

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 July 2022

Minutes of the remote attendance meeting of the Environment and Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Tuesday, 5 July 2022

PRESENT: Councillor David Evans (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Ian Hodge, Richard Lloyd, Mike Peers, Vicky Perfect, Dan Rose, and Roy Wakelam.

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mel Buckley, Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), and Head of Democratic Services

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Rob Davies (for Councillor Roz Mansell)

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Dave Hughes (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Transport Strategy), Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy,

Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy),

Chief Officer (Governance) (for minute number 9),

The Internal Audit Manager and Business Support Assistant (for minute number 10), The Regulatory Services Manager (for minute numbers 10 and 15)

The Waste Strategy Manager (for minute numbers 10 and 15)

The Community and Business Protection Manager and the Food Safety Team Leader (for minute number 11)

The Enterprise and Regeneration Manager (for minute number 13)

The Transport Manager and Transport Area Co-ordinator (for minute number 14)

IN ATTENDANCE: Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were received.

7. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2022 were approved, as moved and seconded by Councillors Richard Lloyd and Mike Allport

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

8. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

In presenting the current Forward Work Programme report the Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator outlined the items scheduled for the September and October meetings. She also reported on the ongoing items on the Action Tracking report and highlighted those which were completed.

The Chair referred to an email he had sent to committee members asking for suggestions for inclusion on the Forward Work Programme. As a substantial number of suggestions had been received these had been circulated to the Chief Officers for consideration. He asked if members were happy with providing time for the officers to report back to committee in September on how these would be best dealt with.

Councillor Mike Peers suggested that including timescales for each item would be very useful. A detailed discussion followed on the items on the Forward Work Programme with Councillor Peers saying that some of the timescales were outside officer control. The Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) said that it was important that the Forward Work Programme was put in place in September and that he would bear in mind the comments made by Councillor Peers regarding timescales.

The recommendations as set out in the report, were moved and seconded by Councillors Mike Allport and Mike Peers

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

9. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE

In presenting the report the Chief Officer (Governance) explained that in October last year the Chief Officer structure was changed and that the Terms of Reference required amendment to align with those changes. He referred Members to the existing Terms of Reference which was attached as Appendix 1 with the changes which had been made shown on Appendix 2. Once the Terms of Reference had been approved it would then be presented to County Council.

Councillor Mike Peers referred to page 36, the item on violence against women, domestic abuse and violence against women and asked if this would be best suited with the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee or shared across two portfolios. In response the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) clarified that the reason for this was the team was managed by his portfolio and aligned with the community safety team. He took to the point and said there would be flexibility where topics crossed over with invitations sent to other committees to join committee when these were being discussed.

The recommendation as set out in the report, was moved and seconded by Councillors Dan Rose and Roy Wakelam

RESOLVED:

That the Committee supported the proposed amendments to its terms of reference as set out in Appendix 2.

10. END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

In presenting the Annual Report the Internal Audit Manager confirmed it was based on the Council Plan for 2021/2022, which was approved at Full Council in June 2021. The Council priorities and performance targets against those priorities which related to Streetscene, Planning, Environment & Economy were outlined at 1.05 in the report. The Internal Audit Manager then provided information on the monitoring process involved throughout the year.

The Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) provided information on the three red indicators which were:-

- support to local businesses to reduce their carbon footprint and provided more detail on this.
- Number of individuals entering employment, learning or volunteering
- Number of individuals receiving support

The Regulatory Services Manager then provided detailed information on the 5 red performance indicators for Streetscene and Transportation. These were: -

- Multi model transport hub in Garden City
- Installation of electric charging points
- Introduction of two electric recycling vehicles which had been part funded by Welsh Government (WG) but there had been a delay in receiving those vehicles.
- Percentage of waste reused, recycled and composted
- Bus quality partnerships – WG network review

In response to questions from Councillor Mike Peers, the Regulatory Services Manager confirmed that the WG recycling, compost and reuse performance target was 64% for last year with the Council achieving 60.5%. This was due to increase to 70% in 2024/25 with the Council fined £200 for every ton sent to landfill if that target was not met. She provided information on the increased levels of residual waste collected during the pandemic as people worked from home and disposed of recycling within their black bin as the HRC sites and other services were closed. Moving forward she explained that once information from the compositional analysis survey was received it would enable engagement with residents to encourage more recycling especially with the use of the food waste service.

In response to a question from the Chair on waste recycling and targeting the worst areas, the Regulatory Services Manager confirmed they were looking at

RFID studies, putting chips on bins to make the service more efficient but the data was not available yet. This could provide information on how residents recycle but she added that most residents do recycle.

