

**CABINET**  
**20<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023**

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of Flintshire County Council held virtually via Zoom on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

**PRESENT: Councillor Ian Roberts (Chair)**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Corporate Finance Manager, Corporate Manager – Capital Programme and Assets, Corporate Manager, People and Organisational Development, Senior Manager, Integrated Services and Adults Lead, Strategic Finance Manager – Housing and Assets, Benefits Manager, Service Manager – Housing Assets, Senior Manager – Business Change and Support, Policy Development Officer – Equalities, and Team Leader – Democratic Services.

**APOLOGIES:**

Councillors: Chris Bithell and Dave Healey.

**OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Councillor Bernie Attridge.

**10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Roberts declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item number 9 – Exercise of Delegated Powers.

**11. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023 were submitted and confirmed as a correct record.

**RESOLVED:**

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

**12. WELSH LANGUAGE ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2022/23**

Councillor Eastwood introduced the report and explained that the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 enabled the Welsh Ministers to specify standards for the Welsh language. The aims of the Standards were to:

- Improve the services Welsh speakers could expect to receive from organisations in Welsh;
- Increase the use people made of Welsh language services;
- Make it clear to organisations what they needed to do in terms of the Welsh language; and
- Ensure that there was an appropriate degree of consistency of the duties placed on bodies in the same sectors.

The report presented the Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report 2022/23 and provided an overview of the Council's progress in complying with the Welsh language standards and identifying areas for further progress and improvement.

The Policy Development Officer – Equalities added that the Council was required to adhere to Welsh language standards, as set out in a Compliance Notice that was served on the Council in 2015. The Notice placed a statutory duty on the Council to publish an annual report that set out how it had met the Welsh language standards.

Details of the complaints received were outlined in the report.

Although there were positive areas of progress, some issues remained as areas in which to progress and improve. Given the challenges recruiting to vacant posts, and filling Welsh essential posts, key areas for improvement included:

- Developing employees' Welsh language skills, particularly those in public facing posts, to support services to be delivered bilingually
- Supporting employees to use Welsh, naturally, in the workplace, to increase the audibility of the language and opportunities to use Welsh

Next steps were outlined as the Council aiming to:

- Increase the number of employees who speak Welsh (this was an action in the Council Plan 2023-28)
- Introduce initiatives to encourage the use of Welsh at work
- Continue completing self-assessments against the Welsh language standards to ensure services were complying

Councillor Roberts thanked the Chief Executive for his leadership in the promotion of the Welsh language. He advised that courses were available to Members as well as staff who wished to learn the Welsh language.

The Chief Executive concurred with the view that using Welsh phrases regularly in the workplace helped to build confidence in the use of the language.

### **RESOLVED:**

That Cabinet be assured of the Council's compliance with the Welsh Language Standards and supports the areas for further progress and improvement.

## **13. SOCIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

Councillor Jones introduced the report and explained that the Statutory Director of Social Services was required to produce an annual report summarising their view of the local authority's social care functions and priorities for improvement as legislated in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Regulations and Inspections Act (Wales) 2015.

The purpose of the annual report was to set out the improvement journey and evaluate Social Services' performance in providing services to people that promoted their wellbeing and supported them to achieve their personal outcomes.

Janet Bellis – very proud of the report and promote the voice of vulnerable people in Flintshire. Proud of Project Search. Active discharge from hospital and work closely with partners in health. Use this report to ensure we build on our successes and continue to listen to the people of Flintshire and respond accordingly.

Councillor Roberts thanked the Chief Officer for all of the excellent work that was undertaken throughout Social Services and said that the contribution from staff at all levels to make the service a success was valued.

**RESOLVED:**

That the draft report, which includes the key developments of the past year and priorities for 2023/24 be approved.

**14. FLINTSHIRE CONNECTS ANNUAL REPORT**

Councillor Mullin introduced the report and explained that it provided an overview of the annual performance of Flintshire Connects, the service responsible for providing face to face and digital access to Council services during the financial year 2022/23.

As part of the Council's business planning process, Flintshire Connects completed a review of vacancies in 2022/23 which led to a £60,000 efficiency at the same time avoiding any redundancies. The report described the impact of that saving on the service.

The Chief Officer (Governance) explained that as with many services Flintshire Connects had faced significant staffing challenges over the last twelve months. With vacancies running at over 50% at times, the service could not continue to operate full time hours across all five Centres.

In October 2022, Buckley and Mold Connects Centres reduced their opening hours on a temporary basis, alternating days between the two Centres. In February the decision to retain the changes on a permanent basis was made as part of the annual budget process.

Connah's Quay and Flint Connects Centres experienced intermittent disruption to opening hours towards the end of 2022 before the opening hours were temporarily reduced in January 2023.

Recruitment had been challenging but as the service moved in to 2023/24, vacancies were filled and training and development for new staff was being undertaken to ensure Connah's Quay and Flint reverted to full-time hours as soon as possible.

