

CABINET
19 NOVEMBER 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of Flintshire County Council held in the Clwyd Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 19th November 2019.

PRESENT: **Ian Roberts (Chair)**

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, 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, Senior Manager, School Planning and Provision, Project Manager and Team Leader – Democratic Services.

APOLOGIES:

Councillors Banks and Hughes.

OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Patrick Heesom.

86. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

87. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October 2019 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

88. COUNCIL PLAN 2019/20 – MID YEAR MONITORING REPORT

Councillor Mullin introduced the Council Plan 2019/20 – Mid Year Monitoring Report which presented a summary of performance at the mid-year point.

The Chief Executive explained that the report had been submitted to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week where it was well received.

The Corporate Business and Communications Executive Officer said the report showed that 88% of activities were making good progress with 90% likely to achieve their planned outcomes. 78% of the performance indicators had met or had exceeded their targets. Risks were being managed with a minority of 14% being assessed as major and 40% of risks decreasing in significance.

The Chief Officer (Governance) said the Audit Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committees were following through areas of risk which would be incorporated into their forward work programmes.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the following be noted and endorsed:
- 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 Cabinet be assured by plans and actions to manage the delivery of the 2019/20 Council Plan.

89. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21 – 2022/23

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) introduced the Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2022/23 report for recommendation to Council.

The Capital Programme covered investment in assets for the long term to enable the delivery of high quality and value for money public services. Assets included buildings, such as schools and care homes, infrastructure, such as highways, IT networks and waste transfer stations, and assets not owned by the Council. The proposed capital investments outlined within the report were closely aligned to portfolio service business plans and the Council Plan.

The Council had limited capital allocations from Welsh Government (WG) and other sources to support Council priorities, needs and liabilities. However, it had the powers to fund Capital schemes by borrowing which was temporary and ultimately the cost and repayment of any borrowing was charged to the Council's revenue budget. Schemes funded by borrowing were carefully considered due to the long-term impacts on the Council's revenue budget.

The report divided the Council Fund Capital Programme into three sections:-

1. Statutory/Regulatory – allocations to cover regulatory and statutory works;
2. Retained Assets – allocations to fund infrastructure works necessary to ensure service delivery and business continuity; and
3. Investment – allocations to fund works necessary to remodel services to deliver efficiencies outlined in Portfolio business plans and invest in services as outlined in the Council Plan.

The report also provided details of potential future schemes, noting that all capital schemes needed to be considered in the context of the position of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Members thanked the officers involved for the work undertaken on the Capital Programme. The aspirations and visionary schemes were welcomed despite the continuing austerity being faced by the Council.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the allocations and schemes in Table 3 for the Statutory/Regulatory and Retained Assets sections of the Council Fund Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2022/23 be approved;
- (b) That the schemes included in Table 4 for the Investment section of the Council Fund Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2022/23 be approved;
- (c) That the shortfall in funding of schemes in 2020/21 and 2021/22 in Table 5 at this point in the approval process allows flexibility. Options including a combination of future capital receipts, alternative grants (if available), prudential borrowing or the re-phasing of schemes will be considered during 2020/21, and included in future Capital Programme reports; and
- (d) That the schemes included in Table 6 for the specifically funded section of the Council Fund Capital Programme which will be funded in part through borrowing, be approved.

90. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) introduced the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme 2020/21 report. The HRA Capital Programme invested resources into the HRA assets and the proposed programme was aligned to the HRA Business Plan and the overall Council Plan.

The strategic context for the HRA Capital Programme included the following:

- The Capital Programme was dependent on the overall funding available within the HRA. The final decision on the rent setting policy would not be communicated until later on in the year and therefore the final programme was subject to change;
- The proposals detailed in the report were based on the funding levels agreed in the Business Plan for 2019/20;
- Achieving Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2020 and providing adequate ongoing capital to maintain WHQS levels; and
- Delivery of new build Council housing.

Details were provided on prudential borrowing, current borrowing and funding.

