

Public Document Pack

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Chief Officer (Governance)
Prif Swyddog (Llywodraethu)



Contact Officer:
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To: Cllr David Evans (Chair)

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

1 March 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

NOTICE OF HYBRID MEETING
ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, 7TH MARCH, 2023 at 10.00 AM

Yours faithfully

Steven Goodrum
Democratic Services Manager

Please note: Attendance at this meeting is either in person in the Council Chamber, Flintshire County Council, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire or on a virtual basis.

The meeting will be live streamed onto the Council's website. The live streaming will stop when any confidential items are considered. A recording of the meeting will also be available, shortly after the meeting at <https://flintshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact a member of the Democratic Services Team on 01352 702345.

A G E N D A

1 **APOLOGIES**

Purpose: To receive any apologies.

2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**

Purpose: To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

3 **MINUTES** (Pages 5 - 34)

Purpose: To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meetings held on 10 January, 1 February, and 7 February 2023.

4 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING** (Pages 35 - 44)

Report of Environment and Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator -

Purpose: To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee and to inform the Committee of progress against actions from previous meetings.

5 **PRESENTATION FROM THE LAND & PROPERTY PROGRAMME MANAGER FOR AMBITION NORTH WALES**

Purpose: To receive an update on the current state of play on the Land and Property Programme projects and the replacement project process.

6 **STREETSCENE STANDARDS** (Pages 45 - 54)

Report of Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) - Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy

Purpose: The Streetscene Standards have not been reviewed since 2019. This reports reviews the existing standards and recommend amendments to ensure that the service continues to delivers to the needs and expectations of the public.

7 **GRASS CUTTING POLICY** (Pages 55 - 144)

Report of Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) - Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy

Purpose: To advise Scrutiny of the revised Grass Cutting Policy.

8 **LOCAL TOILET STRATEGY** (Pages 145 - 152)

Report of Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) - Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy

Purpose: The advise Scrutiny that the next statutory formal review point for our Local Toilet Strategy is required to follow the local government elections that were held in May 2022, and we now have one year from the date of the elections to review, revise, consult upon and publish updated strategies for our local area. This report sets out the approach being taken and the timescales of the review. This revised Local Toilet Strategy will be presented in March 2023.

9 **BEREAVEMENT SERVICES** (Pages 153 - 160)

Report of Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) - Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy

Purpose: To advise the committee on the services provided and challenges faced.

Please note that there may be a 10 minute adjournment of this meeting if it lasts longer than two hours

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ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE **10 JANUARY 2023**

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Environment and Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Tuesday, 10 January 2023

PRESENT: Councillor David Evans (Chair)

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

IN ATTENDANCE AS OBSERVERS: Councillors Helen Brown, Debbie Owen and Bernie Attridge

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),

Councillor Paul Johnson (Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy), Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation),

Contract Manager, Waste Operations Manager, Waste Supervisors, Enforcement Supervisor, Enforcement Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officers

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

42. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 December 2022 were submitted.

Matters arising

Councillor Mike Peers referred to paragraph 37 on page 4 of the minutes where the Facilitator gave an update on progress for the joint meeting with the Education Youth & Culture O&S Committee. He said it did not state the purpose which was to address vehicle parking outside schools.

Councillor Peers then referred to page 5 the MTFs and Budget Setting 2023/23 which was in Part 2 and asked Members would have sight of the questions prior to it being discussed at Full Council.

In response the Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator confirmed that the Finance Officers took notes of the questions raised at the meetings which had been collated. As these were in Part 2 and could not be published within the minutes, she agreed to speak to the relevant Officers to enquire if a copy could be made available to him.

The minutes were approved as moved and seconded by Councillor Dan Rose and Councillor Mike Allport.

RESOLVED:

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

43. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking report. She drew attention to the items included for the February meeting which were the Woodlands Strategy, Climate Change update, Welsh Water Draft Water Resources Management Plan 2024 (Public Consultation), and Wepre Park Management Plan. She then referred to the Communities for Work item which had been withdrawn and she invited the Chief Officer to provide information on this.

The Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) said this item had been included in the Forward Work Programme because of concerns around Welsh Government (WG) funding. He was pleased to announce that funding was secured for next year which was why it was being removed. He said that a report would be provided within the next year outlining the work undertaken by Communities for Work employability programme.

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator confirmed that the Education Youth & Culture O&S Committee had a meeting arranged for the 2 February which would include a joint item on Parking Outside School and Enforcement. Members of this committee would be invited to that meeting for the item. She then explained that Bereavement in the Countryside Policy was now scheduled for the February meeting.

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator then referred to a workshop being held on the 24 January on "Open Space Management, Grass Cutting and Nature". There was also the Exceptions Criteria for 20 mph implementation in February and the Progress on the implementation of the conversion of the FCC Fleet to electric and alternative fuels in October.

The Facilitator then referred to the Action Tracking report and invited the Chief Officer (Streetscene) to provide an update on the network review by Transport for Wales. The Chief Officer (Streetscene) explained that Welsh Government (WG) were reviewing bus legislation in Wales which had been presented to committee and said the network review was part of this. It was still unclear when this would be implemented and that this would stay on the Action Tracking until the review took place. It was suggested to remove this for now until more information was available and this was agreed by committee.

The Facilitator then referred to Town Centre Markets and reported that Niall Waller would be sending a briefing paper to committee members later that day. Referring to Litter from food outlets the Chief Officer (Streetscene) clarified that this was a WG directive and suggested that a letter be sent from this committee highlighting the issues being experienced. The Chair and committee members agreed for the Chief Officer to write to WG for an update.

The Facilitator then referred to the workshop on the 20mph implementation would now take place in March.

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.

44. WASTE STRATEGY

The Chief Officer (Streetscene) presented the report and thanked the officers for the significant amount of work they had undertaken. Three reviews of the Waste Strategy had taken place within the last 5 years with the current fourth review focusing on the Council's drop in performance levels and achieving those targets to avoid financial penalties. Welsh Government (WG) set the statutory targets for local authorities and the Council followed the blueprint with one of the targets being 64% for this year and 70% by 2024/25. The aim was to send 70% of all the waste generated to reuse recycle or compost with the remaining residual waste 30% sent to an energy from waste plant.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene) provided information on the performance levels over the last few years, the impacts following the pandemic and the options available to meet the statutory targets. She then referred members to specific sections of the report and outlined the legislative background and targets set by WG and performance levels achieved by the Council. Information on the infraction fines was given, which were highlighted as a significant risk to the Authority. In 2021-2022 the recycling target has been missed by 3,314 tonnes, which could equate to a potential infraction fine of £662,888 if WG choose to levy a financial penalty.

An overview of the meeting held last year with the Minister was provided by the Chief Officer (Streetscene) which followed a drop in performance the previous year in 2020-2021 of just 17 tonnes and the Chief Officer (Streetscene) indicated that it was likely they would be summoned again this year to explain why the authority had missed its targets in 2021-2022. This was a significant risk to the service as there was no budget to cover that level of fine and it could impact on how services would be delivered in the future. She then referred members to page 19 which included a forecast on performance for this year, which showed that if the authority continued at this level of performance, it would equate to 63.17%, falling short of the target by 622 tonnes with a potential

infracton fine in excess of £124,000. An overview of the tonnages achieved over the summer and winter was provided which was not recovering with residual waste increasing. Recycling rates had increased, but so had residual waste, which did not help with achieving targets. Information on the Sustainable Waste Management Grant was provided by the Chief Officer (Streetscene), who advised that WG were considering whether to potentially bring this into a circular economy grant which would present additional financial risks for the Authority. Members were referred to the table on tonnage rates on page 20 and Appendix 2 which included the slides from the Member workshops and a comparison of Flintshire's performance against other authorities with those local authorities at the top and achieving the targets limiting the amount of black sack waste households could dispose of. In Flintshire households were provided with a 180-litre bin allowing for 90 litres per week with those top performing authorities limiting it to 60 litres per week. Referring to the compositional analysis she confirmed that 50% of the waste included in the black bin was recyclable, of which 27% had found to be food waste.

A summary of the feedback received from the two Member Workshops held in November was provided at 1.11 and the Chief Officer (Streetscene) confirmed that the failure to achieve the statutory recycling targets was now registered as a red risk for the portfolio. The Chief Officer (Streetscene) then referred to the considerations and options on page 22 and provided detailed information on frequency of collections, modelling of rounds and the costs involved. Information on enhanced enforcement and increased charges for garden waste subscriptions was given together with enhanced education to ensure that more residents recycle.

In response to several questions raised by Councillor Mike Peers the Chief Officer (Streetscene) provided the following responses.

Regarding infracton fines she confirmed that prior to the pandemic other local authorities had been fined. She explained that each time the targets were missed representatives from the Council were summoned to meet the Minister to provide an explanation of why these targets were not met and what was being put in place to mitigate it.

Referring to the blueprint policy point she confirmed that it did include recommendations to reduce residual waste capacity, to use 140 litre capacity bins, reduce collection frequency and provided advice on no side waste collection for residual waste.

Moving on to side waste enforcement the Chief Officer (Streetscene) did not have that information to hand but agreed to circulate it to Members following the meeting. She confirmed that fixed penalty notices (FPNs) had been issued and officers had targeted areas to provide that education and guidance to residents. Temporary improvements were usually seen but then the households slipped back into old habits. She outlined the three-stage side waste enforcement process which had reduced the need for FPNs.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy reported that the last time the authority was summoned to meet the Minister the target was missed by 17 tonnes with this

year's likely to be missed by 600+ tonnes. He said some of the options available were unaffordable but education was the way forward, targeting wards who put recyclable waste in their bins. It was hoped to do this right across Flintshire.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene) emphasised that this would not be enough to achieve the 70% target by 2024 on its own which would not be achievable with what was being collected now and more needed to be done to restrict the amount of residual waste collected. .

Councillor Mike Peers referred to the options at 1.14 he asked if any of these guaranteed that the authority would hit the recycling target. In response the Chief Officer (Streetscene) said the top performers were achieving this by limiting the amount of residual waste collected per household to 60 litres a week.

The Chair said that changing the bin size or frequency was not the sole answer but education was required.

Councillor Mared Eastwood commented that 60 litres per week appeared to be realistic for residents and asked what capacity of bin would be required for three or four weekly bins. She also asked what the life expectancy of the bins was and whether it was possible to run two sized bins at the same time. In response the Waste Operations Manager confirmed the bins life cycle was about 15 years and that they had been in use for 10 years now with very little damage. The Chief Officer (Streetscene) confirmed that the authority already offered larger 240 litre bins for larger families of six or more so that would not be an issue. She also mentioned that, although not included within the report, there had been suggestions in the past to undertake a pilot targeting a particular area to understand the bin capacity and frequency of collections, and this is something that could be considered again.

Councillor Dan Rose advised that he would be interested in the possibility of running a pilot to gather further information and suggested that a three weekly pilot would impact the public less than four-weekly collections.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy felt the reason why the service was in this position was because the risks of infraction fines had not been put in the public domain to enable a better understanding. He felt additional resources should be used to ensure strategies on changing people's behaviour were successful. He felt it was unfair for the Chief Officer and Officers to be summoned to meet the Minister when it was the county's constituents who were failing to recycle, especially putting food waste in the bin. He felt that when the Council Tax bills were sent to residents another leaflet was included highlighting in clear terms the situation the council was faced with a note "please do not put this in your black bin"

In response to several questions from Councillor Dan Rose the Chief Officer (Streetscene) provided the following:-

Regarding the point on black bins she confirmed that they were recyclable and were broken down into pellets to make other products.

Replying to the second point on engagement and support provided by Welsh Government (WG) she said a performance efficiency review commenced in April 2021 with comparison data on what other local authorities had achieved and what they were doing differently. The clear message from this review was that those local authorities were limiting the amount of residual waste collected at the kerbside. There were also monthly meetings with WG Officials to explore what the Council could do differently and it was recommended that a waste strategy review was undertaken, hence the purpose of this review.

As regards the enforcement question the Chief Officer (Streetscene) reported on the Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) pilot undertaken with food waste recycling in Denbighshire and said that something similar could be looked at in Flintshire.

Answering the density and volume question the Chief Officer (Streetscene) said last year the recycling had increased by 26% and residual waste had increased by more than 9%. She confirmed that in 2020/21 the recycling figures were 51,000 tonnes. Residents were recycling more but unfortunately residual waste rates were also continuing to rise .

Responding to point of vermin and rodents getting into black sacks, the Chief Officer (Streetscene) said that, providing that people were taking advantage of the weekly recycling and food waste collections there should not be any waste left in the black bins to attract them. This only occurred if perishable or food waste was put in the black bin.

Referring to larger families it was confirmed that larger bins were already provided for families of 6 or more.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement felt councillors were part of the solution by providing that help and advice to residents on a local level.

In response to questions raised by Councillor Bernie Attridge the Chief Officer (Streetscene) firstly said that since the Authority had dropped from third from the top to third from the bottom in Wales for performance and that nothing had changed in terms of the collections, education or enforcement. In fact more was being undertaken now than previously. She confirmed that there was no limit to the number of bags residents could put out for recycling which was why the bags were introduced. Residents were encouraged to put multiple bags out which should be collected and she asked Councillor Attridge to let the team know which streets were having issues. She also confirmed that the waste collected from the AHP and nappy collection service did not go to landfill and it went to the energy from waste plant.

The Waste Operations Manager confirmed that sometimes the authority did use kerbside sorting collection vehicles to collect recycling especially over Christmas and busy periods when the refuse collection vehicles were used to collect recycling, such as cardboard. He asked Councillor Attridge to let him have information on the missed black sack collections and he would investigate it further. These incidents were quite rare and he reported on the very low number of complaints received over the Christmas period. He reiterated that if any

Councillor had any issues in their wards, they should email his team to investigate further.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection commented the situation was very worrying as the Council could not afford to pay the infraction fines when so many efficiencies were already being made to enable a balanced budget. Solutions had to be found and he felt positive that it could be achieved as the authority had done it before when it was third from the top in Wales. It may not be unpalatable to go to a three or four weekly collections as other authorities had done or spend £1m on buying new bins as our existing ones will last some years yet. Over the last few years Covid had changed the way that people lived their lives, but residents had co-operated in the past he was confident they could be brought on board to meet out recycling targets. He felt education together with urgent publicity campaigns informing residents of what the Council and they were facing, as this could impact Council Tax rates. A stern approach was required for those residents who refused to come on board to help meet these targets.

In response to a question from Councillor Dan Rose the Chief Officer (Streetscene) confirmed that the authority would continue to provide the assisted collection service which was not affected by this review and was free of charge.

Councillor Debbie Owen referred to HMO properties and wondered if landlords when they received their licences could pay for community bins which were collected weekly. The Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) agreed to speak to Councillor Owen outside of the meeting.

The first recommendations in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Richard Lloyd and Ian Hodge

With regard to the second recommendation Councillor Dan Rose suggested we wait until after the Pilot first and then look at the data before looking at options. This was second by Councillor Roy Wakelam.

Councillor Mike Peers said that from the discussion he was pleased that one of the Cabinet Members said that the reduction of the effective weekly bin capacity was not supported and that education appeared to be the way forward. Another Cabinet Member said he was not keen to go to three or four weekly collections and he asked that these be noted.

The third recommendation was moved by Councillor Ian Hodge and seconded by Councillor Mike Allport.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee noted the Council's current recycling performance against statutory targets.
- (b) That the Committee noted the options for alternative waste collection delivery models and recommended to cabinet that a pilot scheme be undertaken to inform decision making in order to achieve the statutory recycling targets set by Welsh Government.

That the Committee considered the proposal for increasing the garden waste subscription fee to recover increasing operational costs

45. NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL – QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE

The Chief Officer (Planning Environment and Economy) presented the mid-year performance report from the Economic Ambition Board and he reminded members of the introductory session held in early autumn last year. The Economic Ambition Board had £240m worth of capital (£120m from Welsh Government (WG) and £120m from UK Government) to spend across five programmes, which were Digital, Low Carbon Energy, Land and Property, Agri-Food and Tourism and High Value Manufacturing. The five programmes were rated as amber in terms of progress and he provided detailed information on the Bodelwyddan project which had been withdrawn with £10m going back into the Ambition Board funds. He provided an update on the Road Review, which was now awaited in 2023, the Western Gateway and the Warren Hall development. He hoped the Programme Officer for Land and Property would be able to attend the March meeting and bring the other Programme Officers to future meetings.

In response to questions from Councillor Mike Peers the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) firstly referred to the private sector investment question and confirmed that this was constantly being reviewed and had been flagged as an Amber risk. The Programme Office accepted that more engagement with the private sector was required.

In response to the question on whether any of the projects were at risk, he said the answer was no, but that this was also being kept under review.

Referring to the Roads Review question in relation to the Warren Hall site the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) did not understand why an internal road on a Welsh Government site had been included in the scope of the Roads Review.

Moving to the 440 jobs point, he was confident that the Warren Hall site could deliver these jobs, especially with the release of the land for housing.

Finally referring to the high-end manufacturing point the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) outlined how the optical technology was identified together with the green technologies and described what technologies were also being promoted.

Councillor Dave Healey said what the six Councils had achieved working together within the North Wales Growth Deal and Ambition North Wales to secure funding and identify such positive projects was remarkable. He reported on a visit to the impressive Digital Signal Processing Centre at Bangor which was funded by this initiative. He was pleased to see so many low carbon green energy projects, especially within the agri-food and tourism sectors which was good for rural communities.

The recommendations in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Mike Peers and Richard Lloyd.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee considered and noted the Quarter 2 Performance.

46. COUNCIL PLAN 2022-23 MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORTING

In presenting the report the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) said this mid-year report covered the areas of the Council Plan which related to this Committee.

He provided detailed information on the four areas of red risks

- Procurement – engagement with smaller companies to deliver energy projects or energy efficiencies within properties and provided detail on the Dynamic Processing System.
- Digital Connectivity in Rural Areas – he referred to the December meeting where this was identified as a pressure as an officer post had not been filled. It was hoped to fill the role before the new financial year.
- Social Value – this was something that should go to all areas of the council

The Chief Officer (Streetscene) reported on the red risk for Regional Transport Plan. Further guidance was awaited from Welsh Government (WG) on how local authorities were expected to deliver the Regional Transport Plan. Draft Guidance was issued for local authorities to comment on before Christmas and the authority's comments had been returned to them. This remained a red risk as there was no firm plan on how this was going to be delivered. The authority was proposing to review the Integrated Transport Strategy for Flintshire to understand how this fed into the Regional Transport Plan but this was unable to happen until WG had outlined their expectations.

The recommendations in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Richard Lloyd and Ian Hodge.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the committee noted the levels of progress and confidence in the achievement of priorities as at mid-year within the 2022/23 Council Plan.
- (b) That the committee endorsed and supported the overall performance against 2022/23 Council Plan performance indicators as at mid-year.
- (c) That the committee was assured by explanations given for those areas of underperformance.

47. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.42 am)

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Chair

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ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
1 FEBRUARY 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a remote attendance meeting on Wednesday 1 February, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor David Evans (Chairman)

Councillors: Mike Allport,

APOLOGIES: Councillor Carol Ellis (one of the initiators of the call in)

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillor Tina Claydon (for Councillor Richard Lloyd)

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Glyn Banks, Helen Brown, Richard Jones and David Richardson (initiators of the call in)

Councillor Richard Lloyd attended as an observer

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Dave Hughes (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy); Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation); Regulatory Services Manager; Streetscene Service Manager and Waste Operations Manager

IN ATTENDANCE:

Democratic Services Manager and Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

49. CONSIDERATION OF A MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE PURSUANT TO THE CALL IN ARRANGEMENTS

The Chairman advised that the Cabinet had considered a report on 'Waste Strategy Review' at a meeting held on 17 January 2023. The decision (Record of Decision 4056) had been called in by Councillors Bernie Attridge, Helen Brown, David Richardson, Carol Ellis, Richard Jones and Glyn Banks. Copies of the Cabinet report, Record of Decision and Endorsement of Call in, which identified three reasons for the call in, were included in the agenda pack.

The Democratic Services Manager explained the procedure for the call in of a Cabinet decision as detailed in the supporting document which was included in the agenda.

The Chairman invited the signatories to present the reasons for the call-in to the Committee.

50. WASTE STRATEGY REVIEW

Representations from call in signatories

Councillor Richard Jones outlined the reasons for the call in as detailed within the Agenda. Whilst commenting on the reasons relating to the proposed pilot, he outlined the comments made by Cabinet Members during consideration of the Waste Strategy Review report, which had been around the need for better education and the fact that residents had worked with the Council in the past in ensuring high recycling rates and that this could happen again. The signatories of the call in did not support the introduction of a pilot scheme without knowing the costs, especially given the Chief Officer's comments that this could be tricky, logistically challenging and would add additional cost and feel that education and awareness for residents could work again.

