

CABINET
25TH APRIL 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of Flintshire County Council held virtually via Zoom on Tuesday 25th April 2023.

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Roberts (Chair)

Councillors: Sean Bibby, Dave Healey, Dave Hughes, Paul Johnson, Christine Jones and Billy Mullin.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy), Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Corporate Finance Manager, Corporate Manager – Capital Programme and Assets, Corporate Manager, People and Organisational Development, Housing and Prevention Service Manager, and Team Leader – Democratic Services.

APOLOGY: Councillor Chris Bithell

151. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Bibby, Healey, Jones and Mullin declared personal interests in agenda item number 11 – Parking Outside Schools and Enforcement.
Councillors Jones and Roberts declared personal interests in agenda item number 12 – Universal Primary Free School Meals.

152. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2023 were submitted and confirmed as a correct record.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting be approved as a correct record.

153. COUNCIL PLAN 2023-28 DEVELOPMENT

Councillor Roberts introduced the report and explained that the Council Plan for 2023-28 had been reviewed and refreshed to reflect the key priorities of the Council for the five-year term of the new administration.

The 'super-structure' of the Plan comprised of seven priorities and relevant sub-priorities. The seven priorities took a long-term view of recovery, projects and ambitions over the next five years. Details of each priority were outlined.

The Council plan would be published in a similar format to previous years, identifying actions aimed at achieving the Well-being objectives, priorities and sub-priorities. National and regional issues/risks which could impact on the achievement of those priorities would be identified and monitored.

The Chief Executive explained that Part 2 of the Council Plan had been considered by the respective Overview and Scrutiny Committees, except for Social and Health Care, to ensure full coverage of Part 1 of the Council Plan 2023-28 and its respective measures and their targets. Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported the Plan and made a number of observations. The Plan would be submitted to County Council in June.

Councillor Healey complimented the officers on the compilation of the Plan which he said was a visionary document which demonstrated the breadth of activities undertaken by the Council.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Council Plan 2023-28 Part 1 and Part 2 documents that outline the actions, measures and risks that underpin the Priorities, Sub-Priorities and Well-being objectives of the Council Plan 2023-28 be agreed; and
- (b) That the Chief Executive be given authority, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure, to amend the Council Plan to reflect comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

154. CORPORATE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2021-22

Councillor Roberts introduced the report and explained that the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021 set out a duty to report on performance and stated 'A Council must produce a self-assessment report in respect of each financial year. The report must set out its conclusions on the extent to which it met the performance requirements during that year, and any actions it intends to take, or has already taken, to increase the extent to which it is meeting the performance requirements.'

A three-stage process had been developed:

Stage one – 'desk-based' analysis and evaluation.

Stage two – opinion sourcing, consultation and engagement.

Stage three – final published assessment and improvement plan.

As an organisation, the results of the Corporate Self-Assessment had identified that there was good evidence of performance against the assessment, scoring between good and best practice in 79% of the questions asked. In 15% of the questions, it was identified that there was good / more evidence required and in 6% there was a need for further action.

The theme / question scored as 'very best practice' identified in the Self-Assessment related to **Theme F – Partnership Working**. Two themes / questions scored as 'having evidence but further action needed' related to **Theme B – Resource Planning and Management** and **Theme G – Customer and Community Engagement**.

The Chief Executive said there would be consultation with the workforce, trade unions and Members on the document and the three themes outlined

above would be revisited. The Chief Officer (Governance) added that a Member workshop was being arranged for Members of Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet as the document was reported to each of those Committees.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the findings of the Corporate Self-Assessment 2021/22 be accepted and approved; and
- (b) That the opportunities for improvement identified in the Corporate Self-Assessment 2021/22 be supported and approved.

155. 2022/23 IN-YEAR BUDGET MANAGEMENT – BUDGET MONITORING REPORT
MONTH 11

Councillor Johnson introduced the report which provided the latest detailed overview of the budget monitoring position for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account for the financial year 2022/23 and presented the position, based on actual income and expenditure as at Month 11.

Council Fund

- An operating surplus of (£2.106m) (excluding the impact of the pay award which had been met by reserves), which was a favourable movement of (£1.413m) from the figure of (£0.693m) reported at Month 10
- A projected contingency reserve available balance as at 31st March 2023 of £8.364m

Housing Revenue Account

- Net in-year revenue expenditure forecast to be £2.839m higher than budget
- A projected closing balance as at 31st March 2023 of £3.635m

The Council had continued to claim payments totalling £4.8m in 2022/23 for Self-isolation and Statutory Sick Pay Enhancement, along with Free School Meals direct payments and Winter Fuel Payments within their eligible periods.

The Corporate Finance Manager added that the closure of accounts for 2022/23 was under way and would be reported to Cabinet in July. He also provided details on the positive movements which were detailed in the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report and the estimated financial impact on the 2022/23 budget be noted; and
- (b) The carry forward requests be approved.

