

CABINET
22 OCTOBER 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of Flintshire County Council held in the Clwyd Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 22nd October 2019.

PRESENT: **Ian Roberts (Chair)**

Councillors: Glyn Banks, Chris Bithell, Derek Butler, Dave Hughes, Christine Jones, Billy Mullin and Carolyn Thomas.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Officer (Governance), Corporate Finance Manager, Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Chief Officer (Housing and Assets), Chief Officer (Social Services), Corporate Business and Communications Executive Officer, Early Years and Family Support Manager, and Team Leader – Democratic Services.

APOLOGIES:

None.

OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

None.

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

68. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2019 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

Councillor Roberts paid tribute to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority and officers of Flintshire County Council for their swift action following the recent incident in Bollingbrook Heights in Flint where a number of flats had been flooded due to a burst water pipe. Work was ongoing to restore the use of the lift before residents could return.

69. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BUDGET 2020/21

Councillor Banks introduced the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2020/21 report which provided a summary of the forecast and changes to the position previously reported.

The national position was highlighted, together with the Council's high level strategy to meet the forecast gap. The risks associated with that, in particular on the requirement to ensure that settlements from Welsh Government (WG) included additional allocations to the formula to meet the costs of increased pay and pensions, demand led services and legislative requirements.

It was essential that adequate funding was provided by WG from the additional funding announced in the UK Spending Review. In the absence of the additional funding the Council would be at significant risk of not being able to set a safe and legal balanced budget.

The Corporate Finance Manager highlighted the changes to the pressures from those reported in April, and details of new pressures and strategic solutions, all of which were detailed in the report.

Councillor Roberts commented on the amount of work that had been undertaken with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) during the year, with the Council supporting the position of the WLGA on the budget. He expressed the importance of pay and pensions for Council and school-based employees being fully funded as part of the national agreement for pay awards.

RESOLVED:

That the changes to the forecast be noted.

70. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19

Councillor Mullin introduced the Annual Performance Report 2018/19 which reviewed progress against the Council Priorities as detailed in the Council Plan 2018/19.

The Corporate Business and Communications Executive Officer explained that the report reflected the overall progress that had been made against the Council's priorities and the level of confidence the Council had in achieving the desired outcomes. It also showed the position against the 44 risks, with 1 risk increasing in significance during the year and 15 risks reducing in significance by year end.

Performance against the Council Plan measures were positive with 92% of agreed key activities being assessed as making good progress and 89% likely to achieve the desired outcome. In addition, 70% of the performance indicators met or exceeded the target for the year, whilst 73% showed improvement or remained stable.

Risks were also being successfully managed with the majority being assessed as moderate (64%), or minor/insignificant (25%). 11% of risks showed a high risk status at year-end, mostly due to the lack of financial resourcing. Both Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee had continued to consider performance areas which under-performed throughout 2018/19. Members welcomed the reporting, including the details on the areas of under-performance.

The report would be considered at County Council later that day and would be available on the Council's website.

RESOLVED:

That the 2018/19 Annual Performance Report be endorsed prior to approval by County Council.

71. STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

Councillor Mullin introduced the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) Annual Report 2018/19, including the Performance Progress Report.

The Corporate Business and Communications Executive Officer explained that the current SEP would come to an end in March 2020 and a new SEP would be produced for 2020/24.

Details of areas of achievement in meeting the equality duties during 2018/19 were highlighted in the report. Although there were positive areas of progress, some issues remained as areas for improvement which were also detailed in the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Cabinet be assured that progress has been made during the year to meet our statutory duties; and
- (b) That progress made against the Strategic Equality Plan 2018/19 be endorsed, prior to publication of the annual report on the Council website.

72. CARE INSPECTORATE WALES (CIW) ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW LETTER

Councillor Jones introduced the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Annual Performance Review Letter report which provided details of the letter published on 28th June 2019.

