

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
12 OCTOBER 2021

Minutes of the remote attendance meeting of the Environment and Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Tuesday, 12 October 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Rosetta Dolphin (Chair)

Councillors: Sean Bibby, George Hardcastle, Patrick Heesom, Dennis Hutchinson, Andy Hughes, Joe Johnson, Vicky Perfect, Paul Shotton and Owen Thomas

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Haydn Bateman (as observer)

APOLOGY: Councillor Cindy Hinds

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Geoff Collett for Councillor David Evans

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Chris Bithell (Cabinet Member for Planning & Public Protection), Councillor Glyn Banks (Cabinet Member for Streetscene), Councillor Derek Butler (Cabinet Member for Economic Development), Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Housing & Assets); Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy), Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), Corporate Finance Manager, Highway Network Manager, Regulatory Services Manager, Strategic Finance Manager, Principal Accountants, Community and Business Protection Manager, and Empty Homes Development Officer.

For minute number 29

Steffan Owen - Regional Contracts Manager, North Wales Residual Waste Treatment Project

IN ATTENDANCE: Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

26. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2021 were submitted.

Page 7 - In response to a request from Councillor George Hardcastle for an update on waste recycling and the information/support available for elderly and vulnerable people, the Regulatory Services Manager advised that the Housing Service was in the process of producing a communications package for residents living in sheltered accommodation. The package would include leaflets, signage etc. to assist where access to the internet or social media may be restricted.

The minutes were approved, as moved and seconded by Councillors Paul Shotton and Dennis Hutchinson.

Councillor Patrick Heesom voted against the minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

27. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme. She drew attention to the items scheduled for the meeting of the Committee to be held on 9 November, and advised that the item on Integrated Network Maps would be deferred to the meeting to be held on 7 December 2021. In addition to the items listed for consideration at the next meeting, two additional items on Greenfield Valley and Town Centres would be included on the agenda. The Facilitator asked Members to contact her if they had any suggestions for further items to include on the Programme.

The Facilitator referred to the actions arising from previous meetings and explained that progress on long-term ongoing actions would be monitored and information provided when concluded.

The recommendations were moved and seconded by Councillors Joe Johnson and George Hardcastle.

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.

28. BUDGET 2022/23 – STAGE 2

The Chief Executive and Corporate Finance Manager introduced the second budget stage report which detailed the forecast and the cost pressures which would make-up the total budget requirement.

The Chief Executive provided background information and context. A report to Cabinet and the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee in July provided an updated position on the budget for 2022/23. The cost pressures identified were referred to the respective Overview & Scrutiny Committees with a request that they all undergo a rigorous review. The details of the cost pressures for Planning, Environment and Economy, and Streetscene and Transportation were included in the report.

The Chief Executive, Corporate Finance Manager, Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) and Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), provided a joint presentation which covered the following areas:

- purpose and background
- summary totals of cost pressures
 - Planning, Environment & Economy and Streetscene & Transportation Cost pressures 2022/23
 - Planning Environment & Economy pressures
 - Streetscene & Transportation pressures
- strategic solutions
- update on efficiencies
- budget timelines

In response to a question from Councillor Andy Hughes, the Chief Officer – Planning, Environment & Economy advised that discussions were ongoing with Wales Rally GB and they were keen to come back to Flintshire and that Flintshire hosted the event. He commented that there was a need to make sure that the local spend does happen with the hospitality sector in Flintshire. He added that Wales Rally GB had given a commitment to return to Flintshire.

Councillor Paul Shotton supported the investment in parks. Referring to Wepre Park, Connah's Quay, he asked if there was any consideration being made for non-residents to make a contribution to the upkeep of the Park as use had increased significantly following ease of restrictions around Covid. The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) said ongoing discussion was taking place with the intention to develop Wepre Park. Plans would be coming forward and consultation would take place with the local community.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson referred to the Standard Landfill site, Buckley, and said a commitment to develop the site for recreation did not seem to have been taken forward. Councillor Hutchinson cited the use of solar panels and upgrading of footpaths. The Chief Officer, Planning, Environment and Economy advised that no commitment had been made to where funding would be spent as yet and consideration would be given to the Standard Landfill site to see if it was an appropriate place for investment and the benefits that would arise.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Paul Shotton and seconded by Councillor Joe Johnson.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee supports the Planning, Environment and Economy cost pressures;
- (b) That the Committee supports the Streetscene and Transportation cost pressures; and
- (c) That no further cost efficiency areas be proposed by the Committee to be explored further.