Councillor Jones referred to data provided to Members during the Waste Strategy Workshop held on 9 November, 2022 which showed that the Council had the same collection frequencies as 2 other Council's with the highest recycling collection rates across Wales. He commented on the recycling collection rates at Wrexham Council which currently stood at 68% and that they had 240lr bins and a 2 weekly collection frequency. He felt that this demonstrated that achieving a better recycling rate had nothing to do with the frequency of collections or the size of the black bin and everything to do with education around recycling.

Councillor Glyn Banks recognised that at present the recycling collection rates were disappoint but felt that the 70% target rate was not only achievable but passable by implementation of the proposals put forward to the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet back in September 2021 and without the need to change the frequency of collections. In outlining each of the proposals included within the September 2021 report, he did not believe that they had been fully implemented, especially around education and enhanced enforcement. He said that the Council was following the WG Strategy to the letter but was not implement it and did not feel that the WG could fine the Council for not hitting the target, especially given the increase in home working as a result of the Pandemic.

In relation to Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHP), Councillor Banks welcomed the collection of these products but raised concern that they were being taken to Parc Adfer and not being recycled. He said that the weight of this collection could have a positive increase on the recycling rates and cited Gwynedd Council as an example of a Council who sent their produce to South Wales for recycling. He felt that this was an area that the Council could improve on. He also commented on the Household Recycling Centres and whilst praising the staff at the centres, more work needed to be done to ensure all general waste was being checked for recycling. He said that before any consideration was given to moving to 3 or 4 weekly waste collection service, he wanted to see that all of the proposals within the September 2021 report had been implemented and a further report brought back to the Committee. If these proposals were implemented and they had no effect on the recycling targets then he appreciated that the frequency of collections may need to be considered further.

Councillor Helen Brown commented on the AHP and felt that if this was recycled the Council could be reaching its recycling target. She said that many

residents were complaining about the length of time taken to receive caddies which were not always available and that residents were also not aware that this waste was not being recycled.

Councillor David Richardson asked why changing the frequency of collections was being considered as part of the pilot when areas, such as, education and enforcement could be improved. He said that since becoming a Councillor he had not seen any enforcement within his ward and commented on enforcement within the private sector which he said was proactive instead of reactive. He felt that the Council should make recycling easier for residents, commenting on the recycling bags which many residents complained about and also the opening times of Household Recycling Centres which were not accessible for residents working full time.

Councillor Bernie Attridge felt that there was a lack of consistency with waste collections, commenting on cardboard and side waste being collected at some properties and not at others. He commented on the partnership working between the Council and Housing Associations and the lack of recycling being carried out at Housing Association flats due to the lack of communal bins provided. He suggested that the Council withhold the Social Housing Grant to Housing Associations until they provided adequate bins for recycling as he felt that this was assist with the Council's recycling target. He said that he had been proud during his time as Deputy Leader that the Council was one of the top performing Council's across Wales in terms of recycling targets and said he was confident that the Council could meet the targets again without changing the frequency of collections which he felt penalized residents.

Responses from the decision makers

The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) gave a detailed presentation in response to the concerns and comments made by the signatories of the call-in, which covered the following areas:-

- Reasons provided for call-in
- Response to the Call-In
- Education
- Enforcement
- Other local authority performance

The Regulatory Services Manager responded to the comments around the volume of AHP collected and reported that the volume was 470 tonnes per annum which was not a significant enough volume to meet the 64% recycling target rate let alone the future target of 70%. She said that whilst the service had been embraced by members of the public and that they continued to work with WG to look for long term sustainable recycling solutions, this waste alone would not be sufficient to reach the recycling targets. She advised that the recycling waste being placed in black bins should be targeted and reported that 27% of food waste was being placed in black bins. This amounted to 6,620 tonnes of food waste last year where only 4,470 tonnes of food waste was collected through the weekly collection service provided to residents. Ensuring this type of waste was placed out for recycling would have a significant impact on recycling collection rates.

The Regulatory Services Manager also reported that, following a commitment to increase the number of Enforcement Officers, 3 additional Officers had been appointed to assist with tackling additional fly tipping issues.

The Chief Officer commented on the suggestion to send AHP waste to South Wales as was being carried out by Gwynedd Council and advised that early cost benefit analysis carried out suggested that it was not economical for the Council to send this waste to South Wales. She reported that the waste sent to Parc Adfer did count towards the recycling collection figures. All options on how this waste was disposed would continue to be explored.

The Chief Officer also reported that providing that cardboard was flat packed and not contaminated this would be collected for recycling by the operatives.

The Chairman invited Members of the Committee to ask questions of the decision makers.

Councillor Mike Peers said that it seemed Cabinet voted to support the proposal to pilot a reduction in the frequency of collections without considering a detailed report on the pilot scheme. He said that during consideration of the report at the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 10 January Members were advised that reducing the weekly capacity in the black bin would force residents to recycle. He said that he had not agreed with this statement at the time and did not agree with it now having done further research and cited the recycling collection rates at Wrexham Council as an example of why he felt this statement was flawed. He commented on the enforcement of side waste and that 6 fixed penalty notices had been issued since September 2021, which he felt gave the impression that side waste wasn't a significant issue.

In referring to the Waste Strategy Review report to Scrutiny and Cabinet in January, Councillor Peers commented on the blueprint, as outlined within the report, which stated that if adopted, would result in high rates of high quality recycling and questioned whether the blueprint was not working or not being followed, as the high rates and high quality recycling was not being met. On a composite analysis, he felt that the problem lied with household not recycling properly and not about reducing bin capacity and changing the frequency of collections was not the answer. He said that if residents currently put food waste in an 180lr black bin with 2 weekly collections, they will still do the same with a 3 weekly collection.

The Chief Officer said that Councillor Peers was correct that Cabinet would not have supported a pilot without detail and that Cabinet had recommended that a further report be brought back to a future meeting to outline specific details of the proposed pilot prior to a decision being made on whether to proceed. She said that she could not comment on the collection rates at Wrexham Council as they did not operate their service in-house but she said that she could approach them to ascertain what they did differently as they were the only Council bucking the trend of all Local Authorities across Wales. From the data collected all 4 best performing Councils had reduced the size of the black bin to 60lr with 1 Council increasing their recycling rates by 11%.

The Chief Officer also agreed with the comments made by Councillor Peers that the reason the Council were not meeting their recycling target was because some members of the public were not recycling properly and that residual waste had increased by 9% and therefore it was necessary for the Council to look at restrictions to encourage recycling.

The Regulatory Services Manager responded to comments that members of the public who recycled regularly could feel punished unnecessarily through the changes to waste collection frequency. She did not feel that this was a valid argument as they would not need the capacity within their black bin. She said that all members of the public should be encouraged to use the comprehensive recycling service, provided weekly, to its full capacity.

Councillor Richard Jones commented on food waste being the densest waste and the concern around the weight of the waste if residents continued to place this waste in their black bin. He commented on the recommendation made by the Scrutiny Committee in January around the pilot but said Members were not aware that there would be a change to the frequency of collections without further information being presented.

Councillor Glyn Banks commented on the number of residents using the AHP service which he said worked out less than 0.1kg per person per week. He said that even allowing for that weight of 470 tonnes, this was still a £61,000 gate fee at Parc Adfer and felt that looking at sending this waste to South Wales in conjunction with Gwynedd Council should be considered.

Councillor David Richardson asked whether officers enforced side waste only or whether they also checked waste within the black bins. He said that some families had 6 members in one household and others lived on their own and that those that lived on their own may continue to put all waste in the black bin even with smaller bins.

Councillor Roy Wakleman said that when he seconded the proposal for a pilot at the Scrutiny Committee meeting in January, the discussion had been around educating residents and he questioned how the change in frequency of collections to 3 weekly had been included in the pilot when considered by Cabinet. The Chairman said that his recollection from the Committee meeting was that there wasn't a one size fits all solution but it was also suggested that a pilot be considered.

Councillor Chris Dolphin supported the comments of officers around food waste and said that there needed to be more education and enforcement. He spoke of his personal experience of being able to recycle fully with 4 adults and 2 babies in one household and the need for education which could be carried out through leaflets to residents outlining the fines which could be imposed on the Council if recycling targets were not met. He spoke in favour of Option 3 as a recommendation from the Committee, that the decision should be reconsidered by Cabinet as he was not in favour of a pilot and felt that the Council should get on with introducing a 3 weekly collection as those residents who currently recycle would not be affected.

Councillor Ian Hodge spoke on the need for education, citing a recent situation where he had visited schools and was disappointed with the lack of education at schools and at home, when questioning children on their knowledge of recycling.

The Chairman said that education would be a great thing but the 70% recycling target was coming around quicker than all of the education could be carried out.

Councillor Mared Eastwood asked where reducing the black bins to 60l sat within the blueprint that WG expected the Council to deliver on. The Chief Officer advised that the size of the bins did not sit within the blueprint as WG did not specify litres per week. The Council had collected a great deal of data and evidence that those Councils who had moved to reducing the black bins to 60l had higher recycling rates. WG were reviewing the blueprint but additional responsibilities, such as the AHP waste collection, had been placed on Local Authorities as part of the current blueprint.

Councillor Dan Rose said that when proposing the pilot at the Scrutiny Committee meeting in January, the Committee were discussing education and that the methodology used for the pilot was an important detail for Members to know. He said that the Council needed to look at all options available in order to give Officers confidence when meeting with WG Ministers to demonstrate what actions were being considered/taken. He felt that the purpose of the pilot should be to dig deeper in understanding why residents were not recycling and that the area chosen would be important given the 47% of recycling waste currently being put in the back bin. He asked if the 47% of recycling waste was based on weight or volume.

The Regulatory Services Manager advised that the data was based on weight. The Chief Officer also added that during consideration of the Waste Strategy at the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet meetings, it was not specified what the frequency of collections would be during the pilot. The intention of presenting a further report to Cabinet on the pilot would be to consider various options around frequency and size of bin.

The Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy outlined the financial implications to the Council in not meeting the recycling targets which equated to 0.7% of Council Tax. He said that no decision had been made to pilot a 3 weekly waste collection service but said that a pilot, once agreed by Cabinet, would provide data and evidence on the impact any changes would have.

The Chairman invited the initiators of the call in to sum up.

Councillor Richard Jones, in summing up, said that it was unfair for officers to say that other options, alongside changing the frequency of collections was being considered by Cabinet, as during the Cabinet meeting, piloting a 3 weekly collection was all that was discussed. During the Cabinet meeting, the Chief Officer had offered to bring back a report on the pilot but this would include information on the area selected and other data relating to 3 weekly collection and not different types of pilot schemes. He did not feel that changing the

frequency of collections would have a positive effect as this could antagonise and disenfranchise residents to do the right thing. He also felt that the signatories of the call in had provided enough evidence that there was doubt with the Cabinet decision around the pilot and that there was a need to change residents behaviour which would be a better course of action to increase recycling rates.

Councillor Glyn Banks asked the Committee to consider Option 3 or 4 as a recommendation and said that if Cabinet were minded to go ahead with a pilot, all options around frequency of collections and size of bins should be considered in order to provide accurate data to the Council.

The Chief Officer, in summarising, said that regardless of what action the Council took it was still facing a fine of £663,000 for not achieving the recycling targets set by WG last year and were likely to be fined further within this financial year. She advised that the Council was educating people and carrying out enforcement but members of the public who refused to recycle were not changing their behaviour and this posed a significant financial risk to the Council.

The Chairman invited the Democratic Service Manager to remind Members of the options for decision-making as detailed in item 3 of the agenda.

Councillor Mared Eastwood asked if Members wanted to see detailed proposals on how the pilot would work, which Option would this be for the recommendation. The Chairman advised that this would be Option 3 to ask Cabinet to look at the decision again.

Councillor Mike Peers proposed Option 3 and this was seconded by Councillor Ian Hodge. When put to the vote the proposal was carried.

Councillor Mike Peers asked that the nature of Members concerns be set out in writing to Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That having considered the decision, the Committee is still concerned about it and refers this decision back to Cabinet to be reconsidered at the earliest scheduled meeting.

51. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.35 am)

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Chairman

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ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
7 FEBRUARY 2023

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Environment and Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Tuesday, 7 February 2023

PRESENT: Councillor David Evans (Chair)

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

IN ATTENDANCE AS OBSERVERS: Councillor Paul Johnson (Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement),

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Chris Bithell (Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection), Councillor David Healey (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy), Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), Democratic Services Manager, Programme Manager (Climate Change & Carbon Reduction)(for minute no 50) Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment)(for minute nos. 51, 52 and 53) Service Manager (Planning Strategy) (for minute no 54)

IN ATTENDANCE: Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officers

APOLOGIES:

Cllr Ray Hughes, Cllr Dave Hughes.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

49. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking report. She confirmed that in addition to the items included for the March meeting, David Matthews from Ambition North Wales would be attending to provide an update on the Land and Property Programme. Referring to the joint meeting to discuss parking outside schools with the Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee she reported that this had been re-scheduled for the 23 March 2023 at 2.00 pm The Facilitator then provided an overview of the items scheduled for the forthcoming

meetings and asked members if they had items that they would like to put forward for inclusion.

In response to a question from Councillor Mike Peers on whether enforcement would be included, the Chief Officer (Streetscene) confirmed that it would cover parking enforcement outside schools. As regards other enforcement issues she confirmed that discussions had taken place with the Chief Officer (Housing) and Cabinet Members and it was proposed that a joint portfolio workshop be arranged which could also include fly tipping enforcement. Councillor Mike Peers asked if parking enforcement in general could be included in the workshop, which was agreed.

The Facilitator then referred to the Action Tracking report and provided an update on the status of the items listed. She referred to the list of questions action from Councillor Mike Peers and confirmed that the Democratic Services Manager had provided that information.

Councillor Mike Peers felt the action was still open as the link to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting in January did not include a copy of the questions raised by members. The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that he had contacted the Corporate Finance Manager and would speak to him again. He would speak to Councillor Peers outside of the meeting following guidance from the Chief Officer (Governance) on whether this information could be shared.

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.

50 CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

The Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) confirmed that the report would be presented to Cabinet next week and that any comments received from this committee would be welcome. This report had been presented to the Audit and Governance Committee and Climate Change Committee.

The Programme Manager (Climate Change & Carbon Reduction) commenced by saying the Climate Change Strategy was adopted in February last year and that the Council's 2021/22 Carbon Footprint data had been submitted to Welsh Government (WG). She then highlighted specific areas within the report which included the Council's carbon footprint and emission targets. Information was provided on the themes within the plan and an update on targets achieved for buildings, mobility, transport and procurement.

Moving on to the Priorities for 2023/24 the Programme Manager (Climate Change & Carbon Reduction) outlined the improvements in data collection methodology, especially around procurement, and reported on the work being undertaken with the commissioning officers and suppliers. An overview of the information on the priorities for business mileage, recording of employee vehicles, employee commuting and home working and tendering process when working with suppliers was given. She then provided information on carbon literacy training, the baselining of building and land stock and improvements to electrification of fleet, together with a net zero carbon school and aim for net zero carbon care home and local area energy plan.

The Programme Manager (Climate Change & Carbon Reduction) confirmed that in addition to herself a Climate Change Project Assistant had been appointed with a Climate Change Project Officer starting in two months. It was also confirmed that there was a revenue pressure under the MTFS for an Energy Projects Co-ordinator to lead on renewable energy, energy saving and EV infrastructure support. She also reported on the collaborative work with Denbighshire County Council for a Carbon Procurement Officer and access to additional funding both from WG and the private sector.

Following questions from Councillor Mike Peers the Programme Manager (Climate Change & Carbon Reduction) firstly referred to solar panels on schools. She said the most optimised option was provided for the roof space of each building with consideration made to identify what the pay back on investment would be and renewable energy achieved to off-set the cost. She agreed to speak to another team on the point of revenue generated and report back.

Referring to the point on decreases in heating costs from buildings or streetlighting she confirmed that these had been achieved through upgrades through the invest to save programme with these figures shown against the 2018 baseline information.

Regarding the opportunities to decarbonise buildings the Programme Manager (Climate Change & Carbon Reduction) confirmed that this was included as a priority to better understand what was able to be achieved within the existing council stock.

In response to the Insulation of lofts and conservatories the Programme Manager (Climate Change & Carbon Reduction) confirmed that these were supported through the Domestic Energy Team and she agreed to refer this question to them.

A question was raised by Councillor Dan Rose on measurements in procurement to which the Programme Manager (Climate Change & Carbon Reduction) confirmed that at present there was not a standardised measurement in place. Welsh Government (WG) were developing a toolkit which would make it easier for councils to include carbon weighting in tendering and for suppliers to report on carbon emissions within contracts.

Responding to a question from Councillor Richard Lloyd on the use of open fires in council properties, the Programme Manager (Climate Change & Carbon Reduction) was not aware of any policies from Welsh Government but

reported on several enquires received asking for the reinstatement of open fires which would not be supported. The Chief Officer (Streetscene) confirmed that Welsh Government had published a White Paper on a Clean Air Bill for Wales which would probably follow what was taking place in England.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy thanked the Programme Manager for her work saying there were lots of positives within the report, but that procurement was a real problem. He felt that once the Welsh Government (WG) toolkit was available it would be beneficial both for major contractors and the Council. He said that it was unfair that this was linked to the value of the goods supplied rather than the number of miles travelled and that with inflation included it was a no-win situation for all authorities.

The recommendations within in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Mared Eastwood and Roy Wakelam.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To receive the report and note its contents
- (b) To support the improvement of internal communications to raise awareness of the Council's positive progress in moving to achieve its climate change ambitions.
- (c) To support the introduction of embedding carbon measures into procurement processes within a pilot portfolio of the Council.
- (d) To support the case for an Invest to Save post and resources to introduce Building Management Systems within more of our building assets to improve the management of energy use.
- (e) To support the embedding of climate change principles throughout the Council, through delivery of Carbon Literacy training to Elected Members, Senior Managers and other key decision makers

51. WOODLAND STRATEGY UPDATE

The Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) introduced the report and confirmed that the Urban Tree and Woodland Strategy was adopted in 2018 to assist with tree planting and increasing tree canopy cover. The Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) continued saying the Urban Tree and Woodland Strategy was established to provide an increase in canopy cover and ensure the sustainable management of trees, highlighting the benefits that trees provided to residents within Flintshire. He outlined the targets set for increasing canopy cover from 14.5% to 18% by 2033. Natural Resources Wales carry out the canopy cover assessment, although this had not been reviewed since 2018 so up to date information was not available at present.

The Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) reported that in recent years, tree planting had taken place on sites identified within the county utilising funding from Welsh Government Woodland Improvement Grant and the Local Nature for Places Grant. He outlined how the canopy cover had been increased with well-planned tree schemes, ensuring the aftercare was in place, with local communities involved, to ensure the survival of the trees. The Service Manger (Countryside Access and Natural Environment)

outlined the process involved to ensure these planting projects were successful. Over 23,000 trees had been planted over the last 4 years and the Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) commended his team for their hard work to enable this to happen. Engagement with communities was key to this and he provided story map of tree planting projects across the county which highlighted the work undertaken.

The Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) then provided information on the proposed development of a Flintshire Forest. It was suggested that a Flintshire Forest could mirror the direction of National Forest from Welsh Government (WG). He outlined the objectives for creating areas of new woodland, spaces for leisure and nature, capturing and storing carbon as well as providing timber. There would be a need to align the key objectives from the Urban Tree and Woodland Strategy and the Flintshire Forest. He referred members to the framework at 1.11 in the report and provided an overview of the key elements, vision and engagement with the public.

In response to a question from Councillor Roy Wakelam on the protection of existing older trees, the Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) outlined the mechanisms such as Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) and planning conditions. He referred to public consultations undertaken in advance of planting projects and some resistance to tree planting which had been received, he said public engagement to highlight the benefits of trees as well as ensuring the right trees were planted was key to their ongoing protection. The promotion of good tree planting with the correct trees planted in new developments would ensure better outcomes. Referring to losses of tree he confirmed that approximately 1,000 trees had been lost due to Ash dieback over the winter on highways but more trees were being planting to replace these. This work was critical.

In response to questions from Councillor Dan Rose the Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) firstly responded to the success of the 23,000 trees planted point and said that there was roughly a 20% failure for small whips with maximum care taken to ensure the survival of the larger standard trees. During the drought last year with 5,000 trees planted at Wepre Park it was not possible to ensure all trees survived. This year the whips which were lost were being replaced.