156. DELIVERING PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE 21ST CENTURY, AN OVERVIEW

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and said at its meeting in July 2022, Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested a future agenda item to explore the financial benefits of outsourcing and shared services.

Outsourcing and shared services were just two models of alternative delivery of services. To provide a holistic overview, the report provided a summary of a wider selection of alternative delivery models which were detailed by Councillor Johnson.

The report also highlighted the need to consider broader core principles, and surrounding legislative requirements, when reviewing any service with consideration for a potential change in delivery model.

The Chief Officer (Governance) provided details of where alternative delivery models had been used, citing NEWydd and Community Asset Transfers. The report had been submitted to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee where it was positively received.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the different models that can be used as alternatives to deliver services be noted;
- (b) That the wider factors, such as legislative parameters and core principles, which need to be observed when considering the delivery of services through alternative delivery models be recognised; and
- (c) Cabinet be assured that the Council considers all appropriate alternative delivery models, and the benefits and limitations of these, as part of a broader options appraisal when reviewing services.

157. HYNET CARBON CAPTURE PROJECT; THE COUNCIL'S LOCAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE PROPOSED CROSS COUNTRY CARBON DIOXIDE PIPELINE AND CONTINUED MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) introduced the report and explained that Liverpool Bay CCS Limited was proposing to construct and install a new carbon dioxide pipeline between Ince, near Stanlow, and Flint, and repurpose an existing natural gas pipeline between Flint and Talace. The project was known as HyNet North West Carbon Dioxide Pipeline and was considered to be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

The consenting process was different for an NSIP and an application had been made under the Planning Act 2008 for a permission known as a Development Consent Order (DCO).

The application to construct and operate the proposed Carbon Dioxide Pipeline had been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (England) who would administer the DCO application on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

The examination of the NSIP proposal commenced on 20th March 2023. Part of the Local Authority's role to inform the decision making process was to produce a Local Impact Report to assist the Examining Authority to make a recommendation to the Minister.

The report sought approval of the content of the Council's draft Local Impact Report which was appended to the report.

Appended to the report was the local impact report and a map of where the pipeline would be.

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) and Councillor Roberts thanked the Minerals and Waste Planning Manager for all of her work undertaken on the project and they welcomed the community benefit element.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the draft Local Impact Report be approved; and
- (b) That any addendum to the Council's Local Impact Report that may be required be delegated to the Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection.

158. NORTH WALES ENERGY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN AND LOCAL AREA ENERGY PLAN

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) introduced the report which provided information on the regional energy planning process and incorporating priorities into strategic actions and interventions.

It recommended endorsement of the North Wales Energy Strategy and Action Plan and provided information on the commencement of Local Area Energy Planning in Flintshire.

The report was submitted to Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week where it was supported.

Development of the Local Area Energy Plan would be submitted to the Climate Change Committee and then to Cabinet.

Members welcomed the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the North Wales Energy Strategy and Action Plan be endorsed; and
- (b) That the commencement of Local Area Energy Planning in the county be noted.

159. PLANNING FOR DARK NIGHT SKIES SPG

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) introduced the report and explained that Flintshire, along with Wrexham and Denbighshire Councils, had previously jointly produced and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance relating to design and development within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Following that, further joint guidance had been produced dealing with the specific issue of lighting and light pollution within the AONB, whose aim was to reduce the level of it in order to assist in securing dark skies status for the AONB.

The guidance had been through public consultation in all three Council areas and had been considered by the Planning Strategy Group who recommended its adoption by Cabinet. Denbighshire and Wrexham Councils had already formally adopted the guidance and to give it maximum weight as a material planning consideration, adoption was being sought by Cabinet.

Councillors Healey and Johnson welcomed the report, noting that it had been adopted by Denbighshire and Wrexham Councils.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendation of the Planning Strategy Group to formally adopt the Supplementary Planning Guidance Note Planning for Dark Night Skies be endorsed.

160. PARKING OUTSIDE SCHOOLS AND ENFORCEMENT

Councillor Roberts introduced the report which provided an overview of the problems currently being experienced within the vicinity of the county's schools, whilst also outlining the roles and responsibilities of all parties concerned with a view to seeking a collaborative approach and effective solution.

At the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23rd March 2023, it was resolved that a joint Task and Finish Group should be established, which would involve elected Members from the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees, officers from both the Education and Youth and Streetscene and Transportation portfolios, the Police and Head Teachers to explore the issues in further detail and develop a collaborative and preventative approach with key stakeholders. The Task and Finish Group would report to each Overview and Scrutiny Committee in turn. Cabinet approval was therefore sought to support the creation of the group.

