

CABINET
17 NOVEMBER 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of Flintshire County Council held virtually via Webex on Tuesday 17th November, 2020.

PRESENT: Ian Roberts (Chairman)

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Corporate Finance Manager, Chief Officer (Housing and Assets), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy), Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Chief Officer (Social Services), and Team Leader – Democratic Services.

APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE:

Councillor Billy Mullin.

OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor: Patrick Heesom.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

37. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th October were submitted and confirmed as a correct.

On minute number 30, Councillor Bithell asked if there was any update following the representation made on the Ornamental Gardens in Mold. Councillor Thomas said a review would be undertaken the following year.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting were approved as a correct record.

38. EMERGENCY SITUATION BRIEFING

The Chief Executive provided an update on the current emergency situation. A briefing note had been sent to all Members earlier that morning.

Wales had been out of the Fire-Break for just over a week. The figures in North Wales were the most stable, however he had hoped that Flintshire's figures might have been lower at this point. He explained the importance of public conformity which was critical to help to reduce the number of positive cases and ongoing viral transmission.

There was an ongoing concern with the number of care homes that were classed as 'red'. He welcomed the opening of Ysbyty Enfys Glannau Dyfrdwy

which would see a low number of admissions for patients recovering from Covid-19.

On Test, Trace and Protect, funding had been enhanced and capacity would be doubled with employees hopefully in post by mid-December.

Members thanks the Chief Executive for the update.

RESOLVED:

That the information be received.

39. PERFORMANCE MID-YEAR MONITORING REPORT

The Chief Executive introduced the report and explained that Flintshire County Council Reporting Measures 2020/21 were identified by portfolios and approved by Cabinet in September 2020. This report presented a summary of performance at the mid-year point.

The mid-year performance monitoring report for the 2020/21 Reporting Measures showed that 69% of the performance indicators had met or exceeded their targets. Where performance could be measured against last year there had been a 64% downturn in trend, with 31% of measures improving on last year's performance and 5% maintaining stable performance.

The report was an exception-based report and concentrated on under-performance against target.

The report was considered at Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week and no areas of concern were raised.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the overall performance of indicators against the agreed Reporting Measures at the mid-year point be noted and reviewed; and
- (b) That Cabinet be assured by explanations given for underperformance, which in the main are explained by the interruption of the pandemic.

40. NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD - FINAL GROWTH DEAL

Councillor Butler introduced the report and explained that the North Wales Growth Deal was a portfolio consisting of 5 programmes to be delivered over the next 15 years. It was to be delivered by the Portfolio Management Office on behalf of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB).

The Chief Executive explained that the Growth Deal was seeking to deliver a total investment of up to £1.1bn in the North Wales economy (£240M from the Growth Deal), to create 3,400 – 4,200 net additional jobs and generate £2.0 - £2.4bn in net additional GVA.

The five programmes included 14 projects, which had been carefully designed and developed with stakeholders to address specific market failures and barriers to economic growth. Individual project business cases would be developed and would be presented to the NWEAB for approval from January 2021 onwards.

The report had been considered at Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week where they considered the economic impacts, and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee also the previous week had considered the aspects of governance and finance. Following Cabinet on the report would be considered by County Council that afternoon. Both Overview and Scrutiny Committees supported the report.

The Chief Officer (Governance) explained the areas which were functions of Cabinet and which needed approval by County Council.

In response to a question from Councillor Bithell, the Chief Executive explained that a proportion of NNDR could be retained of new developments of up to 50%.

Members welcomed and supported the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Cabinet and Council approve the Overarching Business Plan as the document that sets out the arrangements to deliver the North Wales Growth Deal as the basis for entering into the Final Deal Agreement and acceptance of the Grant Funding Letter with the UK and Welsh Governments;
- (b) That Cabinet approves the provisions in Governance Agreement 2 relating to executive functions, and recommends that Council approves the provisions relating to non-executive functions, and that Cabinet specifically adopts the delegations and Terms of Reference in "Governance Agreement 2: Appendix 1" thereof as the basis for completing the Final Deal Agreement and acceptance of the Grant Funding Letter with the UK and Welsh Governments;
- (c) That Cabinet formally endorse and recommend that the Council authorise the accountable body, Gwynedd Council, to sign the Grant Funding Offer letter on behalf of the Partners;
- (d) That Cabinet formally endorses and recommends that Council approves the method used to calculate the cost of borrowing notionally required to facilitate the negative cash flow for the Growth Deal, and to include a provision within the Council's budget to pay this contribution and the established core and supplementary contributions as set out in GA2 and paragraphs 2.5-2.7 of the report; and
- (e) That the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer be granted delegated authority to agree

minor changes to the documents with the Partners as necessary to complete the agreement.