Responding to the mulch from felled trees point the Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) confirmed this was already used for keeping moisture in the grounds and preventing weeds on standard trees and hedgerows. He also confirmed that work had been undertaken on carbon sequestration on sites across the county to ensure tree planting did not disturb or disrupt an established environment.

In response to the records point the Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) confirmed that records were kept of species and orchards planted and provided information on the tree days and apple juice sessions held using fruit from heritage variety fruit trees.

In response to the question on protection of new areas of planting the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) said the areas under review

were on Flintshire land and as landowners would be protected. If development occurs next to the council's land assessments would be undertaken to ensure that the trees would not be affected.

The Chair referred to the Local Development Plan (LDP) and asked if there was a way of insisting that Developers included more established trees in their plans. The Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) said this was not for every site but that the Development Management Team should consider this when assessing potential impacts on site.

Responding to questions from Councillor Mike Peers, the Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) firstly referred to the forest question. He confirmed that public engagement was undertaken in areas being considered for tree planning. All proposed trees planting to increase canopy cover, would include a survey of the ground conditions, settings and existing trees before deciding on what type of tree to plant. Trees with thorns or poisonous berries for example, would not be considered in a school environment.

Responding to the green corridor question from the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy, the Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) explained that tree planting and woodlands would not be planted in isolation. There were constraints regarding available land and its connectivity to the wider environment but landowners were engaged in this process.

Responding to a question from Councillor Dan Rose, the Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) outlined the collaborative work undertaken over several years with the partners within the Public Services Board. This had enabled the mapping of green assets within the county with several successful smaller projects. The position regarding landowners was different in terms of funding but that there were options.

The recommendations within in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Mike Peers and Ian Hodge.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Members note the content of this update and support the officers in their ongoing tree and woodland management work.
- (b) That Members support plans to develop the Flintshire Forest in accordance with the framework details provided.

52 WEPRE PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

In presenting the report the Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) explained that the Wepre Park Management Plan was their core operational document to guide the work, actions and development over a 5-year term. He provided information on the changes in format from the 2016/2021 plan and outlined how the new plan would be structured. The Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) then provided

information on the ongoing maintenance schedule and programme for the park moving forward. Information was included at Appendix 3 on the extensive public consultation carried out last year and an overview of the rise in visitor numbers. An outline was given of specific areas within the Management Plan for the park which ensured the protection of sensitive areas of conservation but also welcomed visitors. He then referred to Appendix 2 which included Actions for the day-to-day business running of the park and he provided information on resources and external funding, ranger and natural environment team and the volunteers who support the park.

In response to questions on funding from Councillor Mike Peers the Service Manager explained the core funding included the base budget was for staff and to enable the day-to-day operations of the park with the support of the volunteers. Some of the work highlighted in the actions in Appendix 2 could be undertaken within that budget. As regards additional funding requirements for projects he confirmed that these would be sourced from external funding streams which were difficult to predict. It was essential to provide that confidence to funders that they were buying into something which had been recognised, had undertaken consultation and was included in the Plan for the park.

Following a request for an update on the hydropower experiment on Wepre Brook from the Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Economy, the Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) explained Wepre Brook was dammed in the 1800s to provide electricity for Wepre Hall. Discussions held regarding a previous scheme which was shelved and he then reported on the approach from the University College of London (UCL) who had developed new equipment that they wanted to test. The temporary equipment was installed last autumn and UCL were pleased that it had worked well and had furthered their research. Once the figures around water flow and turbine efficiency had been received this would enable costs to be established for the new turbine to be installed. This would be in keeping with the park and link up to the visitor centre and pay back for electricity generated. This was expected to be received within the next couple of weeks then a decision would be made to move forward or not.

The recommendations in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Ian Hodge and Richard Lloyd

RESOLVED:

That Members endorse the new 5-year management plan for Wepre Park.

53. OPEN SPACES AND HIGHWAY MEMORIAL POLICY

In presenting the report the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) explained that currently there was no policy in place for memorials placed on the highway network or on council land. He felt this policy struck the correct balance between the initial cost, long term maintenance and consideration of location as this was a sensitive issue.

The Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) reported that within countryside sites and open spaces requests had been received from members of the public for a commemorative bench or tree to be planted in memory of a loved one. Over the last few years these requests had increased significantly and had led to concerns that open spaces were not turned into memorial gardens. This was a sensitive issue and the council had to be mindful of families and their circumstances.

The purpose of this policy was to work with families in a sensitive way and consider all options when it came to memorials in addition to benches, such as planting a tree or section of hedgerow, stiles or donate a gate which were also considered in country parks. Referring to highway memorials the Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) said these were slightly different as safety had to be considered because of the distraction for drivers. This policy would enable officers to speak to the families to ensure a positive outcome was achieved. There were also funding issues which had to be considered to include the initial purchase, maintenance and refurbishment of the item which should be borne by the applicant. He then reported on the sensitivity required when families met to release balloons which was an issue as they release plastic and litter into the countryside. Discussions with families would take place to find alternative ways for families to mark family members' passing.

In response to questions on planting memorial trees and balloon releases from Councillor Dan Rose, the Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) confirmed that families could plant trees. There were risks to this which had to be discussed with the family such as trees dying during drought conditions, suffering vandalism and they had to be maintained. He was not in favour of plaques but a commemorative book at visitor centres or online could be used to record this. Referring to balloon releases he said it was difficult for his officers to approach a grieving family to ask them not to release the balloons. Publicising and providing information on the risks of doing this was the way forward

Councillor Dan Rose asked if bio-degradable plaques would be considered as a short-term measure which the Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) confirmed that he would be agreeable to considering.

Councillor Roy Wakelam suggested families be encouraged to leave unwrapped flowers tied with twine. In response the Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) said rotting, composting flowers still had to be removed and maybe suggesting that fresh flowers were left unwrapped but had to be removed within two weeks would be more appropriate. Officers felt reluctant to remove something that had been left in memory, but this policy would allow for the removal of rotten flowers.

Councillor Mike Peers sought clarification on the legacy donation point on page 109 at sections 1.10 and 1.13 and suggested that the following wording be considered :- "you may give a donation to Flintshire County Council or Countryside Services after your instructions had been discussed and agreed by both parties". The Service Manager (Countryside Access and Natural Environment) was happy to include this additional wording

The recommendations in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Roy Wakelam and Councillor Mared Eastwood

RESOLVED:

That the committee approved the policy subject to the amendment suggested by Councillor Mike Peers

54. DWR CYMRU WELSH WATER DRAFT WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN 2024 - PUBLIC CONSULTATION LAUNCH

In presenting this report the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) confirmed that this was a live consultation and that the role of Welsh Water was critical especially with regard the LDP and management of phosphates.

The Service Manager (Strategy) firstly spoke on the previous item of biodiversity saying that the Local Development Plan (LDP) included a sweep of policies which would help with those issues to protect trees, woodlands or hedgerows. There was also green space and urban space protections included together with new policies on biodiversity net gains.

Moving on to the report the Service Manager (Strategy) reported that this consultation from Welsh Water had been sent to key stakeholders and related to an update of their Water Resource Management Plan which was a statutory document which had to be refreshed on a 5 yearly basis. This was to ensure the long-term security of water supply for business and domestic use. Welsh Water had highlighted the drought experienced last year and had introduced drought reliance within this plan. Members were referred to the map which highlighted the 23 planning zones in the report and at point 1.03 included the key objectives and drivers on how these measures would support those areas in deficit. The overview of water supply by Welsh Water was given at 1.04 in the report to ensure that when severe events happen that Welsh Water were able to cater for supply as much as possible. The Service Manager (Strategy) explained that Flintshire was in the Alwen Dee zone and then provided information on how calculations were made. Four areas had been identified as areas that would be in deficit with three in South Wales and one in North Wales. He outlined how the demand management could affect the county and measures put in place to reduce daily consumption. Increased water metering was also being promoted.

He referred to 1.10 of the report and the bullet points listed and explained why further clarification was required:-

- He wanted clarification that the growth in Flintshire's LDP had been factored into this planning.
- That the Council fully supported the wider resilience measures to support leakage improvement
- Supported raising customer awareness on efficient use of water.
- that reductions in waste water going to treatment works from each domestic and commercial property could assist with less phosphates going into rivers

- Encouraged greater connection between waste resource planning and waste water planning to enable improvements to be brought forward
- Seek a commitment for more regular liaison and collaboration with Welsh Water as a key partner whether on a strategic level or local level.

In response to questions from Councillor Mike Peers the Service Manager (Strategy) firstly responded to the point on leakage reduction saying maybe if a definitive programme was publicised it would help. Welsh Water had an aging infrastructure they are working through but it was more a reactive process as it was a costly exercise. Coordination with other statutory providers when undertaking road works to enable opportunities for shared work could be explored.

In response to the question on run off and surface water the Service Manager (Strategy) explained developers had to consider more sustainable ways of dealing with surface water run-off. Developers were still struggling with SUDS and this was something which had to happen.

Councillor Ian Hodge asked if all new developments were required to automatically go on a water meter. In response the Service Manager (Strategy) did not know as it was not a planning requirement but was a requirement for the water bodies. Within the information provided from Welsh Water it appeared it was not which could be part of the problem and should be more actively encouraged especially allaying fears from larger families who do not want them.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection referred to future developments of the LDP with more properties being built and asked had Welsh Water taken this into consideration. The upgrading of the sewerage treatment works which would be affected by the phosphate issues and ways of dealing with phosphates had been included in the LDP

In response the Service Manager (Strategy) reported that Welsh Water had been a key stakeholder involved throughout the LDP and were aware of the growth, amount of houses and their understanding that the SUDS requirements would be included as part of surface water management. Ensuring better communication and dialogue with Welsh Water was the best way to ensure they understood what the council was required to undertake and what their requirements were too. The upgrading of the treatment works could not happen quickly enough as it was the best way to deal with the phosphates problems.

In response to a question on the Milwr Tunnel from the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy, the Service Manager (Strategy) confirmed he would take this back as a separate matter and write to Welsh Water and ask specific questions as to the utilisation of the Milwr Tunnel for water abstraction and hydro power.

The Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) suggested an invitation be sent for a representative of Welsh Water to attend committee for a future meeting. This was agreed by committee members

The Service Manager (Strategy) said that dependent upon the date when a representative could attend committee, he was happy to draft the letter with

regard to the Milwr Tunnel and that the consultation comments could go as per the recommendations.

The recommendations in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Ian Hodge and Mared Eastwood

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Members note the content of this report and the main outcome of the draft Water Resources Management Plan 2024, that shows no supply resilience issues for the Alwen Dee zone that Flintshire is part of
- (b) That Members support the content of paragraph 1.10 of this report and give the Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) delegated authority to prepare a final response and agree this with the Chair of this committee, prior to responding to the consultation by the due date.

55 MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.32 am)

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Chair

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ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	7 March 2023
Report Subject	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking
Report Author	Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview & Scrutiny presents a unique opportunity for Members to determine the Forward Work programme of the Committee of which they are Members. By reviewing and prioritising the Forward Work Programme Members are able to ensure it is Member-led and includes the right issues. A copy of the Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration which has been updated following the last meeting.

The Committee is asked to consider, and amend where necessary, the Forward Work Programme for the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The report also shows actions arising from previous meetings of the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the progress made in completing them. Any outstanding actions will be continued to be reported to the Committee as shown in Appendix 2.

RECOMMENDATION

1	That the Committee considers the draft Forward Work Programme and approve/amend as necessary.
2	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.
3	That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING
1.01	Items feed into a Committee's Forward Work Programme from a number of sources. Members can suggest topics for review by Overview & Scrutiny Committees, members of the public can suggest topics, items can be referred by the Cabinet for consultation purposes, or by County Council or Chief Officers. Other possible items are identified from the Cabinet Work Programme and the Improvement Plan.
1.02	<p>In identifying topics for future consideration, it is useful for a 'test of significance' to be applied. This can be achieved by asking a range of questions as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Will the review contribute to the Council's priorities and/or objectives?2. Is it an area of major change or risk?3. Are there issues of concern in performance?4. Is there new Government guidance of legislation?5. Is it prompted by the work carried out by Regulators/Internal Audit?6. Is the issue of public or Member concern?
1.03	In previous meetings, requests for information, reports or actions have been made. These have been summarised as action points. Following a meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee in July 2018, it was recognised that there was a need to formalise such reporting back to Overview & Scrutiny Committees, as 'Matters Arising' was not an item which can feature on an agenda.
1.04	It was suggested that the 'Action tracking' approach be trialled for the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Following a successful trial, it was agreed to extend the approach to all Overview & Scrutiny Committees.
1.05	The Action Tracking details including an update on progress is attached at Appendix 2.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None as a result of this report.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	In some cases, action owners have been contacted to provide an update on their actions.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None as a result of this report.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Draft Forward Work Programme Appendix 2 – Action Tracking for the Environment & Economy OSC.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Minutes of previous meetings of the Committee as identified in Appendix 2. Contact Officer: Margaret Parry-Jones Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator Telephone: 01352 702427 E-mail: Margaret.parry-jones@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Improvement Plan: the document which sets out the annual priorities of the Council. It is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to set Improvement Objectives and publish an Improvement Plan.

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Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Date of Meeting	Subject	Purpose of Report/Presentation	Scrutiny Focus	Responsible/Contact Officer	Submission Deadline
Thursday 23rd March 2pm	Parking outside Schools Meeting of Education, Youth & Culture OSC with members of Environment & Economy OSC to be invited to the meeting	To provide information on the traffic regulation process and enforcement provision (referred by the Environment & Economy OSC)	Information Sharing	Chief Officer Streetscene & Transportation & Chief Officer (Education & Youth)	
18 April 2023 10.00 am	Highways Drainage Housing regeneration grants & loans policy Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transition Plan Integrated Transportation Strategy	To receive an update To consider the draft refreshed Housing Regeneration Grants and Loans Policy and to recommend approval to Cabinet. To consider the Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transition Plan To consider the Strategy	Assurance Pre-decision scrutiny Assurance Assurance	Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) Niall Waller Chief Officer Streetscene & Transportation Chief Officer Streetscene & Transportation	

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
APPENDIX 1

Date of Meeting	Subject	Purpose of Report/Presentation	Scrutiny Focus	Responsible/Contact Officer	Submission Deadline
	North Wales Energy Strategy & Action Plan and Local Energy Plan	To consider the adoption of the Regional Energy Strategy & Action Plan and support for development of Local Area Energy Plans	Pre-decision scrutiny	Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy)	
16 May 2023 10.00 am	Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO's) review Town Centre Loans Communities 4 Work	To review the current PSPO's prior to consideration by Cabinet. To provide an update To provide an update on the closure of the Communities for Work programme across Wales following the end of the European Structural Fund programmes.	Policy Review Assurance Assurance	Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) Niall Waller Niall Waller	
13 June 2023 10.00 am	Welsh Government Deposit Return scheme Low carbon Energy Programme (to be confirmed)	To receive an update To receive an update on the Low Carbon Energy programme of Ambition North Wales.	Assurance Assurance	Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) Facilitator	

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
APPENDIX 1

Date of Meeting	Subject	Purpose of Report/Presentation	Scrutiny Focus	Responsible/Contact Officer	Submission Deadline
11 July 2023 10.00 am	Council Plan 2022-23 Year-End Performance	To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan.	Performance monitoring	Chief Officers	

Items to be added: -

March 15 2023 - Exceptions criteria for 20 mph implementation – Portfolio workshops x 2 10.00 (in person) 5pm (Zoom)

October 2023 - Progress on the implementation of the conversion of the FCC fleet to electric and alternative fuels.

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Action tracking from Environment & Economy OSC March 2023

Item/Date	Discussion	Action	By whom	Status
Minutes 10/1/23	Cllr Mike Peers requested a copy of the questions raised by Members during the Part 2 budget item considered at the December meeting.	Facilitator to check with relevant officers if the information could be provided to Members	Margaret Parry-Jones	Response provided by Head of Democratic Services
Climate Change Update 7/2/23	Alex Ellis agreed to speak to another team member regarding revenue generated from solar panels on schools.	Alex Ellis to make further enquiries	Alex Ellis	Ongoing
Climate change Update 7/2/23	Insultation of lofts and conservatories – what support is available?	Alex Ellis to refer to Domestic Energy Team	Alex Ellis	Ongoing

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ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 7th March, 2023
Report Subject	Streetscene Standards Review 2022-23
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Regional Transport Strategy
Report Author	Chief Officer, Streetscene and Transportation
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2012, multiple services were combined to create a new Streetscene and Transportation (S&T) portfolio. At this time, Cabinet approved a set of Streetscene Performance Standards which formed the basis of the new portfolio's quarterly performance report. This was then heavily scrutinised by both the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet at the time. These Streetscene Standards were last reviewed in 2019 and have been subject to minimal change since inception.

This report outlines our intention to review the existing standards and recommend changes that link more closely to the council plan and portfolio business plan. We wish to ensure that the service continues to meet the needs and expectations of the public and residents we serve, whilst making the most efficient use of the available resources.

The impending review of financial settlements, the changing demands of our environmental and climate change agenda and the need to provide clear and measurable performance data, will all influence the way Streetscene and Transportation (S&T) deliver services over the coming years. As a service that touches people's lives every day, it is vital we demonstrate real value to the people of Flintshire, but also measure our performance in a way that is meaningful and enables continuous improvement.

The purpose of this report is to illustrate the inadequacies of the existing document and request support from Informal Cabinet for S&T to review and retire the existing Standards. This would be in favour of a more robust and relevant suite of performance metrics that can be measured, monitored and reported more effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Scrutiny notes the proposal to retire the existing Streetscene Standards document, and supports the intended review to replace them with a revised suite of performance metrics that support service standards in order to measure performance against existing statutory obligations, the Council Plan and existing policies. A further report will be presented once the review has been completed.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE BACKGROUND FOR REVIEWING THE STREETSCENE STANDARDS						
1.01	Streetscene & Transportation service delivery teams are responsible for waste and recycling collections, household recycling centres, street cleansing, highways and grounds maintenance, grass cutting, winter maintenance, street lighting and trunk road operations. These services are key to ensuring that Flintshire remains safe, clean and accessible to all. To ensure that resources are allocated and prioritised in the most effective manner, in 2012 a set of ‘Streetscene Standards’ were agreed and adopted.						
1.02	These Standards have not changed significantly since 2012, despite significant changes to the scope of the portfolio. Some of the Standards are no longer relevant, and some areas of the new Streetscene and Transportation services are not represented at all. In addition, many Standards are now covered by new or existing policies, which now supersede the original 2012 document.						
1.03	In 2019, the updated Council Plan included a new performance measure of Streetscene Standards, under the <i>Safe and Clean Council</i> theme and, as a result, the direct output of the portfolio was reported through the Scrutiny process. This was updated to “ <i>A well-connected, safe and clean local environment</i> ” in the Council Plan for 2022-2023.						
1.04	<p>Upon review, it has been found that many of the current Standards are covered by either national guidance or existing policy, and in some instances contradict or confuse our obligations and commitments. The Standards describe how services are delivered and provided rather than providing a measure of the portfolio’s performance.</p> <p>As a result, the current Standards do not offer sufficient clarity to the service provider or the service recipient, which often causes conflicting priorities for all stakeholders. Service standards are important for customers, members and employees, as well as the management of the service in that they help to define what everyone can expect and they provide a reminder of the challenges and obligations that they face. The Standards will be of little value if performance cannot be measured against them.</p>						
1.05	<p>Appendix 1 provides a list of the current Streetscene Standards for illustration purposes; however, the table below gives examples of some redundant sections of the document: -</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="290 1697 1407 1816"> <tr> <td>Contact Centre Response Times</td> <td>No longer controlled by Streetscene</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pest Control</td> <td>No longer controlled by Streetscene</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Smoke Nuisance – Domestic</td> <td>No longer controlled by Streetscene</td> </tr> </table>	Contact Centre Response Times	No longer controlled by Streetscene	Pest Control	No longer controlled by Streetscene	Smoke Nuisance – Domestic	No longer controlled by Streetscene
Contact Centre Response Times	No longer controlled by Streetscene						
Pest Control	No longer controlled by Streetscene						
Smoke Nuisance – Domestic	No longer controlled by Streetscene						
1.06	<p>Future Impacts on the Streetscene Standards</p> <p>Even without the proposed revision, the existing ‘Standards’ may be subjected to change in light of the following:</p>						

- *Future years MTFs Proposals* – Changes to services in light of the current economic climate will need to be considered and some ‘Standards’ may no longer be financially viable in the short to medium term.
- *Waste Strategy Review* - The ongoing review of waste strategy will have considerable impact on the existing standards, particularly if collection frequency or receptacle sizes are to be amended to achieve national recycling targets and avoid fines from Welsh Government.
- *Grass Cutting Policy Review* - The pending review of the Flintshire Grass Cutting Policy and the work being undertaken by the Biodiversity Team could contradict or even undermine the current standards, rendering many more of them outdated.