29. VERBAL PRESENTATION AND VIRTUAL TOUR OF PARC ADFER

The Regional Contracts Manager, North Wales Residual Waste Treatment Project, gave a presentation including a virtual tour of the Parc Adfer site which was well received by the Committee.

Councillor Joe Johnson asked if the incinerator disposed of nappies and mattresses. The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) explained that Parc Adfer did not dispose of nappies, however options were being explored with the Welsh Government about recycling nappies. Mattresses were not incinerated but were recycled.

Councillor Paul Shotton said that assurances had been given to local residents regarding the level of emissions and asked if there had been any incidents. He also asked if any further increases in capacity were envisaged. Councillor Shotton referred to the Community Benefit Fund and asked if any awards had been made and had the criteria changed.

The Chief Executive advised that Parc Adfer operated well within particle controls and performance reports would be sent to Members in due course. He reported on the organisations supported through the Parc Adfer Community Recovery fund and said all applications had been granted. He continued that the Community Benefit fund would be launched later in the year and would benefit the community for the next 23/24 years and would have a grant panel which would involve Members. Details would be circulated to Members when available.

In response to the enquiry on capacity, the Regional Contracts Manager advised that Parc Adfer was permitted to treat 200,000 tonnes as a maximum within its environmental permit as regulated by Natural Resources Wales. There was a higher theoretical amount which Parc Adfer could treat but this was dependent on other factors.

Councillor Owen Thomas asked if more ash was produced than needed and what was done with it. The Regional Contracts Manager explained that the contract for treating the ash by-product was between the operator Enfinium and Blue Phoenix who took the ash. The production of too much ash was unlikely as contracts were in place to address this and the quantity would be a known and consistent.

The Chair thanked the Regional Contracts Manager for the quality and detail of his presentation. She asked that the Facilitator send a link to the presentation to Members. The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) explained that a video of the presentation would be made available on the Council's website and partner authorities also intended to do the same. She reported that work was also in progress to develop the educational exercises available.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Andy Hughes and seconded by Councillor Joe Johnson.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

30. REVIEW OF LOCAL TOILETS STRATEGY

The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) introduced the report to provide an update on progress against the Local Toilet Strategy Action Plan in line with the statutory requirements, and set out the approach to a further review in 2022-23.

The Highway Network Manager presented the report. He provided background information and advised that Flintshire's Local Toilets Strategy was approved and published in May 2019 following public consultation and a copy was appended to the report. He reported that National guidelines stated that the policy should be reviewed every two years from when the local authority last published or last reviewed its Strategy and within one year of every ordinary local government election.

Councillor Owen Thomas asked if community toilets which provide for tourists would continue to have an annual grant from the Council. The Highways Network Manager confirmed that the grant would continue.

Councillor Geoff Collett raised concerns about the lack of public convenience provision in Mold, and the need to upgrade the provision in public buildings citing the public library as an example. The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) explained that alternative provision or development of the public facilities at Mold Bus Station had been considered but costs were prohibitive and the toilets were attracting anti-social behaviour. Discussions with Mold Town Council had not progressed to provide a solution. She reported that Mold Bus Station toilets were part of the Integrated Transport Strategy and discussions were being held with Mold Town Council around coach parking and lighting. Regarding toilets in public buildings she said the Council would work with alternative providers subject to the provision of funding to develop the facilities.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson expressed concern that there was no signage to identify public toilet facilities were available in the Buckley Library building. He emphasised that clear signage was essential for the public. The Chief Officer acknowledged that further work and signage was needed to raise awareness of public toilets in local areas.

Councillor Paul Shotton concurred with the views expressed by Councillor Hutchinson that there was a need for better signage to inform residents of the location of public toilets in local areas.