In response to a question from Councillor Richard Lloyd concerning the Council's website and the 'check your bin day' page, the Regulatory Services Manager confirmed that they were aware of the problem. The page had been disabled with IT were currently working on this and it was hoped it would be up and running soon. Residents were advised to call the Streetscene Contact Centre or refer to their collections calendar.

In response to a question from the Chair on the circa economy information on page 69, the Regulatory Services Manager provided information on the unsuccessful bid for the repair and reuse scheme at the HRC sites. This bid had been re-submitted for further circa economy funding which was being considered by Welsh Government (WG). It was hoped that this would be successful.

The recommendations as set out in the report, were moved and seconded by Councillors Mike Peers seconded by Councillor Dan Rose

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee supported the levels of progress and confidence in the achievement of priorities within the 2021/22 Council Plan.
- (b) That the Committee supported the overall performance against 2021/22 Council Plan performance indicators.
- (c) That the Committee was assured by explanations given for those areas of underperformance.

11. FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2022-23 FOR FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

In presenting the report the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) said that this was a return to business as usual. The authority was very fortunate to have retained such an experienced team of officers and had also recruited other officers who had provided support across the council.

The Community and Business Protection Manager and the Food Safety Team Leader commenced the presentation which included slides on the following: -

- **Food Service Plan for 2022 – 2023**
- **Background**
 - Food Service Plan covers Food Safety, Food Standards and Animal Feed
 - The Plan is an annual requirement of The Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities
 - Food Law Code of Practice and Feed Law Code of Practice with associated Practice Guidance governs what we do, when we do it and how we do it

- Service also covers Communicable Disease and elements of other Trading Standards legislation

- **Food Recovery Plan**
- **Minimum requirement of the Recovery Plan**
- **Review of 2021-2022**

- Achieved all programmed inspections in line with the Recovery Plan for Safety and Standards
- New businesses – inspected 91.4% of all new businesses for Hygiene and 88.6% for Standards
- Broadly Compliant figure improved to 98.5%
- Moved ahead of the recovery plan in relation to Category B and C Food Hygiene and Category A-C Food Standards interventions
- Feed interventions in farms not met – 32 out of 50 premises interventions completed
- Significant auditing of shellfish documentation from the Dee Estuary to improve compliance and traceability in the shellfish industry

- **Commitments for 2022 – 2023**

- All Category A, B and C (High Risk) Food Hygiene inspections
- All Category D non-broadly compliant Food Hygiene inspections
- All Category A (High Risk) Food Standards inspections and all Category B premises that are also due their Food Hygiene inspection
- 90% of all new businesses to be inspected for both Hygiene and Standards
- Feed – 72 Farms interventions and 40 High Risk premises across the range of Feed business types

- **Summary**

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection was pleased that this was being shared with committee. The work undertaken by the team during the pandemic was outstanding, with track and trace unable to function without them. He referred members to page 117 which listed the 1,452-food premises within Flintshire, all of which required one inspection per year. The annual report provided reassurance that the farm to fork process was still working thanks to the ongoing work of the team and it was a tribute to them that issues very rarely come to light.

The Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) confirmed this report would be presented to Cabinet next week with the Committee's views that it should be adopted.

The recommendation as set out in the report was moved and seconded by Councillors Mike Allport and Ian Hodge

RESOLVED:

To recommend the Food Service Plan 2022-23 for Adoption.

12. NORTH WALES REGIONAL ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

In presenting the report the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) sought the committee's comments on the North Wales Regional Economic Framework (NWREF) with a view to it being endorsed by Cabinet next week. He provided an overview of Ambition North Wales as regards funding, delivery across the region and explained the Regional Economic Framework was established by Welsh Government (WG) and Ambition North Wales. He referred Members to Appendix 1 which outlined how this would progress over the next five years to address the recovery of the economy in North Wales. He provided information on the economic gap and the delivery plan, which would be brought back to committee. Any comments from committee would be taken back to Cabinet and he confirmed that all authorities across Wales were seeking to endorse this document.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy commenting that with WG and representatives of all local authorities of North Wales working together for the economic wellbeing of the region, there was the potential for North Wales to play a leading role especially regarding renewable energy.

The Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) commented that one of the programmes of Ambition North Wales was a low carbon energy, with the first being the low carbon tidal energy project on Anglesey. Referring to the Forward Work Programme he said that each of the Programme Managers would be attending to outline the work each of the programmes was undertaking, with the Land and Property Manager attending in September and that low carbon energy could be next.

The recommendation as set out in the report, was moved and seconded by Councillors Mike Allport and Ian Hodge.

RESOLVED:

To recommend the draft 'Regional Economic Framework for North Wales' for endorsement by the Council.

13. SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

The Enterprise and Regeneration Manager provided an update on the Shared Prosperity Fund saying that some information was not available at present. The UK Government Programme replaced the EU Structural Funds which was revenue based with £2.5 b funding over the next three years. He outlined the short timescales involved between the initial release and deadline for submissions. North Wales was required to submit a Regional Development Strategy by the 1st of August, and he explained how this money could be accessed and used. The Enterprise and Regeneration Manager then provided detailed information on the Priorities, which were subject to change, for each of the three themes, community and place, support provided to local businesses

and people and skills. He also provided information on the £10.8 m funding with recruitment of the staff required to deliver this a challenge. In conclusion the Enterprise and Regeneration Manager confirmed that this would be presented to Cabinet next week with WG approval in October. He confirmed that this would be brought back to committee following approval.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy said the situation was constantly changing with the same team also involved with the Levelling Up bid. When it came to funding Flintshire was 20 out of 22 authorities and felt disheartened that the funding of £10.8 m over 3 years was so low.

In response to the questions from Councillor Mike Peers, the Enterprise and Regeneration Manager confirmed that the Priorities had to be submitted by the 1st of August and would specify what interventions the council would like to choose from the programme. The workshops were publicised through the Flintshire Local Voluntary Council (FLVC) and partners, with 20 participants attending each one. The situation was still unclear with regarding the financial breakdown and work would continue to identify which projects met the criteria. Cabinet would be leading on this, but a report would be brought to committee again in the autumn. The Enterprise and Regeneration Manager commented that UK Government had set out the mechanism for this but that Welsh authorities were receiving more funding than their English neighbours, as this was a bigger programme in Wales. That said the funding was also heavily weighted towards West Wales and the Valleys.

A discussion following with Councillor Mike Peers and the committee agreeing to change the wording of the recommendation to “That Members review the opportunity presented by the Shared Prosperity Fund programme and work undertaken to date and a detailed report would be presented to a future Scrutiny meeting.”

The recommendation as amended was moved and seconded by Councillors Mike Peers and Mike Allport

RESOLVED:

That Committee reviewed the opportunity presented by the Shared Prosperity Fund programme and work undertaken to date and that a detailed report would be presented to a future Scrutiny meeting.

14. WELSH GOVERNMENT’S CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR NEW BUS LEGISLATION

In presenting the report the Transport Manager explained that Welsh Government (WG) were seeking feedback on the White Paper proposals which would fundamentally change the way that bus services were governed and operated in Wales. A detailed overview of the WG vision and the public consultation undertaken was given together with information on the current legislation (Transport Act 1985 and 2000) and the Council’s responsibilities. Background information on the commercial bus providers was given with details of the review of the core network which were to hubs, main towns and public interchanges supported by the council with fewer services operating especially in

rural areas. He also provided information on the impacts of deregulation over the years as regards services and the financial support provided by the Council and WG Network Support Grant. The pandemic had highlighted the vulnerability of the services and the impacts because of decreasing passenger numbers.

The Transport Manager then reported on the WG initiatives to enable the regulation of bus services across Wales, which were outlined in the report. Details of the list of measures and how these would be implemented with WG, local authorities and providers, and include measures to combat climate change and emissions. Local Authorities felt improvements were required but had concerns regarding the level of funding available to support this as well as provisions for rural services. Referring to the WG Questionnaire he provided detailed information on the key financial implications and risks and confirmed that comments from this committee would be fed back.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy agreed with the concerns raised and reported on his online petition to WG "Buses for People and not Profits" with former Councillor Carolyn Thomas. He felt that this initiative was trying to undo the damage of deregulation with its focus on social equity and reducing emissions but that there were unanswered questions around rural communities. He understood the impacts on small bus operators (SME) especially around school transport and that WG could intervene and take funding from one scheme and to provide to another without local authority input. The authority could be a high contributor with resources going elsewhere and wondered if all the routes in our rural communities would be prioritised when it operated in practice.

Councillor Mike Peers raised several concerns regarding the provision of the core network of buses and cross border services and the need to ensure rural communities maintained their services. The ambiguity surrounding the pooling of resources was also concerning. Referring to the train services he felt that the Wrexham to Bidston line, including the Deeside Parkway could be a useful hub but that the issues at Castle Cement were causing problems.

In response to the Wrexham Bidston line, Deeside parkway and Castle Cement concerns the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) reported on the Transport for Wales (TFW) bid in the levelling up funding to enable funding for Deeside Parkway, which would address the signalling at Castle Cement and allow two extra trains to run without impacting their freight services. This capital bid would be submitted once the portal was open. He provided information on the unsuccessful borderlines bid last year which included a park and ride facility at Penyffordd. The bid had been changed and would be re-submitted but that round 2 of levelling up would be more competitive but a decision would be received by the autumn.

