

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
10 MARCH 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 10 March 2020

PRESENT: **Councillor Patrick Heesom (Chairman)**

Councillors: Mike Allport, Sean Bibby, Chris Dolphin, Andy Dunbobbin, David Evans, George Hardcastle, Cindy Hinds, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Joe Johnson, Paul Shotton and Owen Thomas

SUBSTITUTION: Councillors: David Wisinger (for Vicky Perfect)

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Veronica Gay, Chris Bithell and Derek Butler

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Kevin Hughes, Christine Jones and Colin Legg

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Carolyn Thomas, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Countryside; Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy); Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation); Regulatory Services Manager; Public Protection Manager – Community and Development Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer.

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None were received.

68. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th January were submitted and were moved for approval by Councillor Paul Shotton and seconded by Councillor Joe Johnson.

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th February were submitted and Councillor Hardcastle referred to the second paragraph on page 13 and wanted to add his thanks to the Chief Officer (Street Scene & Transportation). The minutes were then moved for approval by Councillor Chris Dolphin and seconded by Councillor Cindy Hinds.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

69. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme and gave brief details about the Visit to Parc Adfer on 7 April.

It was agreed that the following items scheduled for the meeting to be held on 5 May would be deferred to 7 July in order that a workshop on the maintenance of ditches and watercourses could be held on the 5th of May.

- Fleet Electrification
- Pest Control

Councillor Wisinger emphasised the importance of regular clearing of ditches giving the example of the situation last year in Sandycroft when flooding was caused due to ditches not being cleared unlike this year when ditches were cleared and there was no flooding but a lot more rain.

In response to an issue raised regarding proposed changes to Liverpool Airport flight paths the Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) agreed to circulate to Members the Liverpool Airport consultation document.

Councillor Owen Thomas referred to changes to bus services which has left areas e.g. Llys Alyn in Rhydymwyn without public transport. The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) agreed to arrange for Sarah Blake to meet with Rhydymwyn residents regarding demand responsive transport.

The Chair referred to an issue with a cable under the A548 and the Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) advised the Committee that the Council were now responsible for repairs as this was outside the 2 year guarantee period and that a bid for resilience funding to Welsh Government had been made.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Dave Wisinger and seconded by Councillor Paul Shotton.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved;
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and
- (c) That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

70. COMPLAINT MADE TO THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) introduced a report sharing the details of a complaint that was made against Flintshire County Council that was investigated by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales in 2019. He confirmed that all 10 recommendations had been accepted.

The Community and Business Protection Manager added that the team had considered the findings very carefully and were endeavouring to move forward constructively taking into account the lessons learnt which will be used as a model for other cases in the future. An inter-departmental group has been formed to address all cases going forward which would be formally minuted in

addition to a detailed action plan. She added that the team are now co-located within the Ewloe.

The Development Manager referred to the planning enforcement policy and the backlog of cases with over 300 cases needing to be investigated individually. She acknowledged that whilst the enforcement team was a very small team, she was hopeful that the Internal Audit report would be satisfactory.

Councillor Wisinger stated that as Chairman of Planning Committee he was not happy with what had gone on but lessons had been learnt and that he was confident the service would keep improving. He welcomed the action plan to deal with the recommendations

Councillor Cindy Hinds raised concerns regarding derelict buildings. In response the Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) said there was a small pot of money to gift/loan to owners of buildings in a poor state to assist in bringing them back to use.

Councillor Sean Bibby expressed the view that there had been a marked improvement in the way enforcement cases are dealt with. He felt the new complaints process was working well and acknowledged the heavy caseloads of officers.

The Development Manager gave an overview of the structure of the Enforcement Team and stated that each officer would be responsible for approximately 80-90 cases but anyone of the officers would be able to give members an update on any case. In addition the Chief Officer (Planning & Development) agreed to circulate telephone numbers and email addresses of the Enforcement Team to Members.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Dave Wisinger and seconded by Councillor George Hardcastle.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee note the content of the report by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales; and
- (b) That the Committee supports the actions taken by Planning, Environment and Economy as outlined in paragraphs 54 and 55 of the report as set out in Appendix 2.