1.07

Desired Outcome

The purpose of this report is to advise members of the intended review of the standards and allow the portfolio to produce a suite of operational indicators and measures, which will demonstrate our performance against statutory obligations and Council policies.

Each ‘Theme’ within the Council Plan is supported by specific policies and it is our performance against these policies which should be measured. The metrics need to demonstrate to the public that we are meeting our commitments, whilst also driving operational improvements.

In addition, we must establish a priority matrix which allows teams to schedule work according to impact and available resources, giving staff and customers a clear understanding of how and when services will be delivered.

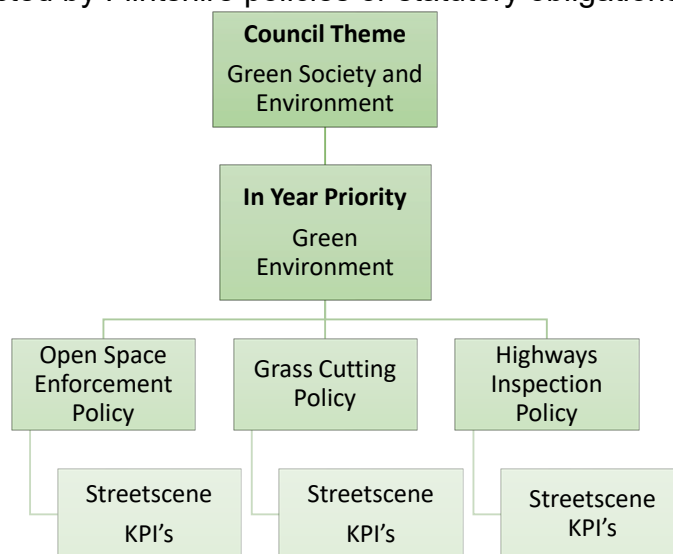
One option could be to mirror the Housing Repairs priorities to give consistency across the authority. For example:

Emergency	Urgent	Standard
Up to 24 hours	Up to 5 Days	Up to 28 Days

1.08

The Structure of Delivery

The intention is that the new metrics, or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), will be operational tools to measure our effectiveness in delivering the services expected by Flintshire policies or statutory obligations.



The image above illustrates where the new metrics would sit in the hierarchy of Flintshire’s service model.

1.09	<p>Benefits of change</p> <p>Replacing the 2012 Standards represents a proactive and future focused mind-set, demonstrating our desire for continual improvement. It gives opportunity to ensure that our Standard Operating Procedures are reviewed and stress tested against the current financial and social climate. It will also instil confidence that we are delivering on our statutory duties in the most efficient and effective way and confirm that performance is being achieved and sustained consistently.</p> <p>As part of the review, areas of the business that are not currently being measured will be identified and the change will bring focus on work streams that can be improved or streamlined.</p> <p>Where we are able to identify strong performance, we will be able to promote and enhance the reputation of Streetscene & Transportation and the authority as a whole by sharing relevant data with members and the wider public.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	In order to measure and record performance, the portfolio will need to fully review historic working practices and introduce new ways of working at all levels of the business.
2.02	The new standards are intended to have a positive impact on resources within the service allowing a more efficient distribution of work through clearly defined priorities and structured working practices where performance is measured and reported on internally and externally.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	By continuing with the existing 'Standards' we are effectively making commitments we are not able to deliver. In addition, we risk reputational damage by placing measures on business functions that are no longer controlled within the portfolio.
3.02	The impact of failing to measure the business correctly can have an impact on our ability to demonstrate true value for money and be able highlight efficiencies over the medium to long term.
3.03	It is intended that a further report will be presented to Cabinet following completion of the review and recommendations made as to how the new metrics and Standards should be measured and reported.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Regional Transport Strategy
4.02	Trade Unions
4.03	Senior Management Team and Operational Managers

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Streetscene Standards 2019 pdf

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Christopher Goddard – Service Manager Streetscene Telephone: 07867 192311 E-mail: Christopher.Goddard@Flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	None

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REVISED STREETSCENE AND TRANSPORTATION STANDARDS 2019

Shaded Grey indicates measure no longer appropriate, Shaded Blue are new measures

Measure Type	Description	Target
Abandoned Cars	Time taken to inspect and respond to abandoned vehicles on the highway	2 working days
Household Recycling Centres and Bring Sites	Length of time taken to respond to requests about Recycling Parks (neighbourhood or household recycling centres) or let the customer know what has happened	24 hours
Waste Missed Black/Brow/Food Bins	Time taken to collect bin missed due to the fault of the Service - weather permitting	1 working day
Waste Bulky Items	Time taken to collect bulky items (following customer request)	6 working days
Waste Assisted Collection	Time taken to process applications for assisted bin collections (from receipt of application).	10 working days
Waste Requests for new receptacles	Time taken to deliver new bins, recycling sacks/boxes, caddies etc.	
	Black/Blue Bin	6 working days
	Food waste bins / caddies	6 working days
	Brown Bin	6 working days
	Recycling Bag	6 working days
Missed Collections	Number of bins missed per 100,000 collections	80
Children's Play areas	Time taken to respond (i.e. complete job or contact customer) to service requests about enclosed play areas or fixed play provision	same working day
Dead Animals	Time taken to remove reported dead animals from highway or other Council land (excluding trunk roads)	24 hours
Dog Fouling Children's play areas	Time taken to remove dog fouling at enclosed play areas, or areas of fixed play provision.	Within Working Day
Dog bins	Frequency of inspection/emptying of dog bins	Minimum 2 working days
Litter Bins	Respond to requests for new litter bins	10 working days
Fly posting / Graffiti	Time taken to remove graffiti from council owned property (including Housing)	2 working days
Offensive /Hate Graffiti	Time taken to remove hate graffiti from time of reporting - 24/7 service	Within Working Day
Fly tipping	Time taken to remove fly tipping from council owned land (including Housing land)	24 hours
Grass Cutting & Hedges	Compliance with standards for grass cutting	100% As Policy
Gully Emptying	Frequency of gully cleaning	Minimum one per annum
Gully Emptying	Frequency of gully and soakaway cleaning in known flooding areas	Site dependant - Minimum 2 per annum
Public Conveniences	Time taken to attend and clean a reported dirty/damaged toilet in Council operated facility	24 hours
Reactive Highway	Time taken to inspect non- emergency highways requests	1 working day
Sharps	Time taken to remove sharp objects/needles from Council land (including Housing and school land)	2 hours
Street Cleansing	Footways - Frequency of sweeping Town and shopping areas	Daily - including Saturdays/Sundays and Litter Picking
Street Cleansing	Footways - Frequency of sweeping All other locations	1 per annum
Street Cleansing	Mechanical Sweeping A Roads and Urban B class Roads	4 per annum
Street Cleansing	Mechanical Sweeping other B class Roads	1 per annum
Street Cleansing	Mechanical Sweeping All other Roads	1 per annum
Street Cleansing	Mechanical Sweeping of Council maintained Car Parks	1 per annum

Street Cleansing	Inspect and empty litter bins (as required)	Minimum: Rural = 2 working days / Urban = 1 working day
Street Furniture	Response time to make safe a reported dangerous item of street furniture	2 hours
Street Furniture	Inspection response time to customers regarding repairs to Street Furniture	10 working days
Street lighting	Time taken to repair street lighting (non mains supply fault) - where it is the Council's responsibility	3 working days for locations assessed as vulnerable, CCTV sensitive, traffic calming, traffic sensitive or (speed) illuminated traffic signs and 10 working days for all other locations (except major faults).
Street Name Signs	Time taken to replace a missing street name plate (if replacement is required within policy)	8 weeks
Beach Cleansing	Frequency of beach cleansing (Talacre)	Summer = daily inspection & visit / Winter = inspection & visit 3 times per week
Contact Centre	Percentage of calls Answered in under 15 Seconds	75%
Contact Centre	Percentage of Calls dealt with at first point of contact	80%
Contact Centre	Percentage of 'lost' calls	5%
Bus Shelters	Time taken to respond following a requests/complaints about bus shelters	10 working days
Bus Shelters	Compliance with standards for cleaning bus shelters - 3 times/year urban 2 times/year rural	100%
Environmental Visual Audits (EVA)	EVA's protocol in place in Council Wards	100%
Environmental Visual Audits (EVA)	Ward Priority Agreed	70%
Member Satisfaction	Percentage of Members rating performance of Streetcene Coordinators Service in ward as acceptable or better	90%
Cleanliness	Maintaining the Cleanliness index above the average figure for Wales	100%
P&D Machines	Respond to non working Pay & Display machines	1 working day
Parking Contraventions	Respond to parking complaint	Corporate standard
Environmental Crime - Dog control	Respond by undertaking site inspection to dog control complaint	2 working days
Environmental Crime - Side waste	Monitor side waste presentation	Daily by crews
Noise Nuisance - Domestic PP	Time taken to despatch an acknowledgement letter and noise logging form	5 working days
Smoke Nuisance - Domestic PP	Time taken to visit a report of domestic smoke nuisance	5 working days
Pest Control PP	Time taken to attend Nuisance Pests, e.g. Wasps	3 working days
Pest Control PP	Time taken to attend Public Health pests. e.g. rats	same working day



ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 7 th March 2023
Report Subject	Grass Cutting Policy Review: Managing Road Verges and Amenity Grasslands to Support Biodiversity
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Regional Transport Strategy
Report Author	Chief Officer, Streetscene and Transportation
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to a request from the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee, an all-member workshop was held on Tuesday, 24th January 2023 to learn more about the management of road verges and amenity grasslands, wildflowers and biodiversity. In particular, members sought to find out about the use of pesticides and gain an understanding of existing policies, the action taken to date and opportunities available to us as a local authority. The workshop was a joint portfolio event, which was facilitated by officers from both the Planning, Environment & Economy (PE&E) portfolio and Streetscene & Transportation (S&T) portfolio.

Under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, public authorities must maintain and enhance biodiversity. Sympathetic mowing of road verges and amenity grasslands can help meet this duty.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the work undertaken to date and consider the opportunities for policy review in the future.

In addition, as a portfolio, Streetscene & Transportation routinely reports on the annual performance of the grass cutting service to the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee for assurance purposes. This report therefore also includes an update on the performance of the service during 2022.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Scrutiny supports the work undertaken to date and considers the opportunities to increase biodiversity in managing our road verges and amenity grasslands.
2.	That Scrutiny supports the proposed changes to the grass cutting policy and supports the targeted reduction in the use of pesticides.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW OF HOW THE LOCAL AUTHORITY MANAGES ROAD VERGES AND AMENITY GRASSLANDS TO SUPPORT BIODIVERSITY
1.01	<p>In response to a request from the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee, an all-member workshop was held on Tuesday, 24th January 2023 to learn more about the management of road verges and amenity grasslands, wildflowers and biodiversity. In particular, members sought to find out about the use of pesticides and gain an understanding of existing policies, the action taken to date and opportunities available to us as a local authority. The workshop was a joint portfolio event, which was facilitated by officers from both the Planning, Environment & Economy (PE&E) portfolio and Streetscene & Transportation (S&T) portfolio.</p>
1.02	<p>Under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, public authorities must maintain and enhance biodiversity. Sympathetic mowing of road verges and amenity grasslands can help meet this duty. The Act states that all public authorities are required, when undertaking their functions in Wales, to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity wherever possible within the proper exercise of their functions. In doing so, public authorities must also seek to promote the resilience of ecosystems.</p>
1.03	<p>In 2019, Welsh Government declared a climate emergency, and in 2021, the Senedd declared a 'nature emergency' in recognition of human induced declines in biodiversity. The 2019 State of Nature Report highlights that 17% of 3,902 species assessed in Wales are threatened with extinction.</p>
1.04	<p>As a Council, we support the declarations made by Welsh Government and, in December 2019, elected members approved a motion to develop a clear Climate Change Strategy, which set key aims and actions for creating a carbon neutral organisation. Some of the ongoing work and projects that we have undertaken include the publication of our "Supporting nature in Flintshire" biodiversity duty plan and we are continuing to work to support biodiversity protection and increase the proportion of Council land managed for biodiversity in Flintshire. This includes increasing the areas with reduced mowing regimes to enhance biodiversity and increase carbon storage.</p>
1.05	<p>The Well-being of Future Generations Act requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of decisions and is all about working with local communities, taking a more joined up approach, looking to prevent persistent problems in order improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and impact of our actions on future generations.</p> <p>The goal of a Resilient Wales is to reverse the decline of our biodiverse natural environment, develop a better awareness of our impacts as individuals and organisations, ensure we are ecologically resilient, with healthy ecosystems, and to support community wellbeing.</p>
1.06	<p>As outlined, an all-member workshop was delivered jointly by S&T and PE&E officers to present the need for change to a more biodiverse focus on our grassland management regimes and explore the options in each area of grass management.</p>

1.07	<p>The workshop addressed the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature emergency and importance of local biodiversity • Grassland habitat requirements • Nature isn't Neat: addressing key concerns • Use of Pesticides • Flintshire action to date: our support for changes • Overview of the existing grass cutting policy and opportunities: road verges and amenity grasslands <p>The workshop was well attended with approximately 30 members showing broad support for the reduction/cessation of the use of pesticides by the authority and its contractors, along with the options being presented for change of grass cutting policy standards.</p>
1.08	<p>The grass cutting policy options and opportunities to increase biodiversity are outlined in Appendix 2, which we intend to take to the Environment & Economy Overview Scrutiny Committee in March 2023; however, this does mean that the 2023 grass cutting season will commence prior to any changes being adopted.</p> <p>Safety will remain the priority for grass cutting and there will be limited opportunities for certain areas, such as rural road verges and visibility splays. However, there are opportunities to collect cuttings when we cut on flat verges, which could reduce the number of cuts required.</p> <p>The main changes proposed to the policy include reduced mowing on all suitable verges (avoiding visibility splays and banks), allowing the grass/wildflowers to grow in certain areas and increasing the number of areas included in reduced mow or wildflower management to improve the biodiversity.</p>
1.09	<p>As a portfolio, Streetscene & Transportation routinely reports on the annual performance of the grass cutting service to the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee for assurance purposes. This section provides an update on the performance of the service during 2022, which helps us to plan next season's operations, as well as inform the policy review and changes to practices.</p> <p><u>Grass Cutting Season – Performance Overview (March 2022 – October 2022)</u></p> <p>The 2022 season began on 1st March 2022 with reduced crews in light of COVID risk assessments at that time, which limited the number of operatives working together. Five crews were able to carry out grass cutting on 28th March 2022, including the cemetery grounds management team.</p> <p>Crew availability was also affected by the winter maintenance schedule, as many operatives from the grounds team were being regularly employed for road gritting operations.</p> <p>Full scale grass cutting operations were realised from 1st April 2022 with all crews undertaking the rounds as per the planned grass cutting schedule. Due to the adversely hot weather in July 2022, the teams were 'stood down' between 18/07/22 and 31/07/22 and no cuts took place during that period.</p>

1.10	<p>Performance status on 31st October as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="292 192 906 506"> <thead> <tr> <th>Area</th> <th>Cuts Completed</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4/5</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cemeteries</td> <td>9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Appendix 1 provides further details of the performance in relation to the schedule of the grass cutting rounds for the 2022 season.</p>	Area	Cuts Completed	1	8	2	8	3	8	4/5	8	6	9	7	8	8	8	Cemeteries	9
Area	Cuts Completed																		
1	8																		
2	8																		
3	8																		
4/5	8																		
6	9																		
7	8																		
8	8																		
Cemeteries	9																		
1.11	<p>Opportunities The management team is currently exploring avenues to deliver a more efficient service for the 2023 season. These include changes to working patterns, adoption of new working practices and delivering additional work streams in-house such as tenants' gardens and hedge cutting.</p>																		
1.12	<p>The acquisition of a new tractor flail arm via Welsh Government grant funding will also help to increase productivity and reduce HAVS exposure. Biodiversity sites are due to increase, which will allow resources to be redirected to other areas of the business and increase the flexibility of the workforce. Partnerships with Countryside Services are in development to facilitate more collaborative working and shared resources, and we are also exploring the opportunities available through social enterprise.</p>																		
1.13	<p>At the member workshop in January 2023, members expressed a level of concern around the use of pesticides, particularly around the harmful effects on human health, wildlife and animals, and the carcinogenic properties of such chemicals. There was broad support by members for targeted reduction of pesticides and the use of alternatives, such as mechanical removal of weeds or organic sprays or opt-out schemes.</p> <p>Targeted reduction would involve stopping the use of chemical herbicides within town centres, school grounds and green spaces, for example in parks or recreational areas, along with excluding the use of chemical herbicides in contracted services, such as the schools' grounds maintenance contract, and using alternative weed control methods instead (E.g. heat-based methods, organic sprays, manual/mechanical removal methods).</p>																		
1.14	<p>Grant funding has been made available by the Welsh Government for Local Places for Nature (LPfN) and a grant funding has already been received for the purchase of new plant and equipment for wildflower and weed control in 2022-2023. A further bid is being prepared for 2023-2024.</p> <p>The aim of Local Places for Nature (LPfN) is to restore and enhance natural capital assets across Wales. Local Places for Nature intends to create Nature on Your Doorstep, where people live, work and access public services. LPfN contributes to wider biodiversity aims, but at a local level rather than landscape scale, creating nature in the 'everyday places'.</p>																		

	<p>LPfN is a bottom up programme and focuses on areas of deprivation, urban and peri-urban areas or those with little or no access to nature. The ethos is fundamentally about behavioural change and, if people engage with nature, they value nature and will take steps to restore and enhance nature.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
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2.01	<p>Flintshire County Council is committed to sustainability in its own operations, as well as across the county more widely through climate change and carbon reduction.</p> <p>Revenue: The portfolio is currently carrying an in-year revenue pressure of £43k, over and above the £30k revenue budget available for the weed spraying contract, which came about following the recommendation of the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee to split the contract into separate areas to ensure more resilience in the supply market. This has been included as an additional cost pressure in the budget for 2023-2024.</p> <p>Any further changes to the policy will need to take into account the impact on future revenue budgets. The current national and local financial position is under increasing pressure and there is little prospect of the portfolio being able to allocate any substantial increase in revenue funding to this non-statutory service provision; consequently, the ongoing impacts of budget reductions will continue to impose a downward pressure on revenue budgets. Any options supported and recommended by the Scrutiny Committee will need to be costed and will need to be deliverable within current budgets. Any future MTFS budget solutions to settle a balance budget that reduce grass cutting standards will need to be addressed and may not align to the biodiversity workshop options supported by the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Capital: There may be implications for the approved capital programme for 2023-2024 and future financial years for the procurement of plant and equipment. Any capital or revenue commitment will need to be supported through a business case approach, taking account of full costs and possible income sources.</p> <p>Staff / Recruitment: The grounds management team appointed three newly promoted charge hands in 2022, who all performed well, adapting to their new roles and adding value to the operation as a whole. Many of the agency staff employed to supplement the teams for the summer season have subsequently been appointed into permanent roles further reducing the cost of the operation.</p> <p>Plant and Equipment: The McConnell RC28 Robo Cutter, which is the mower used to cut grass on slopes and steep banks, was subject to a recall due to reliability issues and, as such, the team are now trialling the larger RC56 model, which is more suited to steep inclines and bank maintenance. The replacement tractor has performed well with very little down time for repairs and a higher level of quality and performance. The teams have also trialled battery mowers, trimmers and chainsaws, with a view to replacing petrol equipment and reducing the carbon cost of the operation. The battery tools also dramatically reduce staff exposure to HAVS. The intention is to replace all petrol equipment with battery powered units over the next 3 years.</p>
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3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT	
3.01	<p>A full integrated impact assessment will be required as part of the review of the grass cutting policy. This strategy and the outcome of the review is expected to have a positive differential impact on all protected characteristics.</p>	
	<p>Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact</p>	
	Long-term	<p>Positive impact - the proposed changes to the policy will enhance the local environment by creating habitat for wildlife, insects and pollinators etc. Areas where wildflowers have been allowed to develop and flourish will enhance the visual aesthetics of roadside verges and amenity areas and provide residents and visitors with a ‘feel good’ factor. This in turn will contribute to the reduction of our carbon footprint and create a more sustainable environment for residents now and for future generations. The changes to the policy aim to increase the awareness of biodiversity and promote the benefits in terms of health and well-being.</p>
	Prevention	<p>Positive impact - the revised management regime will make road verges and amenity grasslands (parks and other open green spaces) more wildlife friendly. Regularly cut, closely mown grass may look tidy, but it has little benefit for wildlife. Letting grass grow and having more meadow-like areas with wildflowers helps wildlife. Changes in grass cutting regimes with cuts timed to benefit wildflowers and pollinators will support the council’s biodiversity duty and climate change strategy and create habitat for wildlife, insects and pollinators, whilst also reducing our carbon footprint. A reduction in the use of glyphosate and other herbicides / pesticides.</p>
	Integration	<p>Positive impact – the review of the policy will need to integrate with other existing strategies, policies and plans of the Council, such as the Place Making Plans, Climate Change Strategy and the Council’s Well-Being Objectives. It will have a positive impact on the local community and enhance their local environments, which will create a more resilient and healthier environment across all communities.</p>
	Collaboration	<p>Positive impact – The proposed changes will enable closer collaborative working with other portfolios, such as Planning, Economy and Environment and facilitate partnership working with Countryside Services and the Biodiversity team, as well as voluntary sector and local community groups,</p>
	Involvement	<p>As a result of the global pandemic, many council services were suspended for an extended period of time, including grass cutting operations and grounds maintenance. This temporary pause or reduction in service allowed many green areas across the county to flourish with wildflowers, which drew comments from the local community, both positive and negative. The involvement of elected members and the local communities in choosing which green spaces within their areas to be nominated for wildflower meadows and habitat for wildlife will be extremely important.</p>

Well-being Goals Impact

The review of the grass cutting policy will need to have due regard for the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The policy review and inclusion of biodiversity helps to achieve all seven of the well-being goals as set out below.