He thanked Members of both Committees for the high level discussion that had taken place and not referring to individual schools within wards. On representation of the Task and Finish Group, he said there needed to be Member representation from both urban and rural communities, in addition to being politically balanced.

He said there was a requirement to adhere to the Highway Code as the most important thing was the safety of children attending schools.

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) added that it was a big issue for headteachers across the county who undertook work with pupils on keeping safe and regular reminders were sent to parents as part of regular communications. It was important to have head teacher representation on the Task and Finish Group and she appealed to all parents to drive and park responsibly.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) said there was no single solution to address the problems which were complex and would require a collaborative approach. The Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group were currently being drafted and would be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In response to a question from Councillor Roberts, the Chief Officer (Education and Youth) said there was a Flintshire Governors Association which provided representatives for other bodies so she would make enquiries.

Councillor Bibby supported the establishment of a Joint Task and Finish Group including the involvement of all of the stakeholders referred to above.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the historical issues associated with parking within the vicinity of schools be noted, and the responsibility of highway users in accordance with the requirements of the Highway Code be recognised;
- (b) That the hierarchy of responsibility in relation to the management of traffic within the vicinity of schools be noted and the role of enforcement as a reactive measure rather than a means to prevent initial occurrence be acknowledged;
- (c) That the creation of a joint Task and Finish Group, which will involve elected Members from the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees, officers from both the Education and Youth and Streetscene and Transportation portfolios, the Police and Head Teachers to explore the issues in further detail and develop a collaborative and preventative approach with key stakeholders, be supported.

161. UNIVERSAL PRIMARY FREE SCHOOL MEALS (UPFSM)

Councillor Roberts introduced the report and explained that Welsh Government (WG) and Plaid Cymru had made a commitment to ensure all primary school aged children could access a free school meal by 2024.

Implementation of universal primary free school meals (UPFSM) would be phased. The first rollout in Flintshire commenced in September 2022 to Reception aged children, the second phase would commence in April 2023 to children in Years 1 and 2.

A significant amount of work had been completed and would continue into 2023 to ensure the infrastructure, equipment, resource and processes were in place to enable full implementation of UPFSM.

The report provided a progress update on local implementation of UPFSM.

Councillor Roberts thanked everybody involved in the preparation preparing for the implementation of this scheme, including head teachers and staff in schools to ensure they could facilitate the rollout. The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) paid tribute to colleagues across several portfolios for their work on the rollout. She stressed the importance of families who were entitled to free school meals still needing to apply for them as those numbers were key indicators for schools and the provision of funding.

Councillor Healey welcomed the scheme, particularly during the cost of living crisis and reinforced the message from the Chief Officer about eligible families continuing to apply for free school meals.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the progress made to date on implementation of UPFSM be noted; and
- (b) That the resource implications and risks identified in relation to UPFSM be noted.

162. HOUSING REGENERATION GRANTS AND LOANS POLICY

Councillor Healey introduced the report and explained that the Housing Regeneration Team role had shifted over the years since its creation as funding had become more focussed on carbon reduction in housing and less on wider measures to improve housing conditions in the private sector.

The report provided an update on the work of the team, set out a series of recommended priorities for the team to focus on in the future, and proposed that the now outdated Private Sector Grants and Loans Policy be replaced with a simple schedule of grants and loans available to householders in Flintshire.

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) added that the report had been submitted to Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week where its findings and content were supported. A comment was made on the need for a communication to residents to inform them on how the funds could be accessed. A separate report on loans, including town centre loans, would be submitted to Cabinet in May.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the update on the work of the Housing Regeneration Team be noted and that the future priorities for the service be approved; and
- (b) That the grants and loans schedule be approved, and that delegated authority be given to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Countryside and the Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) to vary the schedule as funding availability or requirements change.

163. HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER UPDATE REPORT

Councillor Bibby introduced the report and explained that homelessness was a statutory service that continued to be under significant pressure post pandemic and the further challenges related to the cost-of-living crisis and housing crisis.

The need to offer accommodation and support to everyone who was homeless and at risk of rough sleeping during the pandemic was challenging. It had, however, provided a unique window of opportunity to engage with a high number of people who historically would not have received the same level of support and may not have achieved positive wellbeing or housing outcomes.

The Housing and Prevention Service Manager said the local private sector housing market was seeing significant challenges with fewer properties available each year and many landlords leaving the market. That created homelessness as properties were sold, residents asked to leave and the availability of fewer properties resulting in them being increasingly unaffordable.

Changes to the Housing Wales Act 2014 and the introduction of an eleventh category of Priority Need for rough sleeping and those at risk of sleeping rough, saw a sustainment of the “no one left out” approach adopted during the pandemic and now firmly established the principle on a legal footing as a standard practice in Wales.

As a result, more people will be owed accommodation duties significantly increasing demands and cost on already stretched homeless accommodation.