Councillor Roberts welcomed the additional opening hours and thanked the staff in the Connects Centres who provided invaluable support to residents.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Flintshire Connects annual performance 2022/23 be noted;
- (b) That the historic change to opening hours in Buckley and Mold resulting in part-time opening hours at both centres be noted;
- (c) That an increase to opening hours at Buckley Connects Centre (one additional day) to give parity with Mold, be approved, which would take effect when all new employees are training; and
- (d) That the priorities for the service be supported.

**15. COMMUNAL HEATING CHARGES 2023/24**

Councillor Bibby introduced the report and explained that the Housing and Communities portfolio operated eight communal heating schemes within Flintshire, with 417 properties on communal heating systems. The Council had recently renegotiated the fuel tariff to be charged for 2023/24 as the previous contracted ended in March 2023.

The rate changeable for gas was increasing by approximately 420% for the next 12 months. To date, communal tenants had benefitted from the Council's Industrial and Commercial Contract rate and had been protected from the energy price increases which other social tenants had been impacted by. However, the increase in the tariff would now also impact on those tenants who lived in the properties on the communal heating systems. When notifying tenants of their communal heating charges for 2022/23 notice was given of the likely increase in charges in 2023/24 to reflect global energy costs.

New communal heating charges were based on the prior year's energy use which ensured an accurate assessment of costs and impacted on the heating reserve account. In order to recover the projected heating charges in full, the Council needed to increase communal heating charges in line with tariff increases.

The Strategic Finance Manager – Housing and Assets said that the proposed recharges for 2023/24 were set out in the report and were effective from July. Any delay in implementing the charges would mean that the cost to tenants would need to be recovered in a shorter period of time which would be a detriment to those tenants as the weekly charge would be higher. Support would be continued for those tenants who were eligible to apply for assistance.

Councillor Bibby provided details of the discussion that had taken place at Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week where the Committee requested that the proposed increases be spread over a longer period of time. However, he explained that if that was to be implemented, there would be financial implications attached to it. Officers did commit to undertake a piece of work to establish if the significant increases could be

mitigated. That work had been undertaken and there was no scope to spread the costs over a longer period of time.

**RESOLVED:**

That the proposed changes to the current heating charges at Council properties with communal heating schemes, as outlined in the report, be approved.

**16. APPOINTMENT OF LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNORS IN SCHOOLS**

Councillor Eastwood introduced the report and explained that Current council policy provided that the Elected Member(s) of the electoral Ward where a school was located could nominate a person(s) to be a Local Authority (LA) Governor. The policy, however, only provided for nomination. The statutory duty to accept or decline the nomination was a decision of the governing body.

The Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2005 (the Regulations) prescribed how 'stakeholder' groups were elected or appointed to governing bodies and provided the discretion for a local authority to determine its own process for confirming LA governors to its governing bodies.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure and the Chief Officer (Education and Youth) subsequently authorised the appointments through the Council's delegated powers having first been assured that the eligibility criteria to be a governor under the regulations had been met.

A summary of the revisions was:

1. That the current procedure which required elected Members to find and nominate persons to LA governor positions is removed
2. That it be replaced with an automatic consideration for that Elected Member to be nominated as an LA Governor to a vacancy in a school in their Ward should they wish (subject to the regulatory requirement that no governor could be a governor at more than two schools and subject to acceptance by the Governing Body)
3. That in all other positions the Governing Body be asked to nominate to their LA governor positions based on their own identified skills and experience needs in membership. This nomination can include elected Members (subject to the regulatory requirement that no governor can be a governor at more than two schools)
4. That Governing Bodies must duly notify the Chief Officer (Education and Youth) of their candidates as approved by the Governing Body.
5. That the Chief Officer (Education and Youth) under delegated powers, duly confirms the appointment subject to the regulatory checks on the eligibility criteria to be a governor.

**RESOLVED:**

That the proposed revisions be approved.

**17. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS**

Having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item, Councillor Roberts was moved into the virtual waiting room. At this point in the meeting, the Deputy Leader, Councillor Hughes, chaired the meeting.

Councillor Hughes moved deferral of the item which was seconded by Councillor Jones, and carried.

**RESOLVED:**

That the delegated power listed below be deferred.

**Streetscene and Transportation**

- **Prince of Wales Avenue, Park Avenue, St Catherine's Close and Allt Goch, Flint – Proposed Prohibition of Waiting and Waiting at Any Time Restrictions**

To advise Members of the unresolved matters received following the advertisement of the proposed Prohibition of Waiting at Any Time on the roads listed above.

**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).

**18. COMMERCIAL RENT WRITE OFF**

Councillor Mullin introduced the report and explained for individual debts of more than £25,000, Financial Procedure Rules required Cabinet approval to write off the debt.

**RESOLVED:**

That the write off of the Commercial Rent circa £56,000 be approved.

**19. 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 11.04 a.m.)

.....  
**Chair**