Prosperous Wales	Positive impact - the proposed changes to the policy will enhance the local environment by creating habitat for wildlife, insects and pollinators etc. Areas where wildflowers have been allowed to develop and flourish will enhance the visual aesthetics of roadside verges and amenity areas and provide residents and visitors with a 'feel good' factor. This in turn will contribute to the reduction of our carbon footprint and create a more sustainable environment for residents now and for future generations. Additionally, Biodiversity and resilient ecosystems provide important opportunities for economic activity and attracting more tourism to the area, which can often involve the promotion of our natural resources, such as parks and gardens.
Resilient Wales	Positive impact – The alternative grassland management regime proposed in the policy review will not only support the council's biodiversity duty and climate change strategy, but it will also assist with reducing our carbon footprint.
Healthier Wales	The proposals aim to create a more resilient and healthier environment across all communities. Accessible natural spaces can provide direct health benefits, such as encouraging more physical activity (e.g. cycling, walking) and improved mental health and well-being. For example, as well as supporting wildlife, people enjoy seeing wildflowers.
More equal Wales	Equal access to natural spaces would contribute to equality and will have a positive impact on all local communities, enhancing their local environments irrespective of background and circumstances.
Cohesive Wales	More biodiverse green spaces will enhance the local environment and make them more attractive for residents, visitors and wildlife. Communities engaging in the management of their local open spaces has been demonstrated to contribute to an increase in social cohesion and a reduction in Anti-social behaviour.
Vibrant Wales	The proposed changes to the policy will promote and protect the culture, heritage and the Welsh language, by encouraging people to participate in the arts, sports and recreation in the outdoors and experiencing nature.
Globally responsible Wales	Sustainable management of amenity grasslands will help to reduce the carbon footprint and ensure that grass cutting operations do not have an environmental impact.

	<p>Flintshire County Council together with its partners will support the health and well-being of both the current and future generations through the following strategic objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting people from poverty by supporting them to meet their basic needs • Housing in Flintshire meeting the needs of our residents and supporting safer communities • Limiting the impact of the Council’s services on the natural environment and supporting the wider communities of Flintshire to reduce their own carbon footprint • Enabling a sustainable economic recovery and growth • Supporting people in need to live as well as they can • Enabling and Supporting Learning Communities
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4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	With the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Regional Transport Strategy
4.02	An all-member workshop was held on 24 th January 2023. A copy of the workshop presentations is shown in Appendix 3 and feedback from the session will be shared with the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet members.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Grass Cutting Performance 2022 Appendix 2 – Grass Cutting Policy Review & Biodiversity Opportunities Appendix 3 – Biodiversity & Grass Cutting Member Workshop Slides

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Welsh Government’s policy and strategy for managing road verges and amenity grassland to support biodiversity:</p> <p>https://www.gov.wales/road-verges-and-amenity-grasslands-supporting-wildlife</p>
6.02	<p>Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (section 6): guidance for public authorities:</p> <p>https://www.gov.wales/biodiversity-and-resilience-ecosystems-duty-section-6-guidance-public-authorities</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Barry Wilkinson, Highway Network Manager Telephone: 01352 704656 E-mail: barry.wilkinson@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Biodiversity ('biological diversity') = The variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat.</p> <p>Ecosystem = A functioning unit made up of living organisms (plants / animals / micro-organisms) within their non-living environment (air / water / minerals / soil) and all the diverse and complex interactions that take place between them.</p> <p>Resilience of ecosystems = A resilient ecosystem has the ability to respond to disturbance by resisting damage and recovering quickly.</p>

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Appendix 1 - Grass Cutting Performance 2022

Week	28/02/2022	07/03/2022	14/03/2022	21/03/2022	28/03/2022	04/04/2022	11/04/2022
ROUND 1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
ROUND 2		1	1	1	1	1	1
ROUND 3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
ROUND 4	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
ROUND 5		1	1	1	1	1	1
ROUND 6		1	1	1	1	1	1
ROUND 7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
CEMS	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
TRACTOR					1	1	1

← Grass round chargehands out of service due to WM bubble →

Week	18/04/2022	25/04/2022	02/05/2022	09/05/2022	16/05/2022	23/05/2022	30/05/2022
ROUND 1	2	2	2	3	3	3	4
ROUND 2	2	2	2	3	3	3	4
ROUND 3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
ROUND 4	2	2	2	3	3	3	4
ROUND 5	2	2	3	3	3	4	4
ROUND 6	2	2	3	3	3	3	4
ROUND 7	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
CEMS	2	3	3	3	4	4	4
TRACTOR	2	2	2	3	3	3	3

Winter maintenance operatives / chargehands returned to service

Week	06/06/2022	13/06/2022	20/06/2022	27/06/2022	04/07/2022	11/07/2022	18/07/2022
ROUND 1	4	4	4	5	5	6	
ROUND 2	4	5	5	5	5	6	
ROUND 3	4	5	5	5	6	6	
ROUND 4	4	5	5	5	5	6	
ROUND 5	4	5	5	6	6	6	
ROUND 6	4	5	5	5	5	6	
ROUND 7	4	4	4	5	5	6	
CEMS	5	5	5	6	6	6	
TRACTOR	4	4	5	5	5	6	

Week	25/07/2022	01/08/2022	08/08/2022	15/08/2022	22/08/2022	29/08/2022	05/09/2022
ROUND 1		6	6	6	7	7	8
ROUND 2		6	6	7	7	7	7
ROUND 3		6	6	7	7	7	7
ROUND 4		6	7	7	7	7	8
ROUND 5		7	7	7	8	8	9
ROUND 6		6	6	6	7	7	7
ROUND 7		6	6	6	7	7	7
CEMS		6	7	7	8	8	8
TRACTOR		6	6	7	7	7	7

Week	12/09/2022	19/09/2022	26/09/2022	03/10/2022	10/10/2022	17/10/2022
ROUND 1	8	8	8	9	9	9
ROUND 2	8	8	8	8	9	9
ROUND 3	8	8	8	8	9	9
ROUND 4	8	8	9	9	9	9
ROUND 5	9	9	9	10	10	10
ROUND 6	8	8	8	9	9	9
ROUND 7	8	8	8	8	9	9
CEMS	9	9	9	10	10	10
TRACTOR	8	8	8	8	9	9

Appendix 2 – Grass Cutting Policy Review & Options for Biodiversity

Grass Cutting Policy (January 2018) (current)

Biodiversity opportunities highlighted in red text (Jan 2023)

1. Roadside verges

- a) Rural Verges (outside 40mph) – 1 cut per year in July (subject to weather conditions); 1 swathe width on all principal roads; 1 swathe width on all non-principal and unclassified roads

Visibility splays at junctions 4 cuts per year in –

- April
- June
- August
- September/October

Full width verge cutting for weed and self-sown sapling control on all classifications of rural roads once every 4 years in September/October.

Additional cuts may be carried out on Health and Safety grounds in specific locations as identified by the Area Coordinators.

Rural Verges:

- Safety remains the priority
- Limited opportunity
- Opportunity to collect cuttings when we cut on flat verges – looking into bank mowers

Option A – Visibility splays:

- Opportunity to collect cuttings – longer term impact less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity

- b) Urban verges (within 40 mph zones) – 4 cuts per year

- April
- June
- August
- September/October

Option A – Reduced mow on all suitable verges (avoiding banks and visibility cuts)

Letting the grass/wildflowers grow, with a cut and collect once a year between August and October

(Targeted initial communities a possibility but adds complexities)

Option B – retain cuts - collect all cuttings – on flat verges

(longer term impact reduce vigour of grasses- less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity (Dorset approach)

- c) Cyclic

Cyclic routes on county dual carriageways

Appendix 2 – Grass Cutting Policy Review & Options for Biodiversity

Cyclic routes receive 2 cuts a year (1m swathe cut in April-July and a full cut in September)

Option A - Retain first cut as existing.

Collect all cuttings on the second full cut where possible.

Trial cyclic cut and collect 2023 on the most appropriate cyclic route (A548 Gronant or DIP suggested).

2. Amenity Areas

Maximum of 13 cuts per year as required.

Flexible start required for the start of the cutting season, in February/March, subject to weather conditions.

Frequency of cuts based on every 2 weeks in April to June, extended to every 3 weeks July to Oct, subject to weather conditions.

(Removal of grass cuttings will only take place in exceptional circumstances i.e. First-Cut of the season)

Option A - Increase area under reduced mow or wildflower management gradually through existing process.

Option B - Opportunity to introduce collection of cuttings on flat areas – longer term impact less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity

3. Public footpaths / Cycle Routes

A maximum of 4 cuts per year as required, to prevent rural footways being lost to grass ingress and verge creep due to lack of usage.

No change proposed

4. Hedges

The majority of highway hedges are the responsibility of the adjacent landowner. Where the hedge has grown to an extent that it is causing an obstruction to the highway user, notice will be served on the landowner to cut the hedge accordingly. Highway hedges owned by the Council will be cut once a year after the nesting season has passed.

Highway hedges managed by the Council will be cut a maximum of once a year, outside of the nesting season.

Option A - Management timed between Jan - Feb maintains the availability of berries and nuts as a food source for birds and other wildlife.

Allow 2 – 4 years between cuts where possible

5. Bus-stops

A maximum of 4 cuts per year as required across the grassed areas either side of rural Bus-stops, up to 20 metres across the length of the stop.

Appendix 2 – Grass Cutting Policy Review & Options for Biodiversity

Option A - Retain cuts but introduce collection of cuttings– longer term impact less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity

6. Village / Town Gateways

A maximum of 4 cuts per year as required across the grassed areas either side of Village/Town

Gateways signs, up to 10 metres either side of the gateway.

Option A - Retain cuts but introduce collection of cuttings – longer term impact less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity

7. Recreation Sports Grounds

Up to 16 cuts per year March to October. Subject to separate procurement arrangements and direct liaison with the Schools.

No change proposed

Appendix 2 – Grass Cutting Policy Review & Options for Biodiversity

8. Cemeteries

Flexible start required for the start of the cutting season, in February/March, subject to weather conditions. Frequency of cuts based on every 2 weeks in April to June, extended to every 3 weeks July to Oct, subject to weather conditions.

(Removal of grass cuttings will only take place in exceptional circumstances. i.e. First-Cut of the season)

Additional key dates outside of the cutting season to include Christmas and Mothering Sunday.

No change proposed continued implementation of wildflower areas in cemeteries

9. Tenants Gardens

Where tenants have requested and qualify for the assisted gardening service. The service is provided by contractors who will provide the following:

Maximum of 13 cuts per year as required.

Flexible start required for the start of the cutting season, in February/March, subject to weather conditions.

Frequency of cuts based on every 2 weeks in April to June, extended to every 3 weeks July to Oct, subject to weather conditions.

Option A - Collection of cuttings when cutting tenants lawns if not already done

Option B - Allow tenants to opt into a 'wildlife friendly' service for reduced mow to allow grass to grow (cut and collect once a year Aug - Oct).

Additional offer for wildflower enhancement could be coordinated by biodiversity officer. Resident engagement could also be supported by the biodiversity team.

Additions to the current policy –

10. Reduced mow/Wildflower Areas

Allow to grow then 1 cut and collect per year between August – November

11. Natural regeneration Areas

Areas to be identified for natural regeneration for carbon capture and biodiversity only requiring essential management for safety.

Biodiversity Member Workshop 24.01.2023

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**Environment & Economy Overview &
Scrutiny Committee**

Agenda / Format for the Workshop

- Welcome and introductions
- Purpose and background to the workshop
- The nature emergency and importance of local biodiversity
- Grassland habitat requirements
- Nature isn't Neat: addressing key concerns
- Use of Pesticides
- Flintshire action to date: our support for changes
- Overview of the existing grass cutting policy and opportunities: road verges and amenity grasslands
- Interactive session / Q&A
- Summary and Next Steps
- Machinery demo

Purpose and background

- Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee forward work programme
- Member enquiries
- Climate Change and Reducing Carbon Footprint
- Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act
- Flintshire Climate Change Strategy (Feb 2022)
- Climate Change Programme Board
- Council Plan – Green Council
- Joint portfolio workshop – one Council

The importance of local biodiversity

A nature crisis

- The UK is among the most nature depleted counties on the planet
- On average populations of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish have dropped by 69% since 1970
- 1 million species are threatened with extinction , many within decades

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“The damage we are inflicting on species and ecosystems is so extensive and profound that scientists now believe we are witnessing Earth’s sixth mass extinction event—the last one marked the end of the dinosaurs.”

—David Attenborough

Exhibit 3 - Five Major Factors Drive Biodiversity Loss

1

Land-use and sea-use change

Habitat conversion (e.g., deforestation), habitat fragmentation, and degradation through overintensive use of ecosystems

4

Pollution of soil, water, and air

Release of harmful substances (e.g., through excessive chemical use) into ecosystems; also, light and noise pollution

2

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Direct overexploitation

Overexploitation of animals, plants, and ecosystems in general (e.g., from poaching, unsustainable logging, or overfishing)

5

Spread of invasive species

Plants, animals, or other nonnative organisms entering or expanding their presence in a given habitat

3

Climate change

Shifts in temperature, precipitation, and wind flows caused by increased levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere

Source: IPBES, "Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services" (2019)
(Ref: The 2023 BCG report: *The biodiversity crisis is a business crisis*)

The importance of nature

Ecosystem services:

- Clean air and water
- Healthy soil
- Pollination and Food
- Decomposition
- Water regulation

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Health and Wellbeing:

- Improved mental and physical health



Biodiversity related risk

Risks of inaction

- Breakdown of ecosystem services, flooding food supply chains
- Increased regulation and associated costs
- Reputational risk

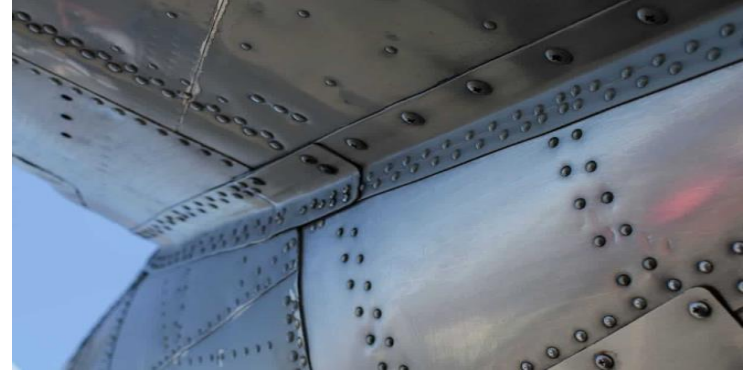
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Does it matter if we lose species?

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- Loss of species from an ecosystem likened to randomly popping out rivets from the wing of an aeroplane
- Remove one or two and the plane will probably be fine
- Remove 10/20/50 = catastrophic failure
- Nature loss – creeping normality due to its reduction and our disconnection



The Hazel dormouse in Flintshire

Species decline is evident locally

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The Hazel dormouse: Decline

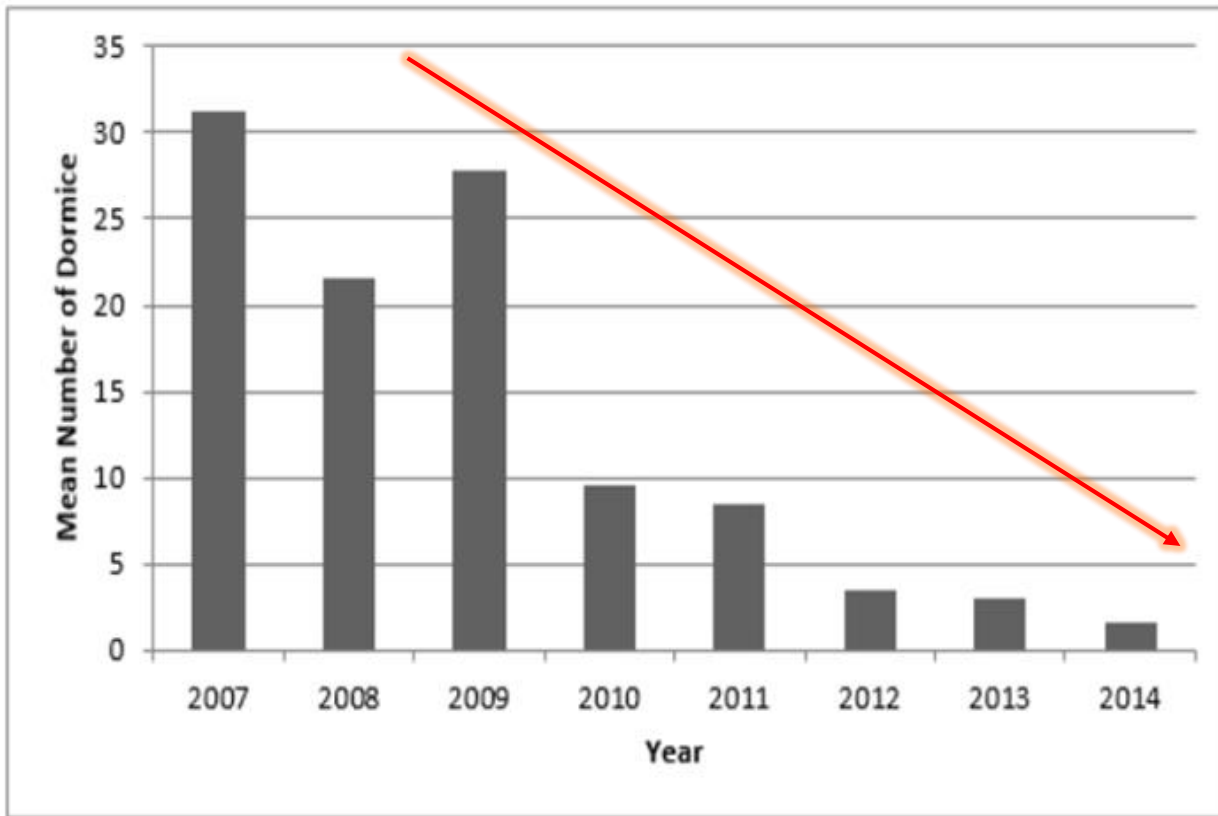


Figure 3.1 shows the average for all the sites each year, this shows that there is a steady decline in the *M. avellanarius* population in Flintshire with a peak in the mean count in 2009 of 27.8.

Nature legislation and policy



- Legislation
- Regional Plans and Policies
- Flintshire Plans and Policies
- COP 15 – 30% of our land by 2030
- Welsh Biodiversity targets forthcoming

Local Action and Impact

- £450,000 in grant funding for biodiversity projects and temporary staffing enabled:
- >5000 trees
- 100 swift boxes
- T/C Councils nature suggestions
- Greener development conference
- housing maintenance works to incorporate biodiversity features
- contaminated land for biodiversity
- Regional biodiversity awards (4/7 Flintshire winners)
- School nature proposals
- Burial sites survey/nature proposals
- Ongoing: Flintshire forest, green infrastructure, Streetscene

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We can enable success through:

- Collaboration
- Working across departments
- Working across sectors
- Being open to change
- Fostering political and public support

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“What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of a difference you want to make.” Dr Jane Goodall



Overview of Grasslands and Management in Flintshire



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Wildflower Meadows

Wildlife meadows have suffered catastrophic declines. Between the 1930s and 1980s, 97% were lost across England and Wales

Traditionally grasslands are managed by grazing and the collection of hay. This avoids enrichment and maintains an abundance of wildflowers.

