

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
7 MARCH 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Hybrid Meeting on Tuesday, 7th March, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor David Evans (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Mel Buckley, Chris Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, Richard Lloyd, Mike Peers, Vicky Perfect, Dan Rose, and Roy Wakelam

SUBSTITUTION: Councillors Bernie Attridge for Councillor Ian Hodge and Councillor Teresa Carberry for Councillor Ray Hughes

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Chris Bithell (Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection), Councillor Dave Hughes (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy), Councillor David Healey (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy), Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), Highways Network Manager, Area Network Manager, Bereavement Services Manager, Biodiversity Officer, Streetscene Supervisor, and Streetscene Maintenance Manager (South and Structures). For Minute No.63: David Matthews, Land and Property Programme Manager, Ambition North Wales.

IN ATTENDANCE: Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officers

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor Teresa Carberry declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 8: Local Toilet Strategy.

61. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 10 January, 1 February, and 7 February 2023, were submitted.

The minutes were approved as an accurate record as moved and seconded by Councillor Roy Wakelam and Councillor Mike Allport.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

62. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking report. She referred to the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 23 March which would be a joint meeting with the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee to consider parking

outside schools, and the items listed for consideration at future meetings. The Facilitator also drew attention to the workshops on the exceptions criteria for the 20mph legislation implementation to be held on 15 March 2023.

The Facilitator referred to the Action Tracking report which was appended to the report and advised that all outstanding items had been completed.

Members were invited to raise any further items they wished to put forward for inclusion on the Programme.

The recommendations in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Bernie Attridge and Roy Wakelam.

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

63. PRESENTATION FROM THE LAND & PROPERTY PROGRAMME MANAGER FOR AMBITION NORTH WALES

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) introduced the item to give an update on the current position on the Land and Property Programme projects and the replacement project process. He provided background information and context on the work of Ambition North Wales and introduced David Matthews, Land and Property Programme Manager, Ambition North Wales. Mr Matthews gave a presentation on the North Wales Growth Deal – Land and Property Programme which covered the following points:

- our Partners
- our vision
- principles
- objectives
- investment
- 5 programmes
 - Innovation in high value manufacturing
 - Agri-food and tourism
 - Digital connectivity
 - Land and property
 - Low carbon energy
- Warren Hall, Broughton
- Western Gateway, Wrexham
- former North Wales Hospital, Denbigh
- Parc Bryn Begin Bangor – Advance Light Industrial Development proposal
- Holyhead Gateway, Holyhead

Councillor Bernie Attridge asked for information concerning any investment made by Flintshire County Council in the Land and Property Programme and expressed concerns around the development and impact on road infrastructure and land in Flintshire and the timelines. The Land and Property Programme Manager responded to the questions and comments raised by Councillor Attridge. The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) provided a further response to the comments regarding the Warren Hall, Broughton, development plan.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

64. STREETSCENE STANDARDS

The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) presented a report which outlined the intention to review the existing Standards and recommend changes that link more closely to the Council Plan and portfolio Business Plan. She explained that the intention was to ensure that the service continued to meet the needs and expectations of the public and residents whilst making most efficient use of the available resources. The purpose of the report was to illustrate the inadequacies of the existing document and request support from the Scrutiny Committee for Streetscene & Transportation to review and retire the existing Standards. This would create a more robust and relevant suite of performance metrics that could be measured, monitored, and reported more effectively. The Chief Officer referred to the key considerations as detailed in the report.

Councillor Bernie Attridge suggested that a Task and Finish Group be convened to support the review of the Standards and this was supported by the Committee.

Councillor Mike Peers commented on the need to ensure that the Standards were enforced and not ignored. He supported the formation of a Task and Finish Group. In response to the concerns raised by Councillor Peers, the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) encouraged Members to report any issues or shortcomings in performance directly to Officers, Customer Services or the Contact Centre so that the matter could be logged, recorded, allocated, and appropriate action taken.

Councillor Richard Lloyd raised concerns about the delays experienced by some residents in accessing the services provided by Contact Centres and requested that additional provision was made available in the Saltney ward to enable local residents to pay for services. He also commented on the cleaning of bus shelters and referred to the provision of bus shelters in his ward. Members commented on the need for up-to-date timetable information to be provided at bus shelters and bus timetables to be made available to the public in printed version as well as online.

The recommendations as set out in the report were moved by Councillor Bernie Attridge and seconded by Councillor Roy Wakelam.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposal to retire the existing Streetscene Standards document be noted and the intended review to replace them with a revised suite of performance metrics that supported service standards in order to measure performance against existing statutory obligations, the Council Plan and existing policies be supported;
- (b) That a further report be presented once the review has been completed; and
- (c) That a Task and Finish Group be convened to consider the development of the new Standards.