Councillor Chris Bithell drew attention to Part 8, of the Public Health Act 2017, and advised that no-one was responsible for providing public toilets and due to cuts there was not sufficient funding available to provide the service. He commented that Mold not only provided for the requirements of its own residents but also served a large catchment area for shopping and tourism and said that the provision of public toilets was insufficient to meet demand particularly in the

Summer. Councillor Bithell expressed concern that signage to the existing public provision was not available in Mold and should have been put in place before demolition of the public toilets in New Street and Wrexham Street. He stated that the current arrangements in Mold for public toilet provision was not sustainable.

Councillor Geoff Collett said facilities in Mold for public toilet provision needed to be reviewed thoroughly with consideration given to access for elderly people and people with mobility issues. The Chief Officer agreed to meet with Councillors Chris Bithell and Geoff Collett to discuss the issues raised and said feedback from the Committee would be incorporated into the review of the Local Toilets Strategy.

Councillor Glyn Banks gave an assurance that bilingual signage would be provided for public toilets throughout the County following a review of the Strategy and suggested that a further item on public conveniences be placed on the Forward Work Programme.

Councillor Owen Thomas expressed the view that as tourism was promoted by the Welsh government (WG) in the County, funding should also be made available by the WG for the adequate provision of public toilets in popular destination areas.

Councillor Derek Butler asked that Town Centres be included in the review of the Local Toilets Strategy with a view to identifying any funding which may be available.

The recommendation was moved and seconded by Councillors Dennis Hutchinson and Owen Thomas.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee supports the review and notes the progress to date against the local toilets strategy action plan.

31. REVIEW OF OPERATOR'S LICENCE (O LICENCE)

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced a report to give assurance that working arrangements and processes were effective and robust. She provided background information and referred to the audit of Vehicle O Licence compliance which was undertaken in April 2021 as part of the approved Internal Audit Annual Plan for 2020/21. The overall findings were that the controls in operation at the time provided some assurance that key risks were being managed and controlled effectively, however, that significant improvement was required in areas relating to the control environment relating to tachography compliance, fleet servicing and maintenance, and single person dependency impacting service resilience. The report provided an update on progress following the audit report in April 2021.

The Highways Network Manager presented the report and referred to the action plan to address the findings of the audit. The Chief Officer explained that there was difficulty in recruiting for the post of Fleet Contract & Transport

Manager and other posts in the Streetscene & Transportation Services, which impacted on progress on the action plan.

The recommendation was moved and seconded by Councillors Joe Johnson and Dennis Hutchinson.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the ongoing working arrangements within the Streetscene and Transportation Services and supports the actions undertaken to control operational risk and deliver on the undertakings of the Council's operator's licence.

32. THE NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL QUARTELY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) presented a report to provide the Committee with the Quarter 1 (March – June) update on the North Wales Growth Deal.

The Chief Officer referred to the North Wales Growth Deal Quarter 1 Performance Report which was appended to the report. He reported on the main considerations and suggested that the Committee might wish to invite programme managers to a future meeting of the Committee to give a presentation on the Economic Ambition Board projects.

In response to the concerns raised by Councillor Derek Butler the Chief Officer referred to the two projects currently reporting as red in section 1.07 of the report and suggested that the programme manager for the Land and Property Programme be invited to report to a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Patrick Heesom commented on the Holyhead project and the move away from supporting the breakwater and asked that consideration be given to the potential of Mostyn Docks as an alternative project.

The recommendation was moved and seconded by Councillors Patrick Heesom and Joe Johnson.

RESOLVED:

That the Quarter 1 Performance Report be noted.

33. EMPTY HOMES

The Community and Business Protection Manager introduced a report to provide an overview of the work undertaken by the Empty Homes Services. She gave a joint presentation with the Empty Homes Development Officer which covered the following:

- context
- achievements since 2019
- case studies

Councillor Patrick Heesom thanked the Community and Business Protection Manager for the high standard of her report.

Councillor Chris Bithell commented on the problem of empty properties which had fallen into disrepair and the need to bring back into use as soon as possible to address the need for housing.

The recommendations were moved and seconded by Councillors Patrick Heesom and Joe Johnson.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted and supported.

34. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.12 pm)

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Chair