section of highway, then the Highway Authority was liable to pay damages unless it could prove that it had taken reasonable care to keep the highway safe. The number of claims must be controlled as they had an impact on the highway maintenance budgets.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Highway and Car Park Inspection Policy outlining the Council's approach to all safety inspections, defect identification criteria and response times, be approved.

268. NORTH WALES SUPPORTED LIVING AND OUTREACH SUPPORT PROCUREMENT

Councillor Jones introduced the North Wales Supported Living and Outreach Support Procurement report which detailed progress made to date on phase 2 of the procurement of supported living services. It requested approval to tender on behalf of the region for a Supported Living and Outreach Agreement.

RESOLVED:

That the proposal for Flintshire to tender for the Regional Supported Living and Outreach Agreement be approved.

269. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS

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

Streetscene and Transportation

• **Deeside Transport Improvements Zones 3**

Delegated powers are required to extend a current contract for the construction of cycle ways and bus stops infrastructure on Zone 3 of the Deeside Industrial Estate. The overall cost of contract will be extended by 31%.

Housing and Assets

• **Sale of Deeside Farm, Flint Road, Saltney Ferry by Informal Tender**

Sale of vacant former agricultural holding, Deeside Farm, Saltney Ferry by Informal Tender.

RESOLVED:

That the actions taken under delegated powers be noted.

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 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

270. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME - MODERNISATION OF THE PORTFOLIO PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT PROVISION & QUEENSFERRY COMMUNITY PRIMARY (C.P.) SCHOOL

Councillor Roberts introduced the 21st Century Schools Programme – Modernisation of the Portfolio Pupil Referral Unit (PPRU) Provision & Queensferry Community Primary (C.P.) School report which identified an option for Cabinet to consider in relation to capital investment and modernisation of the PPRU and Queensferry C.P. infrastructure.

RESOLVED:

That the continuation of the proposed capital project for the PPRU and Queensferry CP for the procurement of a contractor, to design, develop, tender and complete a full Business Case submission to Welsh Government, in line with the programme 21st Century Schools Band B criteria be approved.

271. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was 1 member of the press and no members of the public in attendance.

(The meeting commenced at 9.30 a.m. and ended at 11.25 a.m.)

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Chair