

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
22 NOVEMBER 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Friday 22 November 2019

PRESENT: **Councillor Ian Dunbar (Chairman)**

Councillors: Sian Braun, Jean S Davies, Ron Davies, Rosetta Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, Ray Hughes, Kevin Rush, Paul Shotton and Dave Wisinger

SUBSTITUTES: Councillors: Ron Davies (for Dennis Hutchinson) and Patrick Heesom (for Brian Lloyd)

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Dave Hughes and Ted Palmer

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: Veronica Gay and Christine Jones attended as observers

CONTRIBUTORS: Chief Officer (Housing and Assets); Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy); Councillor Derek Butler (Cabinet Member for Economic Development); Finance Manager, Community Services; Housing Programme Service Manager and Benefits Manager

Strategic Finance Manager and Finance Manager (Environment) for minute number 25.

IN ATTENDANCE: Democratic Services Manager and Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

OPENING COMMENTS

The Democratic Services Manager read out a statement on the restrictions relating to discussions at meetings during the current pre-Election period.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

25. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY: COUNCIL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2020/21

The Strategic Finance Manager presented a report on proposed budget efficiencies and cost pressures for Community & Enterprise pending the completion of ongoing work on corporate finance options and resolution of the Welsh Government (WG) budget. WG had recently confirmed that they would publish the draft Welsh budget on 16 December with the Provisional Settlement being published on the same day. Completion of the budget setting process would be a role for Council at its meeting in January-March.

Councillor Patrick Heesom commented that he hoped that a beneficial provisional settlement would be forthcoming from WG. He raised concerns

around any increase in the working assumption on Council Tax and said that he believed that many Members felt that that no increase above 5% should be considered. The Democratic Services Manager advised that 5% was only a working figure from WG and that Council not made a formal decision on the level of Council Tax for 2020/21.

The recommendations within the report were moved by Councillor Ray Hughes and seconded by Councillor Ron Davies.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee endorses the Community & Enterprise efficiency proposals for 2020/21; and
- (b) That the Committee endorses the Community & Enterprise cost pressures recommended for inclusion in the budget for 2020/21.

26. NORTH EAST WALES (NEW) HOMES BUSINESS PLAN 2019/2048

The Housing Programme Service Manager introduced the North East Wales (NEW) Homes Business Plan, which set out key elements of the company's proposed Development Strategy to increase the number of affordable rent properties delivered over the next three years by 207 units.

The key elements highlighted to the Committee, as detailed within the report, were around:-

- Gifted Units;
- Strategic Partnerships with Local Developers and Housing Associations; and
- Utilising land owned by Flintshire County Council

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin asked for an update on the house building programme at the former Canton Depot site. The Housing Programme Service Manager explained that they were awaiting the Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) report which would determine the number of properties that the Council could build on the site. The Council had initially earmarked 50 properties for the site and it was hoped that work would start onsite at the beginning of next year.

The Chairman asked if there was an opportunity for the Council to take into its ownership the newly developed apartments at The Swan building in Connah's Quay. The Housing Programme Service Manager agreed to look into this following the meeting.

Councillor Patrick Heesom complimented the way in which the service was being managed. He asked why the Business Plan was in place until 2048 and whether the increase in interest rates from the Public Loans Board had affected the Business Plan. He also sought assurance that Council properties would remain in the ownership of the Council. The Finance Manager, Community Services, explained that the Business Plan was in place until 2048 due the long payback of the scheme. On the increase in interest rates, all new schemes were 'stress tested' to ensure a margin of error in the event of interest rates being risen

without causing any problems for the schemes. The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) assured the Committee that all Council properties would remain in the ownership of the Council.

Councillor Ron Davies commented on the recent site visit arranged for the Committee to Garden City and congratulated Wates, the contractors, on the work carried out.

The recommendation within the report was moved by Councillor Ron Davies and seconded by Councillor Paul Shotton.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the progress made through the delivery of the NEW Homes Business Plan 2019/2048.

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

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) introduced a report to present a summary of performance for the Year-end position of 2018/19 for the Council Plan priorities 'Supportive Council' and 'Ambitious Council' relevant to the Committee. The report was an exception based report and therefore focused on the areas of under-performance.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development provided an update on the number of individuals supported through the mentoring service that entered employment, learning or volunteering, explaining that whilst current performance was below target, officers were confident that the full year target was achievable. The service was funded by Welsh Government (WG) and he raised concerns around the uncertainty on the level of funding received year on year.

Councillors Rosetta Dolphin asked why the performance indicators for the percentage of households in the quarter where homelessness was prevented and the tenant satisfaction level, were showing as amber and not green. The Chief Officer explained that the targets set for the year were higher than current achievement but they would continue to be monitored to ensure targets were achieved. He commented on the challenges around engaging with the private rented sector who were reluctant to house people in receipt of Universal Credit but reported that a roadshow with 40 private landlords had been arranged and he agreed to provide feedback to the Committee in due course on how successful the roadshow had been.

Councillors Patrick Heesom welcomed the report. He commented on the number of businesses supported through the regional hub and raised concerns that the hub was currently not in place. He also commented that the projects being driven by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) should cover the Flintshire region as a whole and not be focused only on Deeside. The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) clarified the role of all 6 North Wales Local Authority Economic Development Officers and he advised on the influence they were having on the role of the regional hub through their connections with local businesses. Through the NWEAB there would be four Joint Committees covering Education, Transport at a regional level, Strategic

Planning and Economic Development which would build on the work of the NWEAB.

The recommendation within the report was moved by Councillor Rosetta Dolphin and seconded by Councillor Ron Davies.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

28. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 2.40 pm)

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Chairman