Councillor Jones thanked the Housing and Prevention Service Manager and his team for acting proactively in dealing with homelessness in difficult circumstances which was concurred by Councillors Roberts and Bibby.

RESOLVED:

That the update report be noted and the work being undertaken by the Housing and Prevention Service continue to be supported.

164. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS

An information item on the actions taken under delegated powers was submitted. The actions were as set out below:-

Streetscene and Transportation

- **A5119 Northop Road, Maes Hyfred, Third Avenue, Fourth Avenue and Fifth Avenue, Flint. Proposed Prohibition of Waiting and Waiting at any Time Restrictions**
To advise Members of the objections received following the advertisement of the proposed Prohibition of Waiting and Waiting at any Time on the roads listed above.
- **The Flintshire County Council (Kiln Lane, Hope) (Prohibition of Driving) (Except for Access) Order 2023**

To advise Members of the objection received following the advertisement of the proposed Prohibition of Driving – Except for Access on Kiln Lane, Hope.

- **Ffordd Yr Ysgol, Deansbury Close, Shaftsbury Drive and Windsor Drive, Flint. Proposed Prohibition of Waiting Order**
To advise Members of the objections received following the advertisement of the proposed Prohibition of Waiting Order on the roads listed above.
- **Proposal to Implement no Stopping on School Keep Clear Carriageway Markings at Ysgol Maes Hyfred and Flint High School, Flint**
To advise Members of the objections received following the advertisement of the proposed School Keep Clear markings on Maes Hyfred, Flint.
- **The Flintshire County Council – Ffordd Llewelyn, Flint. Proposed Prohibition of Waiting**
To advise Members of the unresolved matter received following the advertisement of the proposed Prohibition of Waiting at any Time on the road listed above.

Revenues

- **Business Rate Write Offs**
Financial Procedure Rules requires the Corporate Finance Manager and the Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources to write off debts between £10k and £25k.

Two outstanding Business Rates debts totalling £34,762 are considered irrecoverable and write offs are necessary.

Governance

- **Review of Non-statutory Registration Fees**
The Council manages the Registration Service which has several statutory functions including the registration of births, deaths, civil marriages and civil partnerships. The service is based at Llwynegryn Hall, Mold and has custody of archived records from which copy certificates are issued. The service also licences venues for civil ceremonies across the County and conducts a variety of non-statutory celebratory services. The fees relating to statutory services are prescribed by statute and cannot exceed the cost of providing the service. However, the Council has scope to set fees for non-statutory services.

The nature of the Registration Service means some services such as marriage are booked up to 24 months in advance and consequently non-statutory fees need to be set in advance to allow couples to plan. A fundamental review of fees was undertaken when the Council introduced its “Fees and Charges Cost Recovery Template” and new fees were implemented on 1st April 2021, for three years.

Each year the fees are reviewed to ensure the service always publishes a three year set of fees. This report sets the fees for 2025/26 to ensure the Registration Service continues to publish three years fees.

Social Services

- **Social Care Case Management System**

The contract for the existing Social Care Case Management System is due to end on 31st March 2025 and therefore procurement of a Social Care Case Management System is required.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 – TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting for the following items by virtue of exempt information under paragraph(s) 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

165. NEWYDD BUSINESS PLAN 2023/24

Councillor Mullin introduced the report and explained that in October 2021 Cabinet agreed to extend the Services Concession Agreement with NEWydd from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2024.

The Corporate Manager – Capital Programme and Assets said in line with that arrangement NEWydd were required to produce an annual Business Plan, to include financial budgeting and forecasting.

The Business Plan was appended to the report and provided a summary of the key elements of the Business Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the strategic risks facing the business be noted and the Business Plan 2023/24, which includes the mitigation of the risks identified, be endorsed.

166. THEATR CLWYD BUSINESS PLAN

Councillor Roberts introduced the report which consisted of Theatr Clwyd's Business Plan 2023-29 and Companies House trading accounts for Theatr Clwyd Trusts first full year of trading.

Theatr Clwyd's Executive Director said comments made at the Education, Youth and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been included in the revised Business Plan where the report had been positively received. An updated Business Plan was available and would be sent to Cabinet following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That authority to approve the updated Theatr Clwyd Business Plan 2023-29 be delegated to the Corporate Manager – Capital Programme and Assets in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure following receipt of the updated Business Plan.

167. COMMISSIONING / RE-TENDERING HOUSING SUPPORT GRANT FUNDED DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES

Councillor Bibby introduced the report which provided an overview of the current domestic abuse provision in Flintshire funded by the Housing Support Grant (HSG) and the changes the Housing Support Team were proposing to make.

RESOLVED:

That the commissioning / re-tendering of Flintshire's Domestic Abuse Services funded by the Housing Support Grant be approved.

168. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the public in attendance.

(The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and ended at 11.53 a.m.)

.....

Chair