

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
11 JULY 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Hybrid Meeting on Tuesday, 11th July, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor David Evans (Chair)

Councillors: Mel Buckley, Chris Dolphin, Ian Hodge, Richard Lloyd, Hilary McGuill, Mike Peers, Vicky Perfect, and Dan Rose,

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mike Allport, Chris Bithell (Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Protection) and David Healey (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy)

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillor Glyn Banks for Councillor Roy Wakelam

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Dave Hughes (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Regional Transport Strategy), Councillor Paul Johnson (Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities, including Social Value and Procurement, Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy), Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), Community Business and Protection Manager, Team Manager – Food Safety and Food Standards and Team Leader - Sites

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officers

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

17. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2023, were submitted.

The minutes were approved as an accurate record as moved by Councillor Ian Hodge and seconded by Councillor Dan Rose.

RESOLVED:

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

18. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING (E&E OSC)

The Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking report.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) advised that the items on Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transition Plan and Conversion of the FCC

Fleet to electric or alternative fuels were the same subject and it was agreed that a report on this would be submitted to the meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held on 10 October 2023.

Members were invited to raise any further items to include on the Programme.

The Facilitator referred to the Action Tracking report and advised that both outstanding actions had been completed.

In response to a question from Councillor Mike Peers regarding the setting up of a School Parking Task & Finish Group, the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) explained that once the membership of the Group was known meetings would be arranged as soon as possible.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That subject to the above amendment 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

19. FOOD SERVICE PLAN

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) introduced the report to present the Food Service Plan 2023/24 for consideration and endorsement. He provided background information and paid tribute to the work of the Food Safety and Food Standard Team during the Covid pandemic. The Chief Officer advised that the Food Service Plan provided an overview of the Food Service in line with The Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities April 2010. The Plan sets out the aims and objectives for the Service for the forthcoming year and how they were to be achieved.

The Community Business and Protection Manager presented the report and referred to the main considerations. The Team Manager – Food Safety and Food Standards reported on the key achievements for 2022/23 and the targets for 2023/24 as outlined in the report.

Councillor Mike Peers referred to page 20 of the report, targets for 2023/24 and page 59 and the number of programmed inspections for Food Hygiene and Food Standards in 2023/24 and commented that it would be helpful if the number of inspections to be undertaken in 2023/24 had been highlighted and details provided. He also referred to the key achievements for 2022/23 on page 20 and the bullet point 'A significant number of Feed inspections were achieved during a year that saw resource for Farm Feed inspections impacted by Avian Influenza virus' and said it did not use the word "All" as in other categories.

He asked if the targets for 2023/24 contributed to the backlog of work outstanding.

Councillor Peers referred to page 26 of the report, section 1.2, Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans, and asked how the Food Service Plan related to the priority area 'Affordable and Accessible Housing'.

The Community Business and Protection Manager responded to the comments and concerns raised by Councillor Peers and explained the links to the Council Plan 2023-28.

In response to the question raised by Councillor Peers around workload the Team Manager – Food Safety and Food Standards, referred to the data provided on page 62, appendix 3, and the number of food inspections programmed and achieved. She also provided explanation around resources and staffing allocation as detailed in Section 4 of the Plan. The Team Manager said that the work which was overdue was predominantly low risk and would be prioritised following risk assessment and local knowledge and was detailed in Appendix 2 of the Plan. In response to a further question from Councillor Peers she reported on how the risk categories would be prioritised and addressed. . The Community Business and Protection Manager and Team Manager gave reassurance and explanation concerning the ability and experience of the Service to deal with critical or emergency incidents.

In response to a question from Councillor Hilary McGuill the Community Business and Protection Manager advised that if a food business was taken over by a new proprietor it was their responsibility to ensure their staff were suitably trained to carry out the work. The Team Manager – Food Safety and Food Standards outlined the advice and support provided to new businesses. The Team Manager also responded to the further question raised by Councillor McGuill concerning the regulations and standards applicable to mobile fast food outlets.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Mike Peers and seconded by Councillor Ian Hodge.

RESOLVED:

That the Food Service Plan 2023-24 be endorsed.

20. ACCESS BARRIER REVIEW – WALES COAST PATH

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy), presented a report to inform on a recent review into access barriers along the Wales Coast Path (Chester to Deeside Section) and seek approval to implement the recommendations.

The Chief Officer provided background information and reported on the key considerations and proposed recommendations as detailed in the report. He advised that the Council appointed a consultant to undertake a review of the existing access control measures on a section of the Wales Coast Path (WCP) between Chester and Queensferry. The access control barriers are in place to

protect users of the WCP against the risks posed by illegal vehicle access to the path, however, the existing barriers can cause access issues to users of some mobility scooters and unconventional cycles. The study reviews the background context, legislations, barrier dimensions and user constraints, in order to put forward recommendations for all 14 access points from Chester to Deeside. The recommendations to improve access are balanced against any impact of such amendments on illegal vehicle accessibility.

Officers responded to the comments and concerns raised by Councillor Richard Lloyd around access barriers, disabled access, mobility scooters, electric scooters, radar keys, and illegal and anti-social use.

Councillor Glyn Banks also raised concerns about intimidating and anti-social behaviour by some users/groups in the Talacre area which spoilt enjoyment of the coastal path for others.

Councillor Mike Peers recommended that the Council engaged with the user groups referred to in the Review report. He also asked if there was liaison with other local authorities to learn how they addressed problematic matters. The Team Leader – Sites explained there were close links with other North Wales Authorities as part of the North Wales Coastal Path. She reported that Natural Resources Wales had overall responsibility for the Coastal Path and was working to improve the footpath for people with mobility issues. Natural Resources Wales was supportive of the recommendations in the Review report to improve accessibility.