Introduction of fertiliser and intensive grazing or silage management meant vigorous grasses survived and wildflowers disappeared.



Value of Verges

- » The 500,000 kilometres of road verges that span the UK are equivalent to half of the remaining flower-rich grassland. (Plantlife 2019)
- » Road verges are a vital refuge for wildlife, including 45 per cent of our flora.
- » Wildflower-rich meadows and grasslands are a crucial reserve for declining pollinators.
- » Permanent grasslands including wildflower-rich meadows are an important store of carbon
- » Permanent grasslands can reduce the impact of flooding.

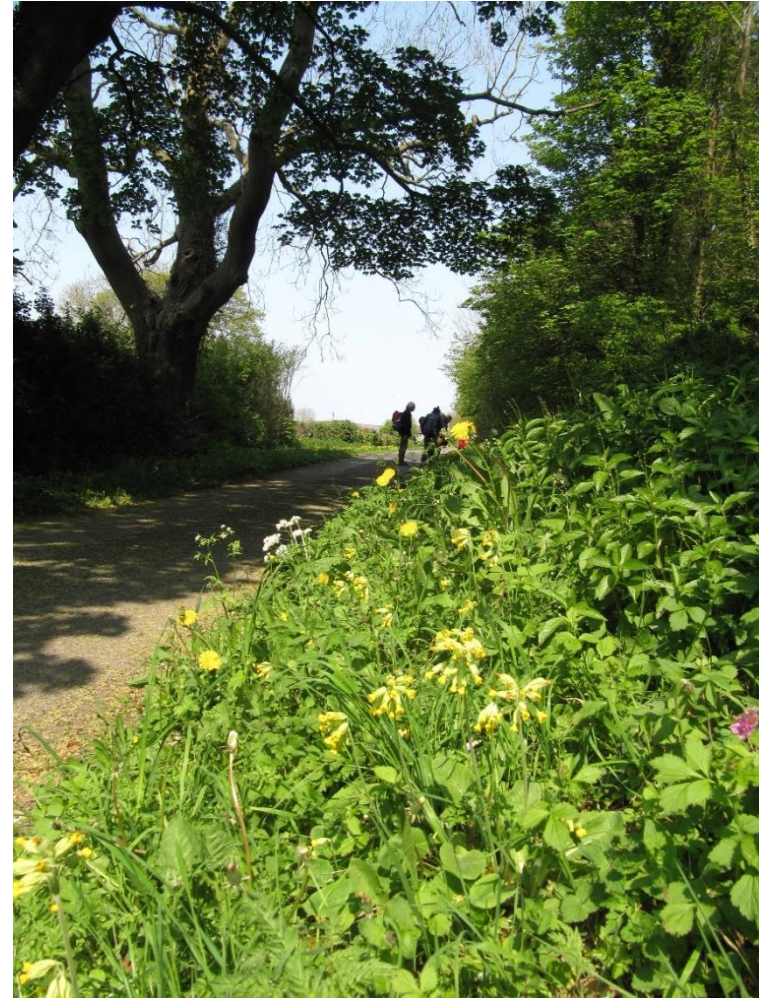




Natural Connections

- » Verges act as corridors and stepping stones for wildlife
- » They provide people contact with their natural environment
- » Science tells us we are healthier and happier around nature.

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Amenity Grassland Management

- » **Mown grassland has minimal wildflowers and the lack of structure means there is very little refuge for wildlife.**
- » **Short grassland can be transformed into a wildflower meadow by reduced cutting**
- » **New grasslands can be created through the use of wildflower seed BUT.....**

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To manage or not?

- » Most wildflowers are associated with low fertility soils.
- » No cut results in an increase in tall grasses and herbs such as Nettle and Hogweed and bramble.
- » If cut and left, the cuttings lead to an increase in nutrients and the tall grasses dominate.
- » Use of herbicides has a similar effect.
- » Cut and collect reduces the layer of thatch and opens up the soil surface to allow seed germination. If repeated slower growing species are encouraged that over time require less management

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Timing of management

- » **Vital that wildflowers are able to complete their life cycle and set seed.**
- » **Verges with woodland spring flowers have an earlier life cycle compared to wildflower meadows.**
- » ***Plantlife 2019: Managing grasslands and road verges***

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Legislation and Protected Sites

Environment Act 2016
s6 Biodiversity Duty

Be Aware of designated verges
Buckley Commons SSSI
Calkyn Mountain SSSI
Herward Smithy SSSI

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Not alone!

La richesse naturelle de nos routes départementales

Pour préserver la biodiversité des abords de nos routes, le Conseil général du Doubs met en œuvre une méthode de gestion écologique : *le fauchage tardif*

Le Conseil général du Doubs gère 3700 km de routes départementales, ce qui représente également une superficie de plus de 3000 ha de dépendances (accotements, talus), dont la biodiversité doit être préservée. À cet effet, dans une démarche de développement durable, le Département a souhaité mettre en place en partenariat avec le Conservatoire régional des Espaces Naturels (Espace naturel Comtois), un mode de gestion respectueux de la flore et de la faune des talus routiers.

Les talus routiers servent de refuge à de nombreuses plantes et animaux, dont certains très rares et protégés. Plus de 300 espèces différentes peuvent être dénombrées sur les bords de routes, et certaines zones abritent des espèces remarquables telles que l'Ophrys Abeille, une orchidée protégée, et le rare papillon Azuré de la Croisette.

La priorité : concilier sécurité routière et environnement. La première passe de fauchage privilégie la visibilité pour les usagers. Le deuxième fauchage, tardif, permet à la flore d'achever son cycle annuel de développement.

Les enjeux : des routes sûres et fleuries, une biodiversité préservée.



Azuré de la Croisette, inféodé à la Gentiane Croisette présente sur les talus routiers.



Le lézard vert, une espèce protégée

Fauche d'entretien d'un talus routier : les principes du fauchage tardif



Nature isn't Neat

And other concerns

Safety

- Resident and motorist safety will always be our **top priority**

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Internal consultation process



Recreational Use

- All P1 sites are excluded from reduced mow
- Consider impact on recreational use of a space
- Healthy and diverse places which encourage recreational use.



There is no scientific evidence to suggest long grass encourages parasites

- The presence of ticks related to deer/livestock, than type of vegetation
- Ticks associated with damp habitats
- Study evidenced longer lawns with no ticks

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Small Mammals

- Improving biodiversity, Creating habitat for nature
- That includes small mammals, some species prefer longer grass' whereas others do not.
- Small mammals are attracted into homes by food and shelter

Fire Risk

- Wildflower or reduced mow areas will not accumulate a thick grassy thatch which increases biomass and fire risk due to the cut and collect management
- In cases of extremely dry summer weather fire breaks can be cut in larger areas of long grass

Behaviour

- Concerns regarding behaviour associated with longer grass/wildflowers include:
- Antisocial behaviour
- ~~Page 100~~ Litter
- Dog fouling
- Need to address the cause of the problem not the symptom
- Creating nature devoid places will not solve behavioural issues
- Support improved behaviour at sites

Neatness

- Biggest concern when consulting on reduced mow or wildflower areas
- Perspective
- Short mown lawns: social norm associated with being cared for, neat, security and wealth

Perception

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Nature isn't neat

But we can demonstrate that sites are cared for and intentional and promote the multiple benefits

- Page 103
- Appropriate locations
 - Mown borders and desire lines
 - Reduced management is clearly intentional
 - Interpretation/Signage
 - Member consultation





B5126

Connah's Quay, Wales

Google

Street View - Oct 2018

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Visual site comparison



B5126

Connah's Quay, Wales

Google

Street View - May 2022

Mown paths

Page 105

Mown borders and signage

Page 106



Public opinion

Having had so many likes and comments from people about the beautiful verges and field of wildflowers planted in Buckley by our CC. I agree we need this to be spread more widely. We have many areas to fill. I have put the video here I took so those who haven't seen the flowers can see them in their full glory.

#saveourwildlife#
#saveourbees#



75

10 comments 2 shares

Page 107

Had a good look other day when bringing dog back through town. It was really calming for me felt like a little escape for couple mins

Walk past them every day walking the dog 🐕

That looks stunning !! 🥰

Beautiful well done 👍

They are doing this all over Flintshire now and it is a brilliant idea.

Off to Mold later along the Mold road so yes I will make sure I see all those lovely wild flowers as I pass along . 😊

They have done this on the field over the bridge street field it looks beautiful xx





Flintshire Council

16.2K Tweets

Following



Flintshire Council  @FlintshireCC · Nov 29



This autumn we've sowed wildflower seed on a number of road verges and roundabouts in Flintshire! By creating more meadows we are helping to address the climate and ecological emergency.

Watch out for an explosion of colour next summer on these new mini-meadows!



 19

 49

 349





Key messages:

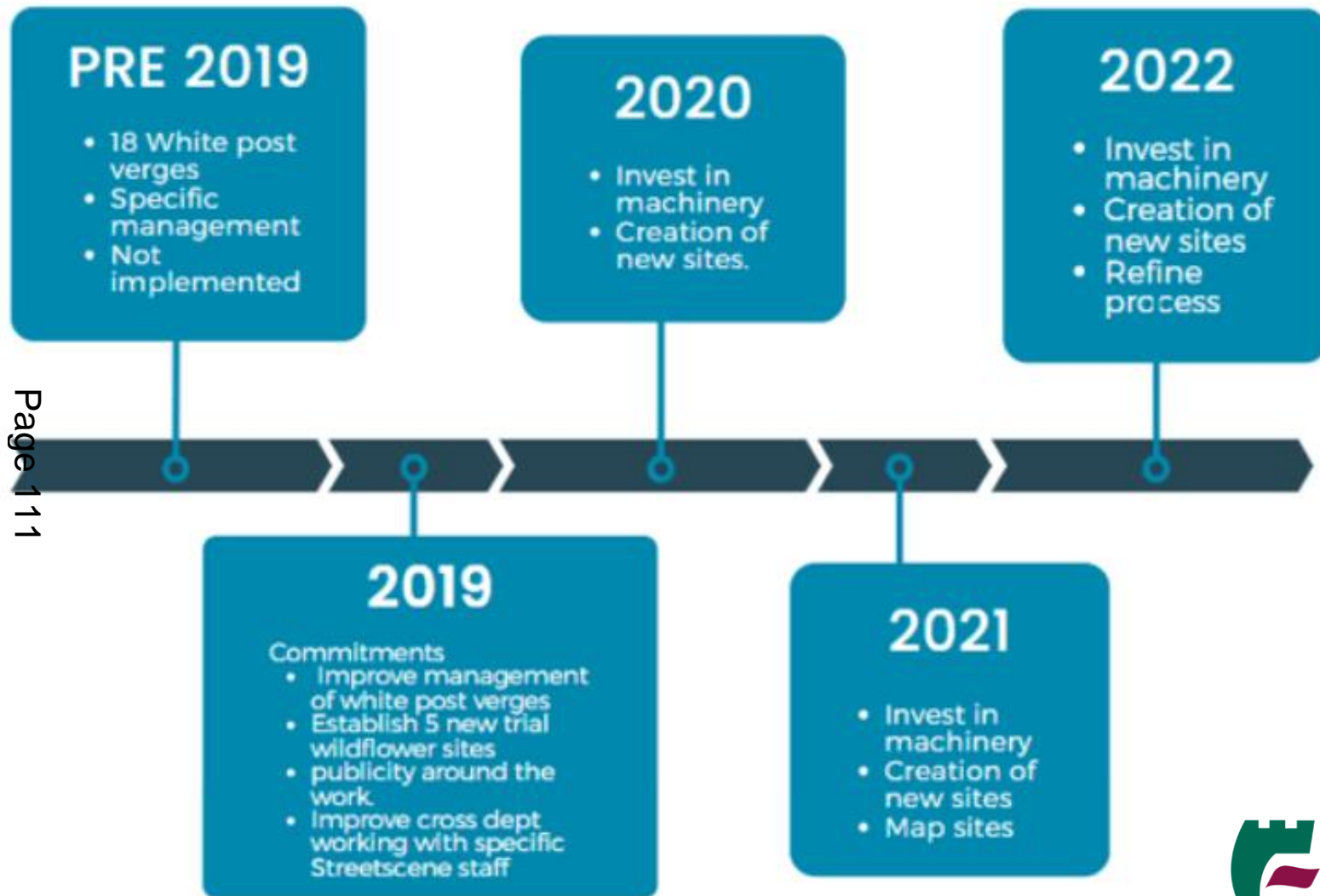
- Safety first – Always
- Consideration of existing site use
- Understanding and promoting the big multiple benefits of our actions - which go beyond neat and tidy

Thank you

Flintshire wildflower sites and grassland management

Action to date: An overview

Timeline



Our Approach

Our approach aims to support meadow restoration by;

- Limiting seed introduction to urban sites with low existing diversity

Page 102
The best approach for nature is to improve grassland diversity (gradually through the correct management)

However

- **There is value in** the burst of colour, the quick results and impact of seeding especially in high visibility / footfall sites

Types of wildflower sites

A balance

- **Created sites:** Seeded or wildflower turf (restricted to urban sites with low existing wildflower diversity)
- **Reduced mow sites:** We allow the grass and wildflowers to grow with the aim of long term restoration to flower rich meadow
- **Naturally diverse sites:** We support restoration to flower rich meadow

Wildflower



Seeded



Initial Reduced mow

After a few years of reduced mow with cuttings collected



Hawarden



Wepre

Page 115

Sites

Page 116



Pre 2019
to 2022



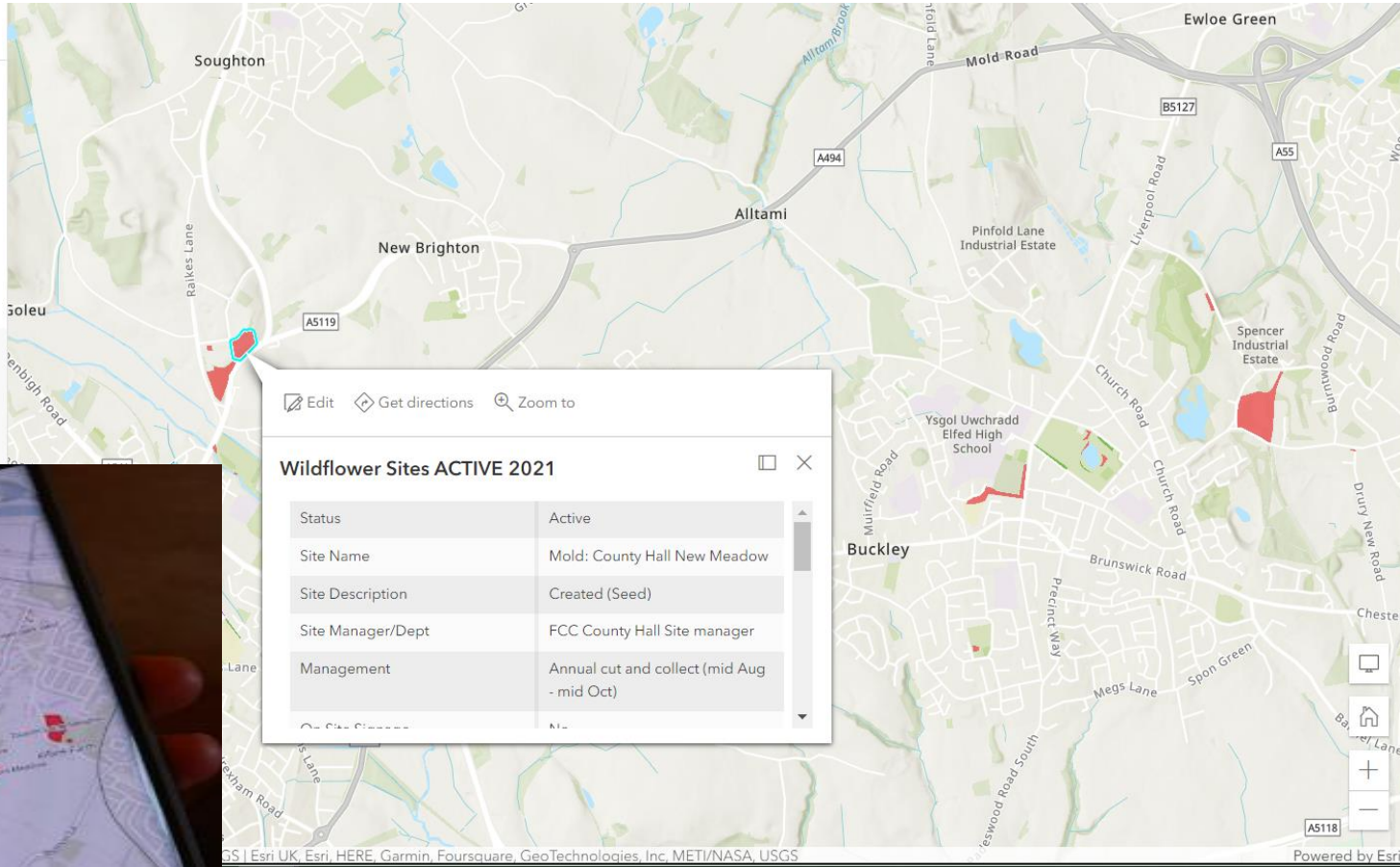
Sites

Legend

Wildflower Sites

Status

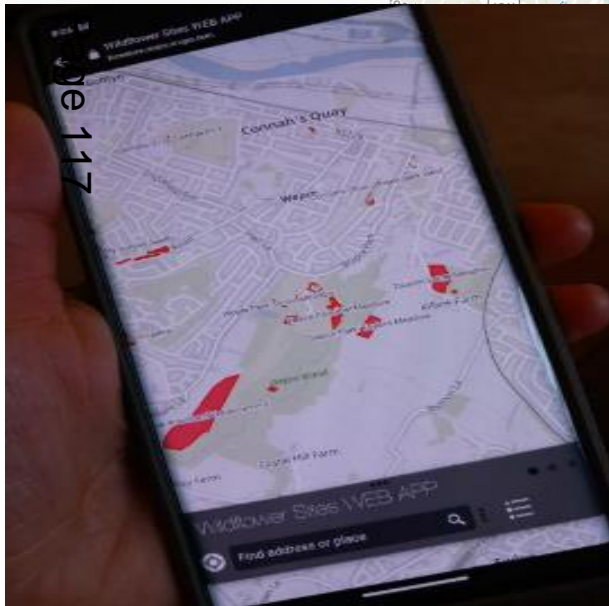
- Active
- Proposed
- Ongoing
- On Hold



Edit Get directions Zoom to

Wildflower Sites ACTIVE 2021

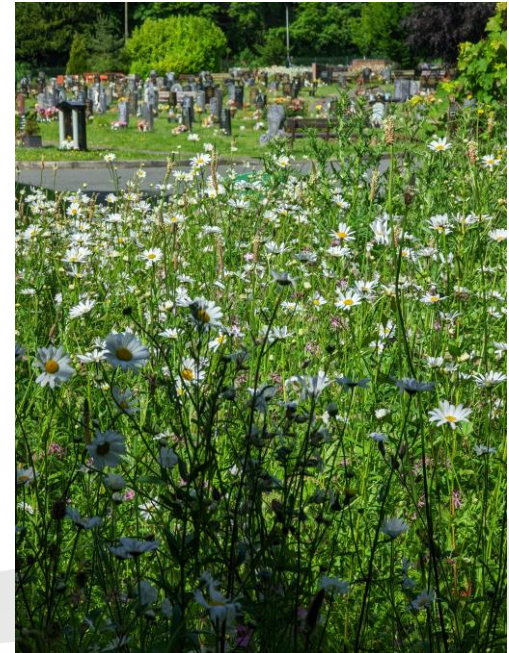
Status	Active
Site Name	Mold: County Hall New Meadow
Site Description	Created (Seed)
Site Manager/Dept	FCC County Hall Site manager
Management	Annual cut and collect (mid Aug - mid Oct)