Members commented on the good quality of the Council housing stock which was commendable, with homes that tenants could be proud of.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme be approved and recommended to Council for 2020/2021. This may be subject to change dependent on the outcome of the rent policy which will become available in December 2019; and
- (b) That the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme for 2020/21 be approved.

91. CAPITAL STRATEGY INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2020/21 – 2022/23

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced the Capital Strategy Including Prudential Indicators 2020/21 – 2022/23 report which provided an update on the Council's Capital Strategy for recommendation to Council.

The report explained the need for the Strategy, its key aims and the content of each of its sections.

The report had been submitted to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week and there were not issues to report to Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Capital Strategy be approved and recommended to Council; and
- (b) That the following be approved and recommended to Council:
 - The Prudential Indicators for 2020/21 – 2022/23 as detailed within Tables 1, and 4-7 inclusive of the Capital Strategy;
 - Delegated authority for the Corporate Finance Manager to effect movements between the separately agreed limits within the authorised limit for external debt and the operational boundary for external debt.

92. CAPITAL STRATEGY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020 - 2026

Councillor Mullin introduced the Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan 2020/2026 report which introduced the refreshed Corporate Asset Management Plan, which set the Council's medium term strategy for managing its assets and moving towards an optimal portfolio of assets.

The report explained the need for the Plan, its purpose, objectives, key aims and content.

RESOLVED:

That the Asset Management Plan 2020-2026 be approved so that it can be adopted as the principal document for managing the Council's corporate property and land resource assets.

93. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Councillor Roberts introduced the 21st Century Schools Capital Programme report which provided the background to the Council's medium term strategic plan for the management and improvement of the school estate and the Council's Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) submission to Welsh Government (WG) for the 21st Century Schools funding programme.

Since approval of the SOP in early 2018, more detailed work had been undertaken to develop and cost individual projects with the programme and pupil numbers across the schools being monitored. Cabinet had approved early decisions on some aspects of the programme, e.g. to finish the remodelling at Connah's Quay High School and not to amalgamate Lixwm and Brynford schools.

WG had also made changes to the intervention rates in favour of local authorities and had also made new funding streams available such as the Welsh Medium and Childcare Capital Grants, both at 100% intervention rates from which the Council had benefited. All of those factors, alongside the development of the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP), had potential impacts on the shape and potential cost of the final Band B programme.

The report outlined the proposed changes to the final programme and sought approval on a number of key issues.

Feasibility studies had shown that there was the opportunity to create a single site model for primary and secondary education in the Mynydd Isa area on the site of the existing Argoed High School. It would provide the opportunity to recycle one of the buildings, which was of good quality, to establish a Welsh medium provision for the Buckley/Mynydd Isa area which supported the Council's objectives in its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. Band B funding and other WG investments were also provided for the improvements in Ysgol Glanrafon, Mold, Glannau Dyfdrwy in Shotton and the replacement of Ysgol Croes Atti in Flint, all of which showed the Council's commitment to the WG strategy to promote Welsh medium education and play its part in the national target of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050.

The proposal would also allow for some significant investment in Buckley Elfed, which with its rising pupil numbers and strong educational performance had proven to be sustainable as a successful school in its own right and should be allowed to remain as a separate entity.

The challenges were more acute in the Saltney area where falling pupil numbers at St. David's High School had prompted the proposal to consider not proceeding with the 3-16 model as outlined in the SOP. It was important that a more detailed review was undertaken of both primary and secondary provision in the Saltney and Broughton area to ensure that the planned capital investment delivered the most sustainable models of education for the area.

In addition, the original £85m funding envelope was insufficient to deliver all of the priorities within the SOP and with the potential development of new strategic housing sites, two of the Council's secondary schools could be put

under pressure in terms of demand for places. It was important that the Council continued to revise and align its investment programme to ensure schools were fit for purpose and able to meet demand where there was a sustained local need. There was a compelling argument to extend the funding envelope to £103m as outlined in the report.