Councillor Dan Rose expressed concerns around the purpose and operation of radar keys which he said could be prohibitive for some users. He felt that the use of A frames and the idea of people with disabilities having to open and close a gate each time could be problematic. He said there was a risk of people leaving gates open with radar keys and felt it was important to undertake a pilot to assess the implications going forward. He suggested that a temporary solution to problems that unexpectedly arose could be that a gate be temporarily closed (for example overnight). Councillor Rose asked if data could be provided on the number of paths that didn't allow disabled access.

The Team Leader – Sites responded to the concerns raised by Councillor Rose on use of radar keys and said she would provide information on the number of paths that don't allow disabled access in Flintshire.

Councillor Paul Johnson referred to the type of kissing gate used at Chatsworth House Estate in Derbyshire which might offer access to wheelchairs and mobile scooters and could be worth consideration.

Councillor Ian Hodge asked if consideration had been given to the surface of the Path and what measures could be used to deter speed. The Team Leader – Sites explained that in other areas which did not have mobility access, changes to the path surface had been made but had not been considered in Flintshire to date.

Councillor Richard Lloyd commented on whether consultation had taken place with Cheshire West Council. He spoke in support of the suggestion by

Councillor Mike Peers that further consultation should take place with user groups.

Councillor Mike Peers proposed that the recommendation in the report be amended as follows: That the Committee notes the findings of the Wales Coast Path Barrier Review and supports, in principle, the recommendations for improved accessibility, as detailed in the report, subject to consultation with the user groups, and a further report on the outcome be submitted to the Committee. Councillor Richard Lloyd seconded the proposal and when put to the vote this was carried.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes the findings of the Wales Coast Path Barrier Review and supports, in principle, the recommendations for improved accessibility as detailed in the report subject to consultation with, the user groups, and
- (b) That a further report on the outcome of the consultation exercise be submitted to the Committee.

21. END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced the report to review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan. She advised that the Council Plan 2022/23 was adopted by the Council in July 2022. The report presented a summary of performance of progress against the Council Plan priorities identified for 2022/23 at year end (Q4) position relevant to the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Chief Officer advised that the out-turn report for the Council Plan 2022/23 showed 78% of activities were making good progress; 61% of the performance indicators had met or exceeded their targets; 11% were being closely monitored, and 25% were currently not meeting target. The report was an exception-based report and concentrated on those areas of performance which were not currently achieving target.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) reported on the activities which showed a red (RAG) status for current performance against target relevant to the Streetscene and Transportation Services as detailed in section 1.05 of the report, Priority - Green Society and Environment, sub-priority - Circular Economy.

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) reported on the activities which showed a red (RAG) status for current performance against target relevant to Planning, Environment and Economy as detailed in section 1.05 of the report, Priority - Economy, sub-priority - Business.

The Chief Officer also reported on the performance indicators (PIs)/measures which showed a red (RAG) status for performance against the target set for 2022/23, relevant to Planning, Environment and Economy as

detailed in section 1.08 of the report. He referred to the Priority - Green Society and Environment, sub priority - Carbon Neutrality/Renewable Energy and the Priority- Economy, sub-priority - Reducing Worklessness.

Councillor Mike Peers referred to the target for recycling and asked if there were any penalties if targets were not met. He also referred to the Standard Yard Waste and Recycling Transfer Station which was being used as storage for gritting lorries and asked if the Council had an operating licence to store the vehicles at the site.

Councillor Peers raised questions on the following:

- Page 155: sub priority - Business - Supporting small and/or local businesses to engage with public sector procurement opportunities. Councillor Peers said there was no explanation as to why the opportunities to deliver supply chain events did not present themselves during 2022/23.
- page 172: Delivering the Rights of Way Improvement Plan with a focus to ensure improved access for all and the promotion of walking for health – 100% completed. Councillor Peers asked if all paths and maintenance were included and there was no restrictions.
- page 176: developing the County's electric car charging network. Councillor Peers asked what was the future plan for Flintshire.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) responded to the comments and questions raised by Councillor Peers and gave an update on the current position regarding recycling performance, achieving the statutory targets and outturn, the Standard Yard Waste and Recycling Transfer Station and storage of gritting lorries, and electric vehicle charging.

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) responded to the questions raised by Councillor Peers on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and explained that the programme of work for 2022/23 for the improvement of paths had been 100% achieved. The Chief Officer also provided further information in response to the question concerning engagement of capital projects.

Councillor Glyn Banks expressed concerns around underperformance on the achievement of Welsh Government recycling targets and said he felt more progress could be made on the following services: AHP collections to reduce the waste being sent to Parc Adfer, enforcement and food waste in the bins, awareness raising in schools regarding recycling, and extending brown bin collections to 12 months.

Councillor Mike Peers proposed that the recommendation in the report be amended as follows: That the Committee noted the levels of progress within the Council Plan 2022/23 instead of supported and that the Committee noted the overall performance against Council Plan 2022/23 performance indicators/measures. Councillor Peers also requested that a third recommendation be included to note the explanations given for those areas of underperformance. The amended recommendations were moved by Councillor Mike Peers and seconded by Councillor Ian Hodge.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the levels of progress as detailed within the Council Plan 2022/23 be noted;
- (b) That the overall performance against Council Plan 2022/23 performance indicators/measures be noted; and
- (c) That the explanations given for those areas of underperformance be noted.

22. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

(The meeting started at 10.00 a.m and ended at 11.32 a.m)

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Chairman