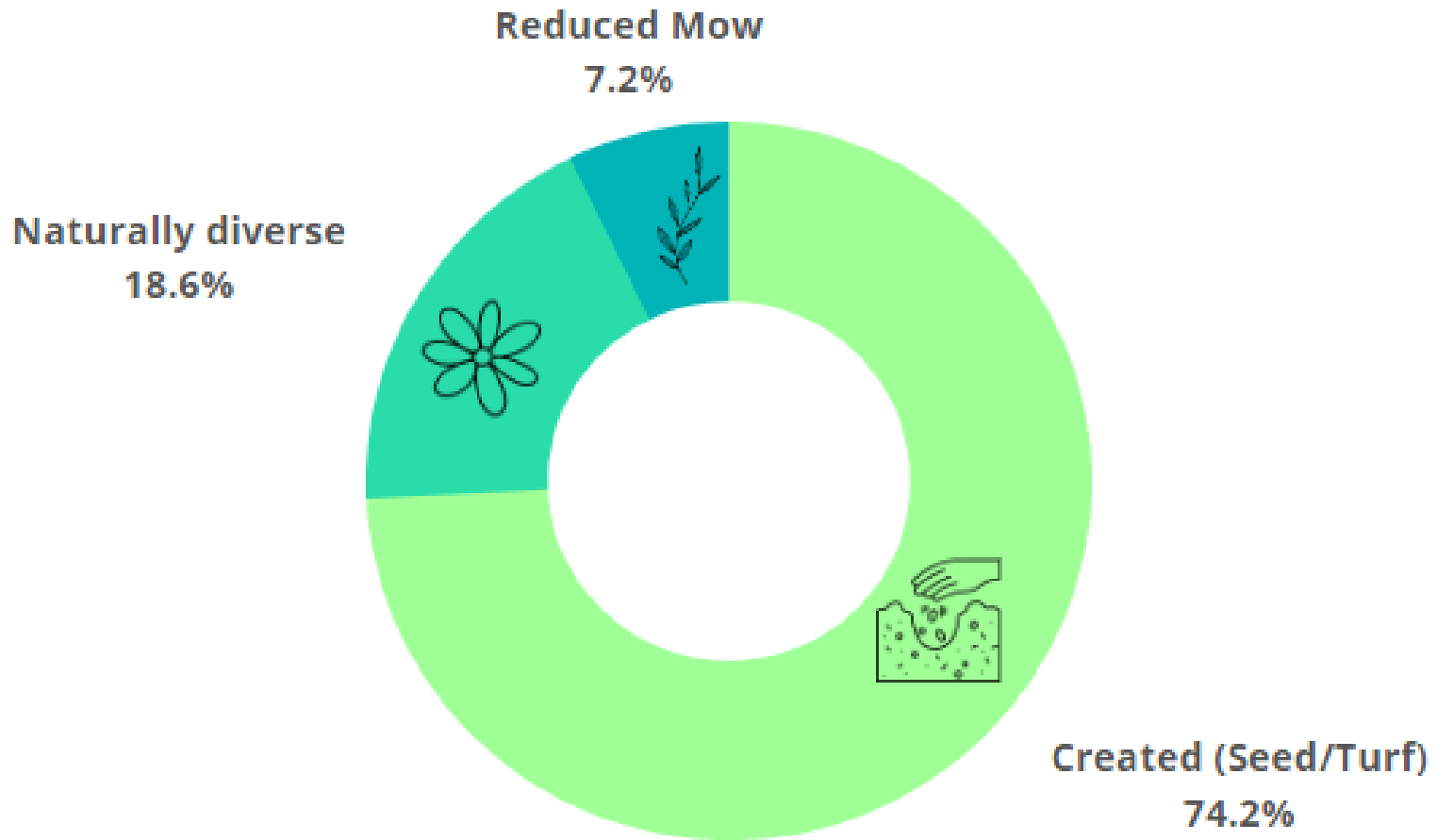
Sites

- 98 sites
- Area 11.8Ha
- 69 Sites /8.6Ha managed by Streetscene
- 4.3% Streetscene maintained ground being managed for biodiversity

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Wildflower site type



Resources and Capacity



Tractor and ryetec cut and collect



Foamstream – non chemical weed control



Bankmaster



Bailer



Iseki cut and collect mower



Grillo cut and collect mower

Education and Engagement

- All sites have Oak marker posts
- Public response: overwhelmingly positive
- No Mow May publicity well received
- A public green spaces survey was undertaken in 2022.

Headline statistics received are as follows:

Page 121

The majority of respondent's consider the maintenance of their green spaces as adequate

"Feeling safe and secure" was ranked as most important when visiting local green space with

"A diverse and healthy natural environment" ranked in second.

84.6% of respondent's wanted to see local greenspace improved for nature.

Project targets & future opportunities

Short term 22/23:

- Grass cutting disposal solutions
- In-house training
- Active travel routes.
- Share of specialist machinery
- In the field management recording
- QR code site information
- A public recording campaign for wildlife
- Grass cutting policy



Medium term /5 years:

- **Manage 25% (49.6Ha)**

Long term /Over 5 years:

- **To manage all appropriate maintained estate for wildflower diversity.**



Pesticides in Flintshire

What are they?

- ▶ Pesticides are chemical or biological products used to kill or control living organisms
- ▶ Types of Pesticide: Herbicides, Insecticides and Fungicides, Rodenticides, Molluscicides and Nematicides
- ▶ Glyphosate is the most widely used herbicide in the world
- ▶ In 2015, the WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) labelled glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic"

Why we need to stop using chemical herbicides

Effects on Human Health

- ▶ Low concentrations: damage to liver, kidney and skin cells.
- ▶ Repeated exposure: Parkinson's disease; asthma and other respiratory diseases; infertility, pregnancy problems, and birth defects; and cancer, including leukaemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.
- ▶ High concentrations: can cause harmful or lethal effects after a single episode of ingestion, inhalation or skin contact.
- ▶ Children are more at risk
- ▶ Exposure: Towns and cities, farmland and rural communities, homes and gardens, and via our food

Why we need to stop using chemical herbicides

Effects on the Environment

- ▶ Reduction of wildflowers = insect declines
- ▶ Pollution of the air, water and soils
- ▶ Bad for bees

- ▶ The evidence supporting the long-term negative impacts of Glyphosate for people and the environment, warrant a move away from its use in a timely manner.



Herbicide Use in Flintshire

Page 128

- ▶ 1150 litres
- ▶ Where: block paving in town centres, greenspaces, along curb edges, school grounds and invasive species
- ▶ Curb spraying contract = £50,000/year
 - = spot-spray 11,000km of curb
 - = One spray in June with optional revisit in September
- ▶ Issues: complaints, mileage, cost



Options for Reductions

- 1) Targeted Reduction
- 2) Use of Alternatives
- 3) Opt-out Schemes

1) Targeted Reduction

- ▶ Stop use of chemical herbicides within town centres, school grounds, and greenspaces
- ▶ Numerous councils including Lewe's district council no longer use chemical weed killers in any of their parks, open spaces or children's play areas
- ▶ Change contract for school grounds maintenance to exclude the use of chemical herbicides (46 schools)
- ▶ Explore policy changes for tenant farms and council owned allotments to restrict the use of pesticides



2) Use of Alternatives

Alternatives:

- ▶ Heat-based methods: Battery powered weed burners, Flame guns and Foamstream
- ▶ Organic sprays: vinegar, lemon juice, citronella etc.
- ▶ Manual removal methods: Hoeing or weeding, Road sweepers
- ▶ Invest in alternatives and trial their effectiveness for different areas
- ▶ Re-direct the curb spraying contract costs to cover an in house member of staff to use/trial alternatives





2) Use of Alternatives

Alternatives:

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- ▶ Organic sprays: vinegar, lemon juice, citronella etc.
- ▶ Manual removal methods: Hoeing or weeding, Road sweepers
- ▶ Invest in alternatives and trial their effectiveness for different areas
- ▶ Re-direct the curb spraying contract costs to cover an in house member of staff to use/trial alternatives



3) Opt-Out Schemes

- ▶ Residents can opt-out of pesticide use on their street by committing to maintaining part, or all, of their road or street, through weeding
- ▶ People can do this either individually, or as part of a residential group
- ▶ Lambeth Councils Community Weeding Scheme had 130 streets involved
- ▶ Option to leave some beneficial weeds



Leading the way

- ▶ In 2019 France banned the use and sale of all non-agricultural pesticides
- ▶ Germany and Austria have announced intentions to end the use of glyphosate over the next few years.
- ▶ Over 80 councils across the UK have either entirely stopped or significantly reduced use of using these chemicals

Wales Aims

- ▶ This video is of Julie James, Welsh Governments Minister for Climate Change talking to the wildlife trust about the need for reduction of pesticides by local authorities
- ▶ https://www.linkedin.com/posts/craig-bennett3_climate-cop15-montreal-activity-7009602443835527169-Ykk1?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_android
- ▶ Skip to 1:27



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Thank you for listening

Flintshire County Council.

Grass Cutting Policy (January 2018)

Biodiversity opportunity in red (Jan 2023)

1. Roadside verges

a) Rural Verges (outside 40mph) - 1 cut per year in July (subject to weather conditions)

- 1 swathe widths on all principal roads
- 1 swathe width on all non-principal and unclassified roads

Visibility splays at junctions 4 cuts per year in –

- April
- June
- August
- September/October

Full width verge cutting for weed and self-sown sapling control on all classifications of rural roads once every 4 years in September/October

Additional cuts may be carried out on Health and Safety grounds in specific locations as identified by the Area Coordinators.

Rural Verges:

- Safety priority
- Limited opportunity
- Opportunity to collect cuttings when we cut on flat verges – looking into bank mowers

Visibility splays:

- Opportunity to collect cuttings – longer term impact less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity

b) Urban verges (within 40 mph zones) – 4 cuts per year

- April
- June
- August
- September/October

- Option A – Reduced mow on all suitable verges (avoiding banks and visibility cuts)
Letting the grass/wildflowers grow, with a cut and collect once a year between August and October
(Targeted initial communities a possibility but adds complexities)
- Option B – retain cuts - collect all cuttings – on flat verges
(longer term impact reduce vigour of grasses- less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity (Dorset approach))

c) Cyclic

Cyclic routes on county dual carriageways

Cyclic routes receive 2 cuts a year (1m swathe cut in April-July and a full cut in September)

- Option: Retain first cut as existing.
Collect all cuttings on the second full cut where possible.
Trial cyclic cut and collect 2023 on the most appropriate cyclic route (Gronant or DIP suggested).

2. Amenity Areas

Maximum of 13 cuts per year as required.

Flexible start required for the start of the cutting season, in February/March, subject to weather conditions.

Frequency of cuts based on every 2 weeks in April to June, extended to every 3 weeks July to Oct, subject to weather conditions.

(Removal of grass cuttings will only take place in exceptional circumstances i.e. First-Cut of the season)

Option A:

- Increase area under reduced mow or wildflower management gradually through existing process.

Option B:

- Opportunity to introduce collection of cuttings on flat areas – longer term impact less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity

3. Public footpaths / Cycle Routes

A maximum of 4 cuts per year as required, to prevent rural footways being lost to grass ingress and verge creep due to lack of usage.

4. Hedges

The majority of highway hedges are the responsibility of the adjacent land owner. Where the hedge has grown to an extent that it is causing an obstruction to the highway user, notice will be served on the land owner to cut the hedge accordingly. Highway hedges owned by the Council will be cut once a year after the nesting season has passed.

Highway hedges managed by the Council will be cut a maximum of once a year, outside of the nesting season.

Option: Management timed between Jan - Feb maintains the availability of berries and nuts as a food source for birds and other wildlife.

Allow 2 – 4 years between cuts where possible

5. Bus-stops

A maximum of 4 cuts per year as required across the grassed areas either side of rural Bus-stops, up to 20 metres across the length of the stop.

- Retain cuts but introduce collection of cuttings– longer term impact less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity

6. Village / Town Gateways

A maximum of 4 cuts per year as required across the grassed areas either side of Village / Town

Gateways signs, up to 10 metres either side of the gateway.

- Retain cuts but introduce collection of cuttings – longer term impact less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity

7. Recreation Sports Grounds

Up to 16 cuts per year March to October. Subject to separate procurement arrangements and direct liaison with the Schools.

8. Cemeteries

Flexible start required for the start of the cutting season, in February/March, subject to weather conditions. Frequency of cuts based on every 2 weeks in April to June, extended to every 3 weeks July to Oct, subject to weather conditions.

(Removal of grass cuttings will only take place in exceptional circumstances. i.e. First-Cut of the season)

Additional key dates outside of the cutting season to include Christmas and Mothering Sunday.

No change proposed continued implementation of wildflower areas in cemeteries

9. Tenants Gardens

Where tenants have requested and qualify for the assisted gardening service. The service is provided by contractors who will provide the following:

Maximum of 13 cuts per year as required.

Flexible start required for the start of the cutting season, in February/March, subject to weather conditions.

Frequency of cuts based on every 2 weeks in April to June, extended to every 3 weeks July to Oct, subject to weather conditions.

- Option A: Collection of cuttings when cutting tenants lawns if not already done
- Option B: Allow tenants to opt into a 'wildlife friendly' service for reduced mow to allow grass to grow (cut and collect once a year Aug - Oct).
- Additional offer for wildflower enhancement could be coordinated by biodiversity officer. Resident engagement could also be supported by the biodiversity team.

10. Reduced mow/Wildflower Areas

Allow to grow then 1 cut and collect per year between August – November

11. Natural regeneration Areas

Areas to be identified for natural regeneration for carbon capture and biodiversity only requiring essential management for safety.

Next Steps

- Collate and share feedback
- FAQs / summary of responses
- Review of grass cutting policy and performance 2022
- Scrutiny – 7th March 2023
- Cabinet – 14th March 2023
- Adopt new policy – April 2023



ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 7 th March 2023
Report Subject	Local Toilet Strategy Review
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Regional Transport Strategy
Report Author	Chief Officer, Streetscene and Transportation
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2017, the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 received Royal Assent, bringing together a range of practical actions for improving and protecting health. Part 8 of the Act includes Provision of Toilets and introduces new responsibilities for Local Authorities to provide local toilet strategies.

To deliver a strategic approach to the provision of toilets across Wales, the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 requires Local Authorities to assess local needs and facilities, and to publish a local toilets strategy for its area.

Since 2012, Flintshire County Council has undertaken two separate reviews of toilet provision across the County. These reviews highlighted that isolated facilities regularly attract antisocial behaviour, which puts people off using them. As a result, Flintshire adopted a more enabling approach by promoting the use of existing toilets in Council buildings, such as libraries and Connects Centres, which people feel more confident and comfortable using.

Flintshire's current local toilet strategy was approved and published in May 2019. National guidelines state 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.

Flintshire County Council is 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 on Thursday 5 May 2022, which means that the latest date for review is due by Thursday, 4 May 2023. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the legislative background and set out how the Council intends to review the current strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Scrutiny supports the proposed review of the local toilet strategy and approves the intended approach and timescales set out in this report.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE BACKGROUND TO THE LOCAL TOILET STRATEGY REVIEW
1.01	<p>The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 ('the Act') received Royal Assent on the 3 July 2017. The Act brings together a range of practical actions for improving and protecting health. Part 8 of the Act introduces provision of toilets and specifically local toilets strategies. The aim of Part 8 is to ensure each local authority (LA) in Wales assesses the needs of its community in relation to toilets, and then takes a strategic and transparent approach to best meet that need.</p>
1.02	<p>To achieve this, the Act places a duty on each LA in Wales to prepare and publish a local toilets strategy for its area. The Act provides that a strategy must include an assessment of the community's need for toilets, including changing facilities for babies and changing places facilities for people with disabilities. The strategy must also provide details of how the LA proposes to meet the identified need. There is no requirement for the strategies to be presented to the Welsh Government for approval, as the strategies should be subject to LAs' existing scrutiny structures and public scrutiny.</p>
1.03	<p>The duty to prepare a local toilet strategy does not require LAs to provide and maintain public toilets directly nor are they required to provide additional dedicated facilities. Local authorities must, however, take a strategic view on how facilities can be provided and accessed by the local population, taking account of such things as location, accessibility, facilities, frequency of use and quality of existing sites, as well as determining whether additional or fewer sites are required by their local population.</p> <p>The legislation published by Welsh Government has no funding for additional provisions attached to it. The aim of Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 is to encourage a broader consideration of options available for providing toilets for public use including traditional stand-alone toilets as well as those in private ownership. It is intended to help address the current challenges faced by Local Authorities in continuing to sustain provision during times of substantial financial pressures.</p>
1.04	<p>It was agreed in the Streetscene & Transportation Programme Board in October 2022 that this review should show more ambition towards the standard of facilities that we provide and it was agreed that the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee should be part of the consultation process.</p> <p>It was also agreed that public consultation should be undertaken through public questionnaire and Equalities and Environmental Impact Assessments should be undertaken. Subsequently, it is the intention that a full review of the strategy will be presented to Cabinet in April/May 2023 prior to a statutory 12-week consultation period of the final draft.</p>
1.05	<p>Flintshire County Council may review its strategy at any time, following which it must publish a statement of the steps that it has taken in accordance with the strategy. If, following a review, the council decided to revise the strategy, it is required publish the revised strategy and then prepare an interim progress report covering the two-year period commencing from the date of publication.</p>

1.06	<p>It is envisaged that the new action plan within the Local Toilet Strategy will set out the following ambitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital investment to improve facilities offered • Improved availability of changing places across the county • Consideration of water usage/rainwater harvesting, in line with the climate change action plan and strategy for the council • Review of the existing contractual arrangements / procurement • Consideration of community asset transfer, where appropriate and feasible 																					
1.07	<p>Below is an indicative timetable for the review: -</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="288 568 1425 999"> <thead> <tr> <th>Timetable for implementation</th> <th>Report to be prepared by</th> <th>Date of the Meeting</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Informal Cabinet report</td> <td>10 Feb 2023</td> <td>28 Feb 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E&E Overview & Scrutiny report</td> <td>17 Feb 2023</td> <td>07 Mar 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Start consultation questionnaire – 21 days <i>Analyse results - write draft strategy</i></td> <td>08 Feb 2023</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cabinet <i>Open 12-week consultation on new strategy To be closed around 16th Aug 2023</i></td> <td>21 April 2023</td> <td>23 May 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Take findings back to Cabinet</td> <td>TBC - following 16th Aug 2023</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Adoption of new strategy around Sept/Oct 2023</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Timetable for implementation	Report to be prepared by	Date of the Meeting	Informal Cabinet report	10 Feb 2023	28 Feb 2023	E&E Overview & Scrutiny report	17 Feb 2023	07 Mar 2023	Start consultation questionnaire – 21 days <i>Analyse results - write draft strategy</i>	08 Feb 2023		Cabinet <i>Open 12-week consultation on new strategy To be closed around 16th Aug 2023</i>	21 April 2023	23 May 2023	Take findings back to Cabinet	TBC - following 16th Aug 2023		Adoption of new strategy around Sept/Oct 2023		
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1.08	<p>The previous 2019 strategy had a 12-point action plan, many of the intentions were adversely affected through the pandemic period. It should also be noted that the structural condition of the facilities provided in both Talacre and Holywell (as was the case with the Mold, New Street Facilities) have deteriorated considerably recently and are in dire need of capital investment to repair and upgrade them.</p> <p>Recent repairs and maintenance to damage caused by flooding and vandalism have incurred additional costs, which has created a pressure of £23k on the existing revenue budget over and above the £89k available budget.</p>																					
1.09	<p>The provision of local toilets for public use is not a statutory requirement of LAs in Wales. Therefore, due to unprecedented financial cutbacks within local government, Flintshire, like many other LAs, has closed down its traditional standalone public toilet blocks. This strategy aims to mitigate potential impacts by making toilets in more council facilities available for public use and to work with the private sector to help promote their facilities.</p> <p>It is recognised that the previous strategy did not necessarily live up to the priorities and values of the council, as well as those of a number of public interest groups, who are aware of the requirements expected of the council to have a public toilet strategy. These groups have contacted the council’s leadership several times to challenge the current provision and support improved facilities.</p> <p>Recently upgraded facilities provided in Mold resulted in significant local criticism following their introduction and are seen as insufficient on the grounds of DDA 1995 and “Changing Places” specification.</p>																					

	<p>The new strategy will therefore look to raise the standard of the facilities across the county over the next 4-5 years. Through this strategy, we aim to provide accessible, clean toilets in the most appropriate locations. We also aim to secure the future of current provision as well as looking at ways to increase the number of public toilets available and improving access to all groups of people.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
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2.01	<p>Flintshire County Council is committed to sustainability in its own operations as well as across the county more widely through climate change and carbon reduction.</p> <p>Revenue: The portfolio is currently carrying a pressure of £23k over and above the £89k revenue budget available for maintaining the existing public conveniences and any additional provision will need to take into account the impact on future revenue budgets for the ongoing cleaning, maintenance and repairs. The current national and local financial position is under increasing pressure and there is little prospect of the portfolio being able to allocate any substantial increase in revenue funding to this non-statutory service provision; consequently, the ongoing impacts of budget reductions will continue to impose a downward pressure on revenue budgets. When planning the future provision of local toilets, we have to consider the current financial constraints on the service area as well as ongoing future budget reductions. Cleaning and maintenance operations and standards will need to be reviewed on a periodic basis to ensure the most efficient and effective provision within allocated resources.</p> <p>Capital: There may be implications for the approved capital programme for 2023-2024 and future financial years. The existing toilet facilities are in old structures or standalone facilities, which can make them difficult to maintain and they are in need of significant capital investment, which is limited. Additionally, the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 as published by Welsh Government has no funding opportunities for LAs to utilise or additional provisions attached to it.</p> <p>Unfortunately, public toilets can also become a magnet for anti-social behaviour such as drug taking and vandalism, which can impact the provision and cause significant damage. Any capital or revenue commitment will need to be supported through a business case approach, taking account of full costs and possible income sources.</p> <p>Human Resources: there are no implications for additional capacity or for any change to current workforce structures or roles at the present time.</p>
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3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
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3.01	<p>A full integrated impact assessment will be required as part of the review of the local toilet strategy. An impact assessment is not provided with this report as this report provides an overview of the legislative requirements and sets out the purpose and timescales for the forthcoming review. This strategy and the outcome of the review is expected to have a positive differential impact on all protected characteristics.</p>
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Toilets for public use matter to everybody outside the home environment, whatever the reason, and they remain a sensitive and high-profile concern. Toilets are, however, even more important to certain groups within society, including older people, people with disabilities, people with particular needs (including certain medical problems), women, children and young people and their families.