71. QUARTER 3 COUNCIL PLAN 2019/20 MONITORING REPORT

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) and the Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) jointly presented a report on a summary of performance for Quarter 3 (October – December 2019) position of 2019/20 for the Council Plan priorities 'Green Council', 'Ambitious Council' and 'Safe and Clean Council' to the Committee.

Councillor Hardcastle wanted to thank Streetscene and Cabinet Members regarding the recent change of day for collection of waste for some households within Flintshire. He said that he was expecting a high volume of calls from people in his area but it all went smoothly. However, Councillor Thomas reported that bins in his area had not been collected as people were unaware of new collection day. He added that this was especially dangerous along the A541 where bins are put on the pavement.

Councillor Wisinger added that waste collection is a massive challenge, but it's not always Streetscene that causes the problems as some people put wrong bins out, put too much in the bins or don't fill bags properly causing rubbish to fall out and the refuse collectors don't always have time to pick up what has been blown around.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) responded by saying that they had learnt lessons from the 2012 round changes and that 10,000 properties within Flintshire had been changed. Whilst he acknowledged some streets had been missed, these were dealt with quickly by the crews who needed time to learn the new rounds. He added that any evidence of untidiness should be reported straight away as reporting days later was harder to respond to.

The Regulatory Services Manager agreed to provide Members with contact details / duty rota for missed waste collections on Saturdays as requested by Councillor Dolphin.

Councillor Dunbobbin commented on the fact that whilst recycling had exceeded targets, Local travel arrangements set targets had been doubled and utility works had achieved more than planned an explanation was needed on the areas that were not positive. He questioned where the threshold was and where it triggered the RAG status as it was not clearly defined and as a public document it should be. In response the Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) said that he would take it back to the Performance Team to look at it.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Paul Shotton and seconded by Councillor Andy Dunbobbin.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

72. UPDATE ON GARDEN WASTE CHARGES IN FLINTSHIRE

The Regulatory Service Manager gave an update on the 2020 garden waste collection season since the increased changes were implemented as part of the annual fees and charges review and the introduction of the new tag system that had replaced the sticker. She emphasised that there was no duty on the Council to collect garden waste; however garden waste contributed significantly to the overall recycling performance and that it was a discretionary chargeable service offered to reduce landfill and generate revenue for the provision of other statutory services as recommended by the WG Waste Collections Blueprint (2011).

In response to the questions raised about the fees and how the service was being promoted to those who had not yet take up subscription the Regulatory Services Manager confirmed that the reduced fee of £32 was still available for all online payments. Members of the public who didn't have the capacity to make the payment online would be able to go to any Flintshire Connects Office and the staff would complete online for them. The £35 fee was for payments made after 1st March 2020 over the phone or at a payment kiosk at Flintshire Connects for cash payments. Work was currently being undertaken to introduce Direct Debit payments next year. An analysis had been done as to how payments were made and to date 70% were done online and 30% face to face.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) agreed to issue instructions to all crews to collect brown bins even if the tags had been put on upside down in response to an issue raised by Councillor Hardcastle.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Dave Wisinger and seconded by Councillor Andy Dunbobbin.

RESOLVED:

That the work undertaken on the 2020 garden waste collection scheme be noted.

73. WASTE PERMITTING AND DATA FLOW

Following a request from the Scrutiny Committee the Regulatory Services Manager introduced the report on the overview of waste permitting and waste data reporting activities within the Council. Key points were

- Waste Permitting
- Duty of Care
- Waste Carrier
- Waste Reporting

The Chairman and Members were very impressed with the very detailed report and what had been done and encouraged them to keep up the good work. The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) and Regulatory Services Manager said they would convey the compliments back to the team.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Owen Thomas and seconded by Councillor Sean Bibby.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

74. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no member of the press and public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.17 pm)

Chairman