The Chief Executive said he and the Corporate Finance Manager were comfortable with the advice given by officers on financial risk/benefit, and the affordability of the total programme presented.

Members welcomed the report and the levels of investment proposed for the benefit of the learners.

RESOLVED:

That the following be approved:

- The revised financial Band B programme and submission to Welsh Government to formally request a monetary variation to the Strategic Outline Programme;
- Extending the review of secondary education provision in Saltney to include Broughton; and
- Consideration be given to amending the number of MIM projects within the programme and provide a mandate to officers for further dialogue with Welsh Government.

94. CEMETERY PROVISION AND STRATEGY

Councillor Thomas introduced the Cemetery Provision and Strategy report which highlighted the major challenge and risk facing the service of the availability of future burial space, particularly at Hope and Hawarden in the short term, and beyond that at Buckley.

Without action being taken to address those shortages, local residents would no longer be able to be buried in the local cemetery with other family members and loved ones. Flintshire was the opposite of the national trend and had approximately 400 interments made up of 70% full body and 30% cremation.

Appended to the report was the estimated capacity for all of the Council cemeteries.

Suitable land had been identified adjacent to the cemeteries at Hope and Hawarden and a Capital Business Case had been submitted for the extension to Hope cemetery and negotiations were underway with the landowner. The Capital Business Case for the extension to Hawarden cemetery was awaiting approval and negotiations were at an early stage with the landowner's agents.

Councillor Thomas and the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) commented on the wide range of services undertaken by the Bereavement Team which showed commitment and dedication to communities.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the purchase of the identified land to extend Hope and Hawarden Cemeteries be approved; and
- (b) That the investigations into future burial provisions at other Cemeteries in the County be approved, which should commence 4 years prior to the anticipated point when the existing capacity will be reached.

95. DENBIGHSHIRE AND FLINTSHIRE JOINT ARCHIVE PROJECT

Councillor Roberts introduced the Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project report which sought approval to create an innovative and sustainable archive service in partnership with Denbighshire County Council, and to develop a state of the art archive facility.

Both Flintshire and Denbighshire Councils were facing significant challenges in accommodation used to house archive materials. Both also faced challenges in terms of financial inefficiency, workforce resilience and long term sustainability. Those challenges could only be met by taking a radical and innovative approach which would address both the accommodation needs of both services and create a very different delivery model which would expand and enhance the role of the archive service in North East Wales.

It was proposed to achieve it through the process of a National Heritage Lottery Fund bid to access up to 70% of the funds to build a state of the art facility which would support a wider network of archive access points. It would also deliver a comprehensive outreach programme to community groups through its unique location alongside a producing theatre of national importance.

The model would provide a much more accessible and engaging archive service across both the Council areas than was currently provided, supporting the Council's contribution to the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

The Project Manager explained that there would be a need for both Flintshire and Denbighshire Councils to make a financial contribution in matched funding. The two services had established effective informal working partnerships, and taking the next step into merging them formally into a single service would provide the opportunity to share expertise, ensure service resilience and achieve a financially efficient model for both Councils.

Members supported the proposals and the innovative accessibility to the service in the future.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the following be approved:
 - Creation of a single shared and sustainable Archive Service with Denbighshire County Council
 - Deliver a 'state of the art' archive building, co-located with Theatr Clwyd, with an extensive digital archive network across both

counties and an innovative public engagement and support programme

- (b) That the allocation of £3,027,782 of Council funds, £2,979,782 of National Lottery Heritage Fund match funding and £48,000 in project management funding be committed to, to deliver the Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project.

96. ADAPTATIONS TO FOSTER CARERS HOMES POLICY

Councillor Jones introduced the Adaptations to Foster Carers Homes Policy report which explained that Flintshire Social Services recognised that in some circumstances the home environment of foster carers could limit the placement opportunities. This was particularly the case for supporting sibling groups or children with disabilities.