The letter summarised CIW's evaluation of performance in relation to Adults and Children's Services during the financial year and reported against the four key principles of the Social Services and Well-being Act.

The letter was a positive review of the statutory Social Services provided by the Council with full details of the areas of performance being outlined in the report.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) said it was pleasing to receive such a positive letter, particularly in relation to the recognition of the progress on the Micro-Care Pilot and the implementation of the Mockingbird Foster Care Model.

Members welcomed the report and commended the service and staff. Councillor Bithell commented on the inclusion of care experienced children in the development of services by being members of the Children's Services Forum which he said was invaluable and pleased to see had been recognised by CIW.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the content of the Annual Performance letter and Care Inspectorate

Wales assessment of the authority's performance during the year 2018/19 be noted; and

- (b) That the Care Inspectorate Wales Performance Review Plan for 2019/20 be noted.

73. ON STREET CAR PARKING IN TOWN CENTRES

Councillor Thomas introduced the On Street Car Parking in Town Centres report which provided a solution which would balance the provision of free short stay parking spaces in Buckley to more closely reflect that available in other towns across the County. The report also sought approval for a pilot scheme to remove the existing pedestrianisation order which was currently in place in Buckley town centre, to further improve access to the town. The proposal would be subject to receiving the support of Buckley Town Council to the proposal.

The availability of a small number of free, short stay, on-street parking spaces in a town centre was essential to allow shoppers to make short visits to collect shopping. The local road layout in the area around Buckley did not permit the provision of on-street parking. It was proposed to re-designate a section of Brunswick Road car park to offer free car parking for up to half an hour, which would provide an additional 18 spaces for short visits to the town centre.

Since publication of the agenda, a meeting had taken place with the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside, the Enterprise and Regeneration Manager and representatives from Buckley Town Council. At that meeting the proposals were put to the Town Council who indicated they supported the proposal, but requested the short stay be for 1 hour instead of half an hour. Work was being undertaken to assess the costs of that suggestion and that it was within the scope of the Car Parking Strategy.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) said the removal of the pedestrianisation order would be undertaken as a pilot with the success of the pilot being measured, similar to what had recently been undertaken in Holywell where business accounts were submitted before and after the pilot scheme to assess the difference in the figures.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That approval be given for the re-designation of a section of Brunswick Road car park in Buckley to provide some free, short stay car parking to compensate for the shortage of on-street, short stay spaces within the town centre; and
- (b) That support be given for the pilot de-pedestrianisation of Buckley town centre and approval for the introduction of such an arrangement for a fixed period, which is sufficient to measure the impact on footfall in the town. The introduction of the pilot scheme would be subject to receiving support for the proposals from Buckley Town Council.

74. HOUSING STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Councillor Hughes introduced the Housing Strategy and Action Plan report and explained that the Housing Strategy built on the achievements delivered through the previous strategy, and set out the Council's vision *'to work with key stakeholders to inform and deliver the right type of quality housing and most appropriate support to meet the needs of our population'*.

The Strategy set out 3 priorities with key areas for action within each priority. They were:

Priority 1: increase supply to provide the right type of homes in the right location through new builds, use of the private rented sector, and better use of existing stock.

Priority 2: provide support to ensure people live and remain in the right type of home through support which will prevent vulnerable people becoming homeless and sustain them in their own home.

Priority 3: improve the quality and sustainability of our homes including addressing fuel poverty through energy efficiency measures.

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) commented on the importance of the document and he thanked the officer who had prepared the Strategy and Action Plan.

In response to a question, the Chief Officer explained that a Housing Needs Assessment determined what was required in an area and that linked in to the Local Development Plan (LDP) to ensure that the mix of homes was correct.