65. GRASS CUTTING POLICY

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) presented the report to advise the Committee of the revised Grass Cutting Policy following an all-member workshop, which was jointly held in January 2023 by the Streetscene & Transportation and Planning, Environment & Economy portfolios. She provided background information and explained that the purpose of the report was to provide an overview of the work undertaken to date by both portfolios and to consider the opportunities for policy review in the future. In addition, the report also included an update on the performance of the grass cutting operational service during 2022.

The Biodiversity Officer, Highway Network Manager, and Streetscene Supervisor, jointly reported on the main considerations as detailed in the report.

Councillor Bernie Attridge congratulated the Chief Officer and her team on the overall improvements in the grass cutting service. He also commented on some of the remaining concerns he had around tenants gardens and cited grass cutting in small areas belonging to sheltered housing as an example.

In response to the comments and questions raised by Councillor Richard Lloyd around maintenance of areas next to garages, the Chief Officer explained that the maintenance of garage areas belonging to social housing came under the remit of the Housing Service.

The recommendations in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Bernie Attridge and Mike Allport.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the work undertaken to date and the opportunities to increase biodiversity in managing our road verges and amenity grasslands be supported; and
- (b) That the proposed changes to the grass cutting policy and the targeted reduction in the use of pesticides be supported.

66. LOCAL TOILET STRATEGY

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) provided background information and advised that Flintshire County Council was required to review and provide an 'end of period' progress statement for the local toilet strategy within a year of each ordinary election for its area. The local government election date in Wales was 5 May 2022, which meant that the latest date for review was by 4 May 2023. The purpose of the report was to provide an overview of the legislative background and set out how the Council intended to review the current strategy.

The Area Network Manager presented the report and referred to the main considerations. The Chief Officer drew attention to the proposed timetable for the review as outlined in paragraph 1.07 of the report. The Highway Network Manager reported on the statutory public consultation exercise to be undertaken.

Councillor Bernie Attridge expressed concerns regarding the provision of public toilets in local communities in the future. He asked if further funding was available from the Welsh Government or alternative funding streams to improve on the facilities currently available. The Highways Network Manager responded to the comments and questions raised by Councillor Attridge and advised that new opportunities were being considered to offer provision across the County.

Councillor Mike Peers commented on facilities available in Town and Community Councils and referred to a proposed development in the Buckley Mountain ward.

The recommendations as set out in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Bernie Attridge and Mike Allport.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed review of the local toilet strategy be supported; and
- (b) That the intended approach and timescales as set out in the report be approved.

67. BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) provided background information and advised that the purpose of the report was to provide an update to members on the existing burial capacity within Flintshire cemeteries and give an overview of the options for reviewing and increasing capacity.

The Transportation Manager presented the report. He invited the Bereavement Services Manager to provide an overview of the remaining burial capacity at both Hawarden No. 2 and Buckley cemeteries, which was at a critical level with only four years left at each cemetery. He advised that two separate projects aimed at providing additional capacity at each of the locations were being progressed and gave an update on developments. He also reported on the alternative solutions, which could assist the current pressures and constraints

associated with requirement for burial and the options that offered improved environmental benefits.

The Chair commented on the remaining capacity in Hawarden and Buckley cemeteries and asked how many requests for burial were “new requests” or were connected to existing family plots. Officers agreed to provide the information following the meeting. The Chair asked whether there was sufficient existing land available in the county to expand provision and expressed concerns around the need to purchase additional land. He referred to the Local Development Plan (LDP) and whether this held any sites.

Councillor Chris Bithell asked if the Council had a policy on ‘stacking’ burials and the reasons for the preference for burials over cremations. The Bereavement Services Manager also responded to the questions and comments raised by Councillor Dan Rose on provision in neighbouring authorities, funeral costs and promotion of options available, the potential to utilise land in closed cemeteries, long term planning around the impact of demography and new and future housing developments, and timescale on the use of burial plots for family members.

The recommendations in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Bernie Attridge and Roy Wakelam.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Scrutiny notes the current capacity levels at each of the county’s cemeteries and notes the need to increase capacity at critical sites;
- (b) That Scrutiny supports an application for additional capital funding for the progression of Hawarden No. 2 cemetery extension;
- (c) That Scrutiny supports proposals to provide additional burial capacity within Buckley Cemetery and approves the future submission of a capital funding application; and
- (d) That Scrutiny approves the further exploration of alternative burial and cremation options as a means to support future cemetery capacity, subject to available funding.

68. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

(The meeting started at 10.00am and ended at 12.28 pm)

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Chairman