41. ESTABLISHMENT OF SPORT NORTH WALES PARTNERSHIP

Councillor Roberts introduced the report which sought approval for the Council to be a partner in the Sport North Wales (SNW) Partnership.

SNW was a national organisation responsible for increasing participation and improving performance in sport in Wales, and one which had historically provided annual funding to each local authority and other partners to undertake a number of sporting programmes and interventions across North Wales. They had included Active Young People and the Free Swimming Initiative.

The vision for SNW was to develop an Active Nation supported by the Sport Wales Strategy. In response to this Strategy a collaborative partnership was established in 2018 and was tasked with developing a shared vision and business case. That led to the formation of SNW with 13 regional partners.

It was proposed that there would be five regional organisations across Wales in the future, with SNW being the pilot region. The business case had been submitted to Sport Wales with a decision due by their Board later this month. All 13 partners were being invited to formally support the formation of SNW under a local authority 'hosted model'.

The Chief Executive explained that the governance agreement and business case were appended to the report. Aura was co-leading on the project with Conwy County Borough Council being the host authority. There would be two Governance Boards and there would be a requirement for Council representation.

Councillor Bithell welcomed the report and looked forward to its success.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet support the establishment of Sport North Wales Partnership (SNW).

42. CAPITAL STRATEGY INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2021/22 – 2023/24

Councillor Banks introduced the report provided an update on the Council's Capital Strategy and sought Cabinet approval for recommendation to Council.

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

The key aims of the Strategy were to explain the ways in which the capital programme was developed and funded, the potential impact it had on the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the way in which it related to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy. The Strategy was split into a number of sections which were outlined in the report.

The tables detailed in the appendices were explained.

Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny had considered the report the previous week and no areas of concern were raised. The report would be submitted to County Council in December.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Capital Strategy be approved and recommended to County Council; and
- (b) That Cabinet approve and recommend the following to County Council:
 - The Prudential Indicators for 2021/22 – 2023/24 as detailed within Tables 1 and 4-7 inclusive of the Capital Strategy; and
 - 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 (Table 6 of the Capital Strategy).

43. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22 – 2023/24

Councillor Banks introduced the report and explained that the Council's 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, infrastructure and assets not owned by the Council.

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) explained that the proposed capital investments outlined in the report were closely aligned to portfolio service business plans and the Council Plan. The information within the report referred to the Council Fund (CF) programme only, not the housing programme which was funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Council's Capital Strategy divided the Capital Programme into three parts:

1. Statutory / Regulatory section – to cover regulatory and statutory works. Examples included providing support to improve and adapt private sector homes (Disabled Facilities Grants), adaptations to schools for children with disabilities and any works required to keep buildings open by meeting Health and Safety requirements
2. Retained Assets section – to ensure service and business continuity. This included schemes that enhanced and improved retained assets and infrastructure to deliver services and met significant need identified by service plans or through condition surveys etc.
3. Investment section – to fund costs incurred when remodelling and investing in services. This included new schemes arising from Portfolio business plans, the Council Plan, other relevant and emerging plans, and other strategies or emerging Council priorities approved through a selection process based on the provision of a business case.

Each of the tables in the report were explained, along with potential future schemes.

It was an ambitious programme with a lot of important projects. He gave examples of previously approved schemes such as Castell Alun High School - Hope, and Marleyfield Residential Home - Buckley, and examples of new schemes for approval such as Theatr Clwyd redevelopment and improvements to Standard Yard Waste Transfer Station.