Councillor Bithell asked if there was anything the Council could do to bring empty homes back into use. The Chief Officer explained that a lot of work had been done previously to bring empty homes back into use but it was very challenging. On a further question from Councillor Bithell on housing for individuals with specific special needs who lived with elderly parents, there was an element in the housing register that held those details and suitable accommodation was sought at the appropriate time. The service worked closely with colleagues in Social Services to help identify those needs.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Strategy and Action Plan for 2019/2024 be supported and adopted.

75. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT POLICY

Councillor Hughes introduced the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy report and explained that as part of the Internal Audit review of the Disabled Facilities Grant service in June 2018, it was identified that the current policy required a review in order to make the process and detail clearer and easier to understand.

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) explained that the review identified that the previous policy, which included the Disabled Facilities Grant process, was out of date and did not align to current practices in operation within the services. It was unclear as to processes and criteria that were required in order to qualify for the grant.

Work had been ongoing to address and implement the recommendations contained within the report and to review service delivery in order to make improvements. A significant amount of work had also been carried out to ensure that customers, and the professionals who supported them, had all the relevant information at the earliest opportunity. He provided assurance that there would be a significant improvement to the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants which would be evident in the forthcoming reporting periods.

RESOLVED:

That the revised policy be supported.

76. REVIEW OF PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

Councillor Mullin introduced the Review of Procurement Strategy report and explained that, whilst the strategy ran from 2016 to 2021, there had been changes in the wider policy context that justified a review now.

The Chief Officer (Governance) said that significant changes since the strategy was adopted were:

1. Welsh Government published, and the Council signed up to, the Code of Practice on Ethical Employment in Supply Chains;
2. Welsh Government had published Prosperity for All – A Low Carbon Wales, committing the public sector to being carbon neutral by 2030; and
3. The Council has revised its own approach to achieving social value from procurement with the adoption of a new social value policy earlier in the year.

Those changes needed to be reflected within the Procurement Strategy and in the performance measures contained within it.

Members welcomed the report, particularly the Council's commitment to Prosperity for All – A Low Carbon Wales which committed the public sector to providing leadership on reducing mankind's impact on climate change by reducing its carbon footprint.

In response to a question from Councillor Bithell, the Chief Officer (Governance) said he would ask the Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) if the aim to seek to increase the impact that spend had within the local economy by directing spend to businesses within Flintshire and more broadly within the geographical area of the Mersey Dee Alliance, was reciprocal.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the revised Procurement Strategy be adopted; and
- (b) That further reports be brought back to Cabinet on the changes that are proposed to Procurement Strategy in order to reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

77. PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES ANNUAL LETTER 2018/19

Councillor Mullin introduced the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter 2018/19 report which provided details of the annual performance of the Council in relation to complaints against services which were received and investigated by the Ombudsman during 2018/19.

The Chief Officer (Governance) explained that the number of complaints received by the Ombudsman about local authorities across Wales increased from 794 to 912 in 2018/19. However, the Ombudsman was pleased that local authorities continued to work with his office to resolve many of the complaints at an early stage.

Appended to the report was a full copy of the Annual Letter, detailing the Council's performance and comparative data.

The Council was undertaking work to reduce the number of complaints to the Ombudsman and planned to undertake further action as soon as the outcome of the Ombudsman's current consultation on the principles and procedures relating to the new powers created by the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 were known.

The Council's actions included:

- Targeted training sessions with Planning officers to learn lessons from Ombudsman decisions over the last 12 months;
- A review of the Council's complaints procedure in response to the Customer Standards Authority (Wales) model concerns and complaints policy for public providers in Wales;
- Redesigned workforce training to support officers to effectively resolve complaints first time;
- Improving the quality of complaint responses through the introduction of house-style and improved guidance for officers;
- Training for Town and Community Councils to promote awareness and the importance of the Code of Conduct where there is evidence of conflict between its members to help reset the boundaries of behaviour for its members;
- Timely performance data for distribution and discussion at senior departmental meetings; and
- Working with Councils from across North Wales and the Ombudsman to collectively record complaints data which may be used to drive improvement in public service for citizens in Wales.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the annual performance of the Council and the number of complaints resolved at an early stage be noted;
- (b) That the actions to reduce the number of complaints to the Ombudsman's office be supported; and
- (c) That a review of the Council's complaints procedure upon receipt of the Complaints Standards Authority (Wales) model concerns and complaints policy for public service providers in Wales be supported.

78. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2019/20 (MONTH 5)

Councillor Banks introduced the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2019/20 (Month 5) report which provided the second detailed revenue budget monitoring position for 2019/20 for the Council Fund and the Housing Revenue Account for the financial year and presented the position, based on actual income and expenditure, as at Month 5. The report projected how the budget would stand at the close 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 £3.042m which was a negative movement of £0.059m from the deficit figure of £2.983 reported at Month 4; and
- A projected contingency reserve balance as at 31st March 2020 of £1.827.

Housing Revenue Account

- Net in-year expenditure forecast to be £0.108m higher than budget which was a negative movement of £0.027m from the deficit figure of £0.081m reported at Month 4; and
- A projected closing balance as at 31st March 2020 of £1.215m.

The Corporate Finance Manager explained that at the last meeting, Members considered reports on the two areas of major variance – Out of County Placements and School Transportation. Members confirmed that they were satisfied that there was very limited scope for mitigation to reduce the in-year overspend and that there would be an inevitable impact on the budget position from 2020/21 and that it would need to be factored into the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

To assist with mitigating the overall projected overspend the following measures were being introduced:

1. All non-essential spend would be reviewed and challenged with a view to ceasing/delaying where possible; and

2. Further Portfolio Management Team challenge of recruitment to vacancies.

The outcome of the review would be included in the Month 6 Budget Monitoring Report.

The Corporate Finance Manager also provided details on the projected position by portfolio; tracking of in-year risks and emerging issues; achievement of planned in-year efficiencies; other in-year issues; MTFS impact and risks; reserved and balances and earmarked reserves.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the overall report and the projected Council Fund contingency sum as at 31st March 2020 be noted; and
- (b) That the projected final level of balances on the Housing Revenue Account be noted.

79. AROSFA UPDATE

Councillor Jones introduced the Arosfa Update report which outlined plans to refurbish an unused wing of the building to provide two additional bed spaces at the facility.

Arosfa was a well-established service providing short term breaks/respite for children with disabilities. The two additional beds would bring capacity to accommodate two permanent long-term residents and provide a quality local service as an alternative to Out of County Placements. This would be in addition to the current short term break, respite provision for up to three children.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) explained that, together, the plans would enable the Council to support a maximum of five children at any one time and would provide a good quality, cost effective and local service as a clear alternative to Out of County Placements.

The revenue implication was £200k per annum which would be fully funded by the Intermediate Care Fund (ICF). The minimum annual cost for an Out of County Placement was £182k with many placements exceeding that. Supporting two young people through the open market would therefore cost a minimum of £364k a year so this was a cost avoidance for the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the refurbishment plan be supported.

80. SUPPORTING FAMILIES TO ACCESS THE FREE CHILDCARE OFFER

Councillor Jones introduced the Supporting Families to Access the Free Childcare Offer report which provided an update on the 3-4 Year Old Funded Childcare Offer, and the work undertaken to support families to access the Offer.

The Early Years and Family Support Manager explained that the aim of the Offer was to support families with quality, flexible and affordable care. It also supported economic regeneration and reduced pressures on family income, helping parents to participate in work and reducing a family's risk of poverty. It was also helping to sustain and remodel the childcare sector.

The Childcare Offer had been successful in Flintshire and the number of children who had accessed the Offer since September 2017 was outlined in the report.

Information, advice and assistance was available to parents and childcare providers through working with the childcare sector and partners.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the work being undertaken to support families to access the Free Childcare Offer be acknowledged.