The Transport Manager thanked the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy and Councillor Mike Peers for their observations regarding the reallocation of funding especially as the authority had no control over how it was distributed. The criteria were still unknown, and clarification would be sought on that. If this failed and Flintshire was left without a bus service, the Integrated Transport System would fail as buses were an integral part of the various forms of transport. This could result in an increase in car usage and CO2 emissions.

Councillor Dan Rose understood what WG were trying to achieve with the one ticket for buses and trains etc. and asked if the authority would still be responsible for the active travel initiatives. Would this eliminate the council's powers to create extra routes around what was provided by WG? In response the Transport Manager confirmed that active travel would be continuing as the authority worked closely with TFW and WG on strategic plans and cross border routes but that would have to link with the proposals and identification of transport hubs. The Transport Area Co-ordinator confirmed that no clarification had been received on the impact of local transport arrangements which were wholly funded by Flintshire or the funding under franchise model.

The Chair commented that as the committee had not seen the final response only the concerns raised, he suggested that the second recommended be removed. This was agreed by the committee.

The change in the recommendations was moved and seconded by Mike Peers and Roy Wakelam

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Scrutiny Committee welcomed the proposals to introduce new legislation for bus services in Wales but noted some of the risks and challenges highlighted in this report.

15. RECYCLING BRING SITES

In presenting the report the Regulatory Services Manager provided detailed information on the purpose of the sites, collection rates achieved and their locations across the county. Since they were established the successful kerbside recycling collection services had been introduced and there were now also 5 HRC sites for residents to use. The Regulatory Services Manager confirmed that these sites supported the council's recycling performance, but they were unmanned and unregulated sites and were abused with fly tipping incidents as the banks were only for glass and textiles. Several of these sites were in public and pub car parks which enabled businesses, such as the hospitality industry, to dispose of their waste which was not their intention. The Council's Area Cleansing Team then had to clear the fly tipping waste, which was disposed of as black sack waste, and their costs were now increasing. The council could not offset the costs by the glass collected. Consideration was being given to this as there were several outlets providing the services in conjunction with the weekly successful kerbside operation for these residents to use. Regarding textiles these could be taken to the HRC sites or residents could use the charity bags households received through their letterbox or use sites on social media. There was also a bid currently with WG to pilot a doorstep collection service for textiles.

Councillor Mike Peers asked why residents took glass to a bring site when it was collected at the kerbside and was it clear who was using these bring sites. In response the Regulatory Services Manager explained these sites were unmanned so it was unclear which was business waste or whether residents

brought these items. There was no detailed information, and it was felt predominantly the waste was from businesses

Councillor Richard Lloyd reported that he had witnessed fly tipping at his local sites and that if there was an increased cost to remove this then he was in favour of their removal, especially as residents were able to use the kerbside collections.

In response to a question from Councillor Mike Peers on textiles the Regulatory Services Manager confirmed textiles could still be deposited at HRC sites but that recommendations would also be made to residents to use local charities in their area too. A comprehensive information pack would be provided to residents should these sites be removed

Councillor Dan Rose asked if a study had been carried out for those areas which were not in a pub car park to see if there was an actual need for the site. In response the Regulatory Services Manager reported a study had not been undertaken but if people wanted to travel to these sites there were alternatives to the kerbside collection at the HRC sites.

Councillor Ian Hodge understood that currently textiles were not collected in the kerbside services but there could be people who were unable to get to the HRC sites. He felt this should not be removed until there was an alternative in place for them to use. In response the Regulatory Services Manager said there was always the option of charity shops to dispose of these items and that the funding bid to introduce kerbside collection was still with WG. A comprehensive package providing alternatives which were nearby would be included for residents.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection commented that charity shops took textiles and there were regular bags through the door asking for donations.

The Chair reported on incidents in his ward where bags were left outside charity shops and torn apart during the night. He asked if Charity shops had a limit on the stock they could accept. In response the Regulatory Services Manager explained that a survey had not been undertaken as regards capacity but said when the bid was being prepared the Charity shops were interested in small textile items such as clothing for re-sale in their shops. Promotion of the HRC sites and hopefully kerbside collection service would be recommended to residents.

The recommendations as set out in the report was moved and seconded by Councillors Richard Lloyd and Dan Rose.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Scrutiny Committee noted the issues and challenges around the continued provision of the recycling bring sites and increasing costs for such a provision.

- (b) That the Scrutiny Committee supported the proposed removal of the recycling bring sites across the county.

16. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 10.00am and ended at 12.21 pm)

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Chair