Members welcomed the report which they felt was exciting and set a clear vision for the future.

Councillor Thomas said previously Welsh Government (WG) had provided a grant for a three-year period towards highway improvements. That grant was now coming to an end. She had been in contact with the Leader of the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) on the need for continuing financial support from WG but no information on that was yet available. She asked if the amount of £0.600M allocation for the Highways Asset Management Plan could be increased by £0.400M so the total budget was £1M. The Chief Executive said possibilities could be looked at with flexibility and it could be reviewed in the New Year once the details of the Settlement were known.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the allocations and schemes in Table 3, be approved for the Statutory/Regulatory and Retained Assets sections of the Council Fund Capital Programme 2021/22 – 2023/24;
- (b) That the schemes included in Table 4, be approved for the Investment section of the Council Fund Capital Programme 2021/22 – 2023/24;
- (c) That the shortfall in funding of schemes in 2021/22 in Table 5, at this point in the approval process allows flexibility, be noted. Options including a combination of future capital receipts, alternative grants (if available), prudential borrowing or the re-phasing of schemes will be considered during 2021/22, 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.

44. CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

Councillor Jones introduced the report and explained that safeguarding was a corporate priority and a discipline that all portfolios were expected to observe and support as good corporate practice.

The corporate safeguarding panel was established in December 2015. The report set out the robust corporate safeguarding arrangements that had been put in place, which included:

- Working with North Wales Police on Operation Encompass, an initiative to support children and young people who were subject to or witnessed police attended domestic abuse incidents;
- Theatr Clwyd delivered Justice in a Day workshops. This interactive performance involved a workshop with a team of professional actors and a participatory visit to Mold Magistrates' Court where an actual Magistrate took part; and
- Providing safeguarding training to over 400 taxi drivers to ensure they recognised the signs of potential abuse and knew how to make a report;

Flintshire was committed to its responsibilities and had taken positive steps to ensure that there were robust arrangements in place for protecting children, young people and adults.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) explained that The key actions to be completed during 2020/21 included participating in National Safeguarding Week 2020 to raise public awareness of safeguarding issues including modern slavery; encouraging employees to complete the Welsh Government's eLearning module "Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Against Women" to achieve 100% completion rate by March 2021; and raising awareness of the new Wales Safeguarding Procedures

He thanked all colleagues for their input into the report.

In response to a question from Councillor Bithell on Elective Home Education and safeguarding, the Chief Officer (Education and Youth) said it was challenging but Welsh Government (WG) were making progress on a nationally established register so that agencies knew where children were. If the child had been in school and then removed for Elective Home Education, the authority and agencies would be aware of them. However, if they had never attended school they would not be known, or where they were. She welcomed the introduction of a national register.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Cabinet be assured that work is being undertaken to improve corporate arrangements for safeguarding children and adults; and
- (b) That the Corporate Safeguarding Annual Report 2019/20 be approved, prior to publication.

45. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2020/21 (MONTH 6)

Councillor Banks introduced the report which provided details of the known risks and issues for 2020/21 for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account.

The Corporate Finance Manager explained that 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 £0.569M (excluding the impact of the pay award which would be met by reserves), which was a favourable movement of £0.352M from the deficit figure reported at Month 5
- A projected contingency reserve balance as at 31st March 2021 of £1.415M

Housing Revenue Account

- Net in-year expenditure forecast to be £0.478M lower than budget
- A projected closing balance as at 31st March of £2.651M.

The report provided details on the projected position by portfolio, significant movements from Month 5, open risks, new emerging risks and reserves and balances.

Council Tax income was 1.4% below target which equated to £1.37M. Income was expected to continue to recover now that recovery processes had resumed in full and when agreed payment deferrals were settled. The Chief Executive added that the situation was being monitored by Welsh Government (WG).

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the overall report and the projected Council Fund contingency sum as at 31st March 2021 be noted; and
- (b) That the projected final level of balances on the Housing Revenue Account be noted.

46. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2020/21 (MONTH 6)

Councillor Banks introduced the report which summarised the changes made to the Capital Programme 2020/21 since it was set in January 2020 to the end of Month 6, along with expenditure to date and projected outturn.