81. SUPPORTING PEOPLE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT AND USER FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

Councillor Hughes introduced the Supporting People Service Annual Report and User Feedback Questionnaire report which provided a snapshot of results from an on-line Supporting People questionnaire for the period 2nd December 2018 to 31st March 2019.

Direct quotes from service users were provided in the report and provided evidence to demonstrate the direct positive impact the Supporting People programme had on lives which was welcomed.

RESOLVED:

That the information on how Supporting People funding is helping people be noted

82. WINTER MAINTENANCE AND SEVERE WEATHER POLICY

Councillor Thomas introduced the Winter Maintenance and Severe Weather Policy report which updated the current policy and explained the legislative requirements of providing such a service, and the actions taken by the Streetscene and Transportation portfolio to deliver the winter maintenance service. In addition, the report outlined the Council's response to other adverse weather events, such as flooding and high winds.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) said it was good practice to regularly review the policy and the report outlined the changes to the most recent version of the 'Winter Maintenance Policy' for approval. The key areas considered by officers were outlined in the report.

The review concluded that the current operating model was adequate in responding to the risk presented during periods of adverse weather and was effective in the deployment of resource, whilst limiting the impact of the disruption

to the service and wider service users. There were no significant changes following the review, however in recent years the service had looked to improve the communication during periods of severe or prolonged adverse weather, and the approach had been captured within the policy.

The policy had been amended to reflect the change in weather forecast provider, from MeteoGroup to MetDesk, following procurement of the forecast service by Welsh Government (WG).

RESOLVED:

That the reviewed Winter Maintenance Policy 2019/21, which contains the procedures and processes for delivering the Council's winter maintenance and adverse weather service, be approved.

83. FLINTSHIRE CONNECTS ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor Mullin introduced the Flintshire Connects Annual Report which detailed the annual performance of Flintshire Connects, the service which was responsible for providing face to face and digital access to Council services in 2018/19.

The Chief Officer (Governance) said Flintshire Connects was integral to the Council's Customer and Digital Strategies in terms of providing high quality, accessible, responsive and cost effective public services. As part of the Council's business planning process, Flintshire Connects completed a review of its structure in 2018/19 which led to a £46k efficiency, whilst avoiding any detrimental impact on customer access to services.

The report detailed an overview of performance in 2018/19 and information relating to customer demand following the implementation of the revised structure.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the high performance and customer satisfaction across Flintshire Connects Centres be noted;
- (b) That the review of the services supported by Flintshire Connects in 2019/20 be supported; and
- (c) That the important role of Flintshire Connects, to support the Council's Customer and Digital Strategies, be noted.

84. 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

- **The Flintshire County Council (A5104 Corwen Road, Ffordd Y Rhos and Roads Adjacent, Treuddyn) (40mph and 50mph Speed Limit) Order 201x**

To advise Members of an objection received for the proposed 40mph and 50mph speed limit on the A5104 Corwen Road, Ffordd Y Rhos and road adjacent, Treuddyn.

Social Services

- **Formal Notification to Declare Glanrafon Day Centre in Queensferry as Surplus to Service Requirements**

The report provides formal notification that Glanrafon Day Centre in Queensferry became surplus to Social Services needs from Monday 24th June 2019, following the completion of the new Learning Disability Adult Day Centre at Hwb Cyfle, Queensferry. The Glanrafon building is to be returned to Valuation and Estates Team for decommissioning or for refurbishment and re-let.

Housing and Assets

- **Council Rent – Application to Write Off Tenancy Arrears**

Financial Procedure Rules (section 5.2) stipulates that individual bad and irrecoverable debts in excess of £5,000 are considered for write off in conjunction with the relevant Cabinet Member. The decision to write off is in respect of one tenant who is subject to a Debt Relief Order (DRO). Rent arrears of £7,300.96 are included in the DRO which are now irrecoverable as a result of the award of the DRO.

85. 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 11.55 a.m.).

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Chair