It was proposed to introduce the 'Adaptations to Foster Carer Homes Policy' to give Flintshire, and the children it was responsible for, more choice and options for placements which could offer better value for money for the authority.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) explained that the policy sought to introduce a grant scheme, which offered foster carers financial support to make adaptations to their existing home, or financial assistance towards the purchase of a new larger or more suitable property, up to the value of £36,000 for adaptations, or £20,000 for the relocation to a new property.

Councillor Roberts thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for the report which would provide invaluable assistance to foster carers who provided loving homes and life changing care for children.

RESOLVED:

That the Adaptions to Foster Carers Homes Policy be supported.

97. REGIONAL TECHNICAL STATEMENT FOR AGGREGATES SECOND REVIEW CONSULTATION

Councillor Bithell introduced the Regional Technical Statement (RTS) for Aggregates Second Review Consultation report, which was a document prepared on behalf of Welsh Government (WG) and the Regional Aggregates Working Parties, and was a requirement of Planning Policy Wales Minerals Technical Note 1: Aggregates.

The purpose of the RTS was to assess the future demand for construction aggregates and to make recommendations to local authorities to make provision in the Local Development Plans (LDP) to ensure long term security of supply to meet the predicted future demand.

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) added that the RTS set out apportionments of how much construction aggregate (crushed rock and sand & gravel) was required to be planned for in LDPs to ensure that a reliable supply could be maintained to meet the needs of the construction sector.

The RTS was recommending a significant apportionment of crushed rock and a modest apportionment for sand and gravel for Flintshire, both of which required allocations for minerals in the LDP and advocated inter-authority collaboration where any individual authority was unable to make such provision.

The report had been considered at Planning Strategy Group prior to being submitted to Cabinet for approval.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Second Review Regional Technical Statement be endorsed; and
- (b) That the recommendations set out in the Regional Technical Statement for the strategic provisions required for planning for the supply of construction aggregates be accepted.

98. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2019/20 (MONTH 6)

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2019/20 (Month 6) report which provided the latest 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 6. 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 £2.698m which was a favourable movement of £0.344m from the deficit figure of £3.042m reported at Month 5; and
- A projected contingency reserve balance as at 31st March 2020 of £2.171m.

Housing Revenue Account

- Net in-year revenue expenditure forecast to be £0.010m higher than budget which was a positive movement of £0.098m from the deficit figure of £0.108m reported at Month 5; and
- A projected closing balance as at 31st March 2020 of £1.313m.

As reported at Month 5, and to assist with mitigating the overall projected overspend, the following measures were introduced at Month 6:

1. All non-essential spend had been reviewed and challenged with a view to ceasing/delaying where possible; and
2. Further Portfolio Management Team challenge of recruitment to vacancies.

This had resulted in identifying a one-off delay in spend of -£0.530m at Month 6 which had helped to reduce the overall financial overspend position. However, additional demand pressures at Month 6, totalling a net £0.186m, had negatively affected the overall position, hence the net overall reduction in variance of £0.344m.

Engagement by Portfolio Budget Holders with Finance Teams had been good, however work would continue into Month 7 and beyond with the same rigour and challenge in an attempt to further improve the position.

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; reserves and balances and earmarked reserves.

The report had been considered at Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week and no specific issues had been raised.

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.

99. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2019/20 (MONTH 6)

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced the Capital Programme Monitoring 2019/20 (Month 6) report which summarised the changes made to the Capital Programme 2019/20 since it was set in February 2019 to the end of Month 6, along with expenditure to date and projected outturn.

The Capital Programme had seen a net increase of £6.948m during the period, which comprised of:

- Net increases in the programme of £7.365m (Council Fund £7.365m, Housing Revenue Account £0.000m); and
- Carry Forward to 2020/21, approved at Month 4 of £0.417m.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the overall report be approved;
- (b) That the carry forward adjustments set out in the report be approved;
- (c) That the funding of schemes from the current 'headroom' and IT savings identified be approved; and
- (d) That the use of the Economic Stimulus funding be approved.

100. COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2020/21

The Chief Officer (Governance) introduced the Council Tax Base for 2020/21 report and explained that setting the base was integral to the revenue budget and Council Tax setting process for 2020/21 and allowed the Council, Police & Crime Commissioners Office for North Wales and Town and Community Councils to calculate next year's Council Tax precept.

The Base for 2020/21 had been calculated at 64,554 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 discount applied.

Setting in the Tax Base at 64,554 also represented growth in the Tax Base of 0.37% compared to the previous year, equivalent to an increase of 237 band D equivalent properties.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Tax Base of 64,554 band D equivalent properties for tax-setting purposes for the financial year 2020/21 be approved;
- (b) That the Council continue to set a 'nil' discount 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 the Council continue to set a 50% Premium for long term empty property and second homes falling into the Council Tax Premium scheme.

101. PROGRESS FOR PROVIDERS UPDATE

Councillor Jones introduced the Progress for Providers Update report which raised awareness of the project 'Progress for Providers – Creating a Place Called Home Delivering What Matters' and its outcomes, including the roll-out of the programme to domiciliary care providers.

The report evaluated progress to date and the work underway to expand the programme into new areas.

To demonstrate progression, the Council had introduced three levels of accreditation for Care Homes which were validated by the Flintshire Contract and Commissioning Team in partnership with Care Home Managers.

To date, 15 Residential Care Homes had been successful in achieving Bronze accreditation and the Contracts and Commissioning Team were continuing to work with the remaining Care Homes to move them towards Bronze accreditation.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) said the work demonstrated excellent partnership working in a scheme that had attracted a lot of positive national attention.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the impact of 'Progress for Providers – Creating a Place Called Home Delivering What Matters' be noted; and
- (b) That the details of ongoing actions and initiatives underway to further develop the programme be noted.

102. REGIONAL LEARNING DISABILITY PROGRAMME: REPORT ON PROGRESS

Councillor Jones introduced the Regional Learning Disability Programme: Report on Progress report which provided an overview of the "North Wales Together; Seamless Services for people with Learning Disabilities" programme which was being funded by Welsh Government (WG) via the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and hosted by Flintshire.

The programme was developed with the individuals with a learning disability and their families, the six local authority areas, the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and the third sector.

The aim of the programme was to seek out and develop best practice, shaping models of support for Learning Disabilities Services in North Wales that could be trialled during the course of the project and adopted and taken forward alongside the North Wales Learning Disability Strategy (2018/2023) following the end of the programme in December 2020.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) commented that there had been positive progress in the initial phase of the programme. There was innovative practice in North Wales and the Council could learn from best practice elsewhere to roll out a consistent standard across the region.

RESOLVED:

That the direction of the Learning Disability Programme be supported.

103. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS

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

Housing and Assets

- **Purchase of Land**
Flintshire Council to purchase an agreed parcel of land to facilitate an extension to Hope cemetery.
- **Sale of Units 15 and 16 Castle Park Industrial Estate, Flint, Flintshire together with the frontage land**
The sale of Units 15 and 16 Castle Park Industrial Estate, Flint together with associated frontage land to an adjoining landowner/company in relation to the expansion and continuation of their business operation. The County Council to receive a capital receipt in respect of the disposal.

Streetscene and Transportation

- **The Flintshire County Council (Off-Street Parking Places – Ty Dewi Sant, Ewloe) (Civil Enforcement) Order 201-**

To advise Members of the objections that have been received following the advertisement of the Flintshire County Council (Off-Street Parking Places – Ty Dewi Sant, Ewloe) (Civil Enforcement) Order 201-

- **Implementation of the 2019 Annual Review of Fees and Charges and the Introduction of New Fees and Charges**

In line with the Council's Income Generation Policy, the 2019 annual review of fees and charges has been conducted with changes to fees and charges implemented from 1st October 2019, where applicable. In addition, new fees/charges, set on a cost recovery basis, are to be introduced for:

- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) pre-application service;
- Building conservatory pre-application/pre-purchase services; and
- Exclusive rights of burial transfer of ownership.

104. 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 11.36 a.m.).

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Chair