The Corporate Finance Manager explained that the Capital Programme had seen a net decrease in budget of £3.419M during the period which comprised of:

- Net budget increase in the programme of £3.028M (Council Fund £3.028M, Housing Revenue Account £0.000)
- Carry Forward to 2021/22, approved at Month 4 of £6.420M
- Identified savings at Month 6 £0.027M

Details of the table contents were explained, noting that information relating to each programme area was contained in Appendix B to the report.

RESOLVED:

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

47. COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2021/22

The Chief Officer (Governance) introduced the report and explained that setting of the Council Tax Base was integral to the revenue budget and Council Tax setting process for 2021/22 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 had been calculated at 65,026 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.

Setting in the Tax Base at 65,026 Band 'D' equivalents also represented significant growth in the Tax Base of 0.73% compared to the previous year, equivalent to an increase of 472 band D equivalent properties.

Councillor Bithell said the Council had tried to bring back empty properties into use without success, and asked if the 50% charge of a Council Tax Premium could be increased to encourage them to be brought back into use. The Chief Officer (Governance) said that could be considered during the course of the year but not for this financial year. Councillor Butler concurred with the views of Councillor Bithell, adding that empty properties was one of the wellbeing objectives in the draft Council Plan for next year onwards.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Tax Base of 65,026 band D equivalent properties for tax-setting purposes for the financial year 2021/22 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 that to apply to the whole of the County area; and
- (c) That a 50% Premium continue to be set for long term empty property and second homes falling into the Council Tax Premium scheme.

48. YOUTH SERVICES

Councillor Roberts introduced the report and explained that Flintshire Integrated Youth Provision (FIYP) was innovating services for young people.

The innovation reflected the impacts of, and lessons from, the pandemic emergency response and changes to national and local context. It represented a next step in the Council's corporate Recovery Strategy for the pandemic emergency response.

FIYP proposed a blended service offering that prioritised:

1. Digital and remote engagement with young people;

2. Targeted prevention work within communities and with partners to build resilience and well-being for more vulnerable children and young people;
3. Equity for Welsh medium provision across all FIYP services;
4. Partnership work with schools to support young people at risk of not engaging with education; and
5. Support for staff and quality practices.

The proposal delivered potential annual savings of £98.6K, representing a 49% saving on premises and 20% on staff.

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) explained that the FIYP would consult young people, FIYP and Council staff and statutory and community partners about proposals in the period ending January 2021. That consultation would inform the development of a FIYP Plan 2021/2024, for launch in quarter 1 2021/2022.

The pandemic had changed the way in which services were delivered as youth clubs, outreach services, community-based activities and most school had closed. FIYP adapted quickly and introduced a number of things which were outlined in the report. FIYP service development would embed lessons from the pandemic response to realise the vision of the Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2019.

In response to a question from Councillor Thomas, the Chief Officer (Education and Youth) confirmed that Town and Community Councils would be included in the consultation.

The Chief Executive added the report had been considered at Education, Youth and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee where it was well received and the need for change was recognised.

RESOLVED:

That Flintshire Integrated Youth Provision consultation on developing the Flintshire Integrated Youth Provision Plan 2021/2024 be approved.

49. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS

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

Chief Executive's – Corporate Business and Communications

- **Amendment to Council Community Grant Schemes to Enable Response / Recovery Action**

The Council's Community Chest Grant provides grants of up to £1,000 for community organisations who meet the grant criteria. The contribution community organisations have made in keeping vulnerable people safe and meeting their needs during Covid-19 restrictions has been significant and invaluable. These organisations could be better supported during an emergency situation, such as Covid-19, if the grant criteria was more

flexible and repurposed to enable timely and responsive actions to meet local needs.

Housing and Assets

- **Declaration of Public Footpath on Leadmills Site, Mold**

To dedicate land as a Public Footpath which is currently within the ownership of Flintshire County Council.

- **Disposal of Princess Avenue Garage Sites**

The disposal of the garage site at Princess Avenue to Clwyd Alyn Housing Association to facilitate the development of affordable housing.

50. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and ended at 11.55 a.m.)

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Chair