These groups can be disproportionately affected by poor provision of toilets; for example, poor provision is understood to have particular negative impacts on older people, as some may be less likely to leave their homes without having confidence that adequate facilities will be available to them. This can contribute to increased social isolation and inactivity, as well as affecting people's ability to maintain independence and dignity in later life. When considering toilet provision in Flintshire, we also need to consider local people and visitors alike.

The strategy is aimed to increase the identifiable / publically available toilet facilities across the city; meaning, a reduction in individuals needing to travel extensive distances to public conveniences and identify accessible and age permissible / suitable facilities.

Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact

Long-term	Positive - The strategy aims to mitigate potential impacts by making toilets in more facilities identifiable and available for public use, and to work with the private sector to help promote their facilities.
Prevention	Positive – The provision of and access to toilets is an issue that affects public health. Accessible, clean toilets that are well located in places such as town centres, parks and near public transport hubs or active travel routes (for cycling and walking) can help encourage people to socialise take exercise and stay more physically active. This has clear health and economic benefits. Conversely, a lack of adequate toilet facilities can impact on a person's physical and mental health, as well as affecting the wider environmental health of the population.
Integration	Positive - The review of the strategy will need to integrate with other existing strategies, policies and plans of the Council, such as the Place Making Plans, the Integrated Transport Strategy, Climate Change Strategy and the Council's Well-Being Objectives.
Collaboration	Positive – The review of the strategy will explore options for partnership working with establishments that have high quality toilet provision and collaborate to find share sustainable solutions.
Involvement	Positive – The provision of toilets can make a significant impact upon the comfort of individuals and families who visit public spaces and their perception of the area as a desirable place to visit. The consultation aims to involve a diversity of population in the decisions affecting them.

Well-being Goals Impact

The review of the local toilet strategy will need to have due regard for the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The provision of toilet facilities and the strategic way forward helps to achieve all seven of the well-being goals as set out below.

Prosperous Wales	The review will need to consider the impact of the strategy on the economy and in particular the importance of tourism. The availability of clean, accessible public toilets can make a positive difference and improve the quality of the visitor experience, thereby growing the local economy and tourism.
Resilient Wales	The provision of public toilet facilities will need to minimise the impact on the environment. Opportunities for more eco-friendly toilets will be explored as part of the review e.g. rain-water harvesting.
Healthier Wales	The provision of and access to toilets is an issue that affects public health. Accessible, clean toilets that are well located in places such as town centres, parks and near public transport hubs or active travel routes (for cycling and walking) can help encourage people to socialise, take exercise and stay more physically active, which helps to maximise physical and mental well-being. Conversely, a lack of adequate toilet facilities can impact on physical and mental health, as well as affecting the wider environmental health of the population.
More equal Wales	In reviewing the strategy, consideration will be given to our duties under the Equality Act, such as the provision of “Changing Places” and gender neutral toilets, as well as standard accessible toilets.
Cohesive Wales	We will continue to work with the police, town/community councils, residents, local businesses, voluntary sector partners and community groups to ensure that public toilet facilities are as safe as possible and ensure that as many facilities are available where and when they are needed.
Vibrant Wales	Signposting and mapping publicly available toilets will be important so that those who need to visit a facility, can easily access information about the location, opening/closing times, accessibility and suitability of the toilets. In doing so, the strategy will ensure that we meet our obligations under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards, and provide information in both Welsh and English.
Globally responsible Wales	N/A

	<p>Flintshire County Council together with its partners will support the health and well-being of both the current and future generations through the following strategic objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting people from poverty by supporting them to meet their basic needs • Housing in Flintshire meeting the needs of our residents and supporting safer communities • Limiting the impact of the Council's services on the natural environment and supporting the wider communities of Flintshire to reduce their own carbon footprint • Enabling a sustainable economic recovery and growth • Supporting people in need to live as well as they can • Enabling and Supporting Learning Communities
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4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	With the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Regional Transport Strategy
4.02	Streetscene & Transportation Programme Board (October 2022)
4.03	Consultation will be carried out with the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee
4.04	A 12-week public consultation will be held as part of the review, commencing in May 2023.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Welsh Government has published statutory guidance to help local authorities produce a local toilet strategy for their area: https://www.gov.wales/toilets-public-use-guidance-local-authorities

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Barry Wilkinson, Highway Network Manager Telephone: 01352 704656 E-mail: barry.wilkinson@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	Changing Place(s): these are fully accessible toilets with a height adjustable changing bench, a hoisting system, a peninsular toilet, and enough space for a person with a disability, his/her wheelchair and two carers

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ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 7 th March 2023
Report Subject	Capacity Review at Flintshire County Council Cemeteries
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Regional Transport Strategy
Report Author	Chief Officer, Streetscene & Transportation
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the forward work programme, the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee requested a report on the capacity of the county's cemeteries, whilst also seeking an update on a number of ongoing capital projects and services provided by Bereavement Services.

Over the recent years, there has been an increasing risk and challenge around the capacity within the existing cemeteries and the availability of future burial space, particularly at Hawarden (No. 2) cemetery and Buckley cemetery. Without action being taken to address these shortages, deceased residents may no longer be able to be buried in their local cemetery with other family members and loved ones.

Additionally, a motion was proposed to the Climate Change Committee on 25th January 2023 for the Council to consider alternatives to traditional burials and cremation, such as columbaria* as an option for the deceased. A recommendation was made by the Climate Change Committee to Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committee that the Council should seek to expand its current suite of bereavement and burial services for the deceased to include columbaria in the short term, whilst also exploring the viability of other environmentally friendly bereavement options, such as resomation**, in the longer term.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members on the existing burial capacity within Flintshire cemeteries and an overview of the options for reviewing and increasing this capacity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING CURRENT CAPACITY LEVELS WITHIN FLINTSHIRE CEMETERIES
1.01	<p>Bereavement Services currently manage 15 cemeteries and 8 closed churchyards located throughout Flintshire. In addition, the service also has 2 gardens of remembrance located at Hawarden and Kelsterton, a dedicated child and baby memorial at Kelsterton cemetery and a woodland / natural burial area also located at Kelsterton Cemetery.</p> <p>Also located within the 15 cemeteries are approximately 300 memorial benches and 12 buildings of various sizes and usage, including the chapel located in Hawarden (No 1) Cemetery. Within the cemeteries, the council undertakes approximately 400 interments annually, both full body and cremated remains.</p>
1.02	<p>The management of cemeteries is, in the main, covered by the Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1977 (LACO). Whilst there is no statutory duty placed upon the authority to provide burial space for any specific community or religious group, should the council exercise its powers to provide burial space, a duty is then placed upon local authorities to maintain it in a good condition.</p> <p>For those residents of Flintshire who are unable to fund their own funeral, the authority does have a statutory duty under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1974 to undertake the necessary funeral arrangements on behalf of the deceased and/or their family.</p>
1.03	<p>The current national trend indicates that 75% of all bereavements result in cremation compared to that of 25% for burial. However, in Flintshire, this trend is reversed, with 70% of all bereavements resulting in burials compared to only 30% opting for cremation. It is not known why the preference of Flintshire residents is different to that of the rest of the UK; however, this places a far greater demand for burial land within Flintshire than that required by other local authorities.</p>
1.04	<p>Over recent years, there has been an increasing risk and challenge around the capacity within the existing cemeteries and the availability of future burial space, particularly at Hawarden (No. 2) cemetery and Buckley cemetery. Without action being taken to address these shortages, local residents may no longer be able to be buried in their local cemetery with other family members and loved ones.</p>

1.05

The table below shows the current position with regard to the number of remaining full burial plots available at each of the county's cemeteries. An estimated equivalent number of years remaining has also been included for reference, which is based on the current rate of usage.

Cemetery	Remaining Available Plots	Current Annual Average Demand	Estimated No. of Years Remaining (based on average Year demand)
Buckley	20	5	4
Hawarden No.2	200	46	4
Bagillt	110	7	16
Flint - London Road	653	31	21
Holywell	304	12	25
Hope - Bryn y Grog	310	12	26
Rhewl	214	3	71
Kelsterton	1864	12	155
Treuddyn	385	2	193
Greenfield No. 2	1026	4	257
TOTAL	5107	134	38

Please Note: Greenfield No.1, Hawarden No.1, Hope Old, Northop Road, Flint and Bryn Road, Connah's Quay are now all closed for new burials.

1.06

As can be seen from the above table, the remaining burial capacity at both Hawarden No. 2 and Buckley cemeteries is now at a critical level with only four years of capacity at each cemetery.

Hawarden No. 2 is Flintshire's main cemetery with approximately 33% of all annual interments being undertaken at the cemetery.

Given the above, two separate projects aimed at providing additional capacity at each of the above locations are currently progressing and an update has been provided in this report for information.

In 2018 / 2019, Cabinet committed to retain cemetery provision in existing locations (or as close to as possible) rather than moving to a "centralised" cemetery to ensure that families could continue to be buried in the in the same location as previous family members and to minimise any further distress to bereaved families at this extremely sensitive and difficult time.

1.07

Hawarden No.2 Cemetery

Initial stages of the proposed extension to Hawarden No.2 Cemetery are progressing. However, unfortunately all land owned by FCC within the proximity of Hawarden No. 2 cemetery has been ruled out on the grounds of environmental / conservation concerns. A section of land located to the rear of the former Registrar's Office had initially been identified, however, all efforts to progress this have proven unsuccessful.

As a result, we are currently exploring the alternative option of acquiring a section of land in private ownership. Whilst negotiations with the landowner commenced a number of years ago, it has since been established that formal negotiations (including a formal offer of purchase) have yet to be pursued, and hence, it is not possible to establish, at this stage in the process, the likelihood of an agreeable solution being found or the timescales.

	<p>To progress discussions with the landowner, specialist consultants have been appointed and are in the process of completing outline design proposals, which will accurately detail the land take required. In addition, a series of 'at distance' ecological surveys have also been instigated, which will provide the council with the information required for a potential change of use and legal advice has been provided on the appropriate procurement process.</p> <p>A meeting with the private landowners will be planned in the next couple of months, once designs and surveys have been completed.</p> <p>We currently have a capital budget allocation remaining of £250k for this project. However, this may need to be revisited due to the recent increases in industry market costs and required procurement approach. It has not been possible to quantify any potential increase in costs at this moment in time; however, this is currently being investigated and established as part of the consultant's brief.</p>
1.08	<p><u>Buckley Cemetery – utilisation of currently unsuitable land:</u> Capacity at Buckley cemetery is also at a critical stage with only four years of capacity remaining given current usage rates. Unfortunately, there is no option for extension at the current cemetery on Elfed Drive, Buckley due to the surrounding residential developments.</p> <p>However, within the existing cemetery there is an area of low-lying land that has yet to be utilised for burials, but ground investigations have found that the shallow water table in this area means that the area is very wet and heavily waterlogged in the winter months, which makes it unsuitable and dangerous for grave excavation.</p> <p>Further investigations have commenced for the installation of a system of below ground, sealed pre-cast concrete burial chambers or a system of interlocking composite chambers into this area. With this solution, the current low levels would be raised, and a system of paths constructed around the "chambers". The area in question would have the chambers installed "en-masse," which, depending on the final design, could have the potential to accommodate up to 100 grave spaces, giving a minimum of 15 years' additional capacity.</p> <p>By installing the chambers during the summer months, the previous risk of grave collapse (due to saturation) is greatly reduced, and the system of paths would allow each grave to be dug by machine located on the paths.</p> <p>An initial outline cost of approx. £180k has since been obtained, which would include ground level raising, retaining wall construction, installation of the chamber system, installation of footpaths and localised drainage connecting to an existing soakaway. This proposal would be a considerably cheaper option than the cost of establishing a new cemetery in the Buckley area (if suitable land could be identified).</p>
1.09	<p><u>Local Churchyards</u> All local churches have minimal capacity left within their churchyards, which is leading to a greater demand and increased burial rates within FCC's cemeteries. This is most evident in Buckley where Bistre Church now has only two grave spaces remaining. We have therefore seen an increased demand for reserved graves at Buckley as a direct consequence.</p>

	<p>This has led to a temporary hold on the pre-purchasing of grave spaces being put in place to ensure that we have sufficient burial space available until an extension is completed / approved at Buckley. Demand for burial space is generally increasing across the county with an increase of approximately 15% above the historic average being recorded over the last 3 years.</p>
1.10	<p>Whilst the existing approach very much focuses on traditional burial methods, we also have to be mindful of alternative solutions, which could assist with easing current pressures and constraints associated with the requirement for burial land. It is also worth exploring options that offer improved environmental benefits.</p>
1.11	<p>A motion was proposed to the Climate Change Committee on 25th January 2023 for the Council to consider alternatives to traditional burials and cremation, such as columbaria as an option for the deceased. A recommendation was made by the Climate Change Committee to Cabinet and the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee that the council should offer columbaria as an option for residents as part of its suite of bereavement and burial services. Additionally, the Committee recommended that the council explores the viability of offering other environmentally friendly burial options, such as resomation or natural/woodland burials, in the longer term.</p> <p>An overview of the various alternatives have therefore been referenced within this report for information.</p>
1.12	<p><u>Columbaria</u> Consideration could be given to the introduction of ‘Columbaria’ in Flintshire. Columbaria involves the above ground storage of cremated remains and would be best suited in areas where below ground interment may not be possible. Not only would this enable the use of previously unsuitable ground, it would also enable the prioritisation of suitable ground for traditional interments (full body). Ideally this could be considered as part of the increased capacity proposals for both Hawarden Cemetery (Flintshire’s main Cemetery) and Buckley cemetery. This would allow for potential demand to be understood before any further developments and financial commitment are made.</p>
1.13	<p><u>Resomation</u> Resomation could also be considered as an alternative to traditional cremation in Flintshire. Resomation is a process that utilises water rather than fire / gas and is often seen as a more environmentally friendly option to cremation due to the greatly reduced emission levels. The process is commonplace in the USA and, whilst a small number of local authorities in the UK have shown an interest in the process, the necessary permits and permission to run such an operation / facility in the UK are still a few years away.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the above, the council could place itself in the ideal position to consider the option in coming years, and continues to participate in the APSE Cemetery and Crematorium Network Group to remain current with industry developments. Whilst significant capital investment in the process would be required, it does have the potential to generate a revenue income stream in the longer term.</p>

1.14	<p>Natural Burial</p> <p>The process of a natural burial is more environmentally friendly than a traditional burial and only permits the use of ecologically friendly coffins and cut flowers with no plastic wrappings or packaging. In addition, memorials are not permitted on a natural burial grave; however, consideration is currently being given to sustainably-sourced wooden memorials.</p> <p>Flintshire currently has a natural burial area located within Kelsterton Cemetery. A small number of full body and cremated remains interments have already taken place within the area.</p> <p>Consideration could also be given to including a second natural burial area in the proposed Hawarden No. 2 extension (subject to progression of the land ownership discussions) along with increased promotion of the existing area.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	We currently have a capital budget allocation remaining of £250k for this project. However, this may need to be revisited due to the recent increases in industry market costs and required procurement approach. It has not been possible to quantify any potential increase in costs at this moment in time; however, this is currently being investigated and established as part of the consultant's brief.
2.02	Capital funding in the region of £130k is required for the implementation of the required works in Buckley cemetery to increase the capacity as outlined in this report, subject to receiving support for the proposal.
2.03	Should any of the alternative options be favoured, a varying degree of investment would be required to support the implementation of additional facilities.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	Given the current burial rates across the county, burial space is more than likely to be exhausted within the next 4 years at two of our main cemeteries. Should an agreed solution not be forthcoming, the impact would be that the Council will no longer be able to offer burial plots to Flintshire residents and future generations at these cemeteries, and residents would lose the option of affordable burial space. This could lead to a negative public perception should Flintshire run out of burial space and potential equalities impact, with residents unable to access the service or having to use privately owned cemeteries or cemeteries outside the area.
3.02	Extending the burial capacity at the council's cemeteries enables us to address the shortage of remaining burial space and is an opportunity to improve the quality of the bereavement services offered. It also aligns with the priorities in the Council Plan by delivering this service efficiently and maximising value for money for the tax payer. It would encourage more users to the cemetery and contribute to the council's priority of ensuring access to green spaces.

3.03	To ensure that the local authority is compliant with Article 4(1) of LACO 1977, which requires that a local authority keeps any cemetery that they are responsible for in good order, including buildings and infrastructure. Therefore most day-to-day operations would need to continue in order to complete horticultural and housekeeping duties, not to mention the health and safety functions for a public open space and so costs would not significantly reduce, despite a cemetery being closed in the future.
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4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
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4.01	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Regional Transport Strategy
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4.02	Consultation to be undertaken with the local elected members within the wards of Hawarden No. 2 cemetery and Buckley cemetery following the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee to provide them with an update on the issues and progress to date, along with the options for increasing capacity.
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5.00	APPENDICES
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5.01	None
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6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
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6.01	None
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7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
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7.01	Contact Officer: Anthony Stanford, Transportation Manager Telephone: 01352 E-mail: anthony.stanford@flintshire.gov.uk
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8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
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8.01	<p>(1) Columbarium: a columbarium is an above ground piece of funerary architecture, which is made up of individual chambers that house cremated remains</p> <p>(2) Resomation: a resomation is sometimes referred to as ‘water cremation’ or alkaline hydrolysis. It involves the use of water and alkali at high temperatures and pressure to chemically reduce the body to liquid and white ash. The resulting ash is returned to relatives in the same way as the process for flame cremation. The excess fluid created during the process can then be used as fertiliser because of the high nutrient content.</p> <p>(3) Natural Burial: a natural burial is a more environmentally friendly option to that of a traditional burial which only permits the use of ecologically friendly coffins, no memorials and the use of cut flowers with no plastic wrappings or packaging.</p>
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- (4) **Flintshire Funeral Service:** a proposal for the council to work in partnership with a designated local funeral director to offer local residents an affordable low cost funeral package.
- (5) **Flintshire Memorial Repair Service:** a proposal to upskill the council's sextons to allow them to undertake any required memorial repairs for which a fee could be charged when undertaken for external requests. This would greatly benefit the ongoing memorial safety programme and allow unsafe memorials to be addressed in-house. Currently these repairs are all undertaken by external contractors.
- (6) **Grave Maintenance Service:** a proposal for the council to undertake a service that attends to a grave upon request of a family member. Three different levels of service could be offered (Gold, Silver and Bronze) for which varying fees would apply. The scope of the proposed service would include regular headstone cleaning, keeping the grave area tidy, supply and placement of flowers on the grave on anniversaries / annual events (Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day etc.) with regular photos being sent to the family member upon completion of works. This service would be offered in addition to our ongoing grounds maintenance service and would be targeted mainly towards those people who were no longer able to visit family graves either due to location or reasons of incapacity.
- (7) **Genealogy Service:** as part of the council's new cemetery management system, we will have the option to show all our burial records online via a link hosted on the council's website. This would allow members of the public to undertake their own genealogy searches with a small fee being applied for this service.