

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
12 SEPTEMBER 2024

Minutes of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Thursday, 12 September 2024

PRESENT: **Councillor Richard Jones (Chair)**
Councillors: Tina Claydon, David Coggins Cogan, Bill Crease,
Gladys Healey, Ian Hodge, Alasdair Ibbotson,
Gina Maddison, Allan Marshall, Billy Mullin, Vicky Perfect
and Rob Davies (substitute for Jason Shallcross)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor: Bernie Attridge, David Healey, Dennis
Hutchinson, Andrew Parkhurst and Sam Swash attended as
observers

APOLOGIES: Councillor Dave Hughes (Deputy Leader and Cabinet
Member for Streetscene & Transportation), Chief Executive
and Corporate Manager - Capital Programme and Assets

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Christine Jones (Deputy Leader and Cabinet
Member for Social Services and Well-being), Councillor Paul
Johnson (Cabinet Member for Finance and Social Value and
Procurement), Councillor Linda Thomas (Cabinet Member
for Corporate Services), Chief Officer (Governance),
Corporate Finance Manager and Corporate Manager -
People and Organisational Development

Strategic Executive Officer for minute nos. 33-35
Andrea Powell from Community Foundation in Wales for
minute no. 35
Senior Manager (Safeguarding and Commissioning) and
Continuing Health Care Co-ordinator for minute no. 36
Revenues & Procurement Manager for minute no. 38
Strategic Finance Managers for minute no. 39
Internal Audit, Performance & Risk Manager and Strategic
Performance Advisor for minute nos. 40-42
Customer Contact Service Manager for minute no. 43

IN ATTENDANCE: Democratic Services Manager and team

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None.

29. MINUTES ([Link to recording](#))

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on [13 June 2024](#), [19 July 2024](#) and
[7 August 2024](#) be approved as a correct record.

30. ACTION TRACKING ([Link to recording](#))

The Democratic Services Manager presented a [report](#) on progress with actions from previous meetings.

The recommendation was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the progress which has been made.

31. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME ([Link to recording](#))

The Democratic Services Manager presented the Committee's [Forward Work Programme](#) for consideration and would schedule the items listed in paragraph 1.04 of the report.

As requested, an item on the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations would be scheduled and a report on the recent fire at Synthite Ltd would be shared in October/November.

On that basis, the recommendations were supported.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved, as amended; and
- (b) That the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

32. VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

A change in the order of business was agreed to bring forward agenda items 15 and 16 to allow the relevant officer to present.

33. SOCIAL VALUE PROGRESS UPDATE ([Link to recording](#))

The Strategic Executive Officer presented a [report](#) on social value performance data for the latter six months of the financial year 2023/24. She agreed to follow up queries on anticipated local spend through contract and increased costs to the Council generated from social value, both of which would be reflected in the action tracking report.

On that basis, the recommendation was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the positive performance achieved in generating social value for quarters three and four of the financial year 2023/24.

34. FLINTSHIRE AND WREXHAM PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD (PSB) ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 ([Link to recording](#))

The Strategic Executive Officer presented the [annual report](#) of the Flintshire and Wrexham Public Services Board for 2023/24 as required by statutory guidance.

The recommendation was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the provision of the Flintshire and Wrexham Public Services Board (PSB) Annual Report 2023/24.

35. FLINTSHIRE FUNDS IMPACT REPORT 2024 ([Link to recording](#))

The Strategic Executive Officer introduced the [report](#) outlining progress with the Flintshire Community Endowment Fund and Flintshire Welsh Church Act Fund, both of which were overseen by Community Foundation Wales.

On behalf of Community Foundation Wales, Andrea Powell summarised key points and would provide a separate response to clarify the difference between the total of grants awarded in 2023/24 shown in the covering report and that in the Fund Overview. The Strategic Executive Officer agreed to respond separately to a query on governance arrangements for the Flintshire Welsh Church Act Fund.

On that basis, the recommendations were supported.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes the contents of the Flintshire Impact Report April 2024 and supports the work of the Communication Foundation Wales; and
- (b) That the Committee notes the current Elected Member representative vacancy on the grant panel and supports the promotion of this opportunity to Members.

36. JOINT FUNDED CARE PACKAGES - UPDATE REPORT ([Link to recording](#))

The Senior Manager (Safeguarding and Commissioning) presented a [report](#) to update the Committee on current long-term debt with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) in respect of NHS Continuing Health Care packages in Flintshire. The Committee was introduced to Helen Brockley, the Continuing Health Care Co-ordinator, who provided information on the national framework and processes.

The recommendations were amended to reflect the debate.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes the update on the current position regarding outstanding Continuing Health Care invoices raised by the Council for payment by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board;
- (b) That the Committee notes information regarding the Continuing NHS Healthcare - The National Framework for Implementation in Wales and its disputes and appeals process; and
- (c) That the Senior Manager and Co-ordinator meet with the Chair of the Committee to compile a letter to the Health Board and Ministry for Health on behalf of the Chair and Cabinet Member for Social Services.

37. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BUDGET 2025/26 ([Link to recording](#))

The Corporate Finance Manager presented a [report](#) on the first stage of developing the budget for 2025/26 prior to consideration by Cabinet.

In response to comments about the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority levy, the Chief Officer (Governance) agreed to liaise with the treasurer on any potential variation.

A request for service budgets to show the percentage of those costs within the Council's overall budget (as had been done with schools delegated budgets) would be actioned by Finance officers for future reports.

The recommendation was amended to reflect additional motions which were supported.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the comments on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2025/26 be reported back to Cabinet when it considers the report;
- (b) That the Council seeks to prioritise protection of the delivery of critical front-line services; and
- (c) That an invitation be extended to the Chief Fire Officer for a representative to attend a future meeting of this Committee.

38. COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM SCHEME FOR SECOND HOMES AND LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES ([Link to recording](#))

The Chief Officer (Governance) and Revenues & Procurement Manager presented a [report](#) on the outcome of public consultation on Council Tax premium rates on second homes and long-term empty properties.

Following debate, the recommendation was amended to reflect additional motions put forward and supported. A request was made for comparative

information from other Authorities on the impact of introducing a progressive premium charging scheme for long term empty homes.

RESOLVED:

The Committee recommends:

- (a) That the Council Tax premium rate be increased from 75% to 100% on long-term empty properties and the existing premium rate of 100% retained on second homes;
- (b) Consideration of introducing a progressive approach to the premium rates on long-term empty properties from April 2025; and
- (c) Consideration of a further discretionary exception from the premium in circumstances where a buyer of a long-term empty property can be subject to premium from the period when they purchase the property but are making genuine efforts to bring the property back into use. This will ensure buyers would not be disadvantaged.

There was a brief adjournment at this stage of the meeting.

39. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25 (MONTH 4) AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 (MONTH 4) ([Link to recording](#))

The Strategic Finance Managers presented reports on the 2024/25 month 4 position for the [Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account](#) and the [Capital Programme](#), prior to consideration by Cabinet.

During discussion, points were raised on unforeseen significant overspends at this early stage, the need to feedback outcomes from lobbying Welsh Government and use of the word 'efficiencies'.

In response to the projected year-end outturn on the Housing Revenue Account, a response would be sought from the Housing portfolio on whether some of the closing un-earmarked balance could be utilised in-year.

On that basis, the recommendations were supported.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That having considered the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2024/25 (month 4) report, the comments raised by the Committee be referred to Cabinet; and
- (b) That having considered the Capital Programme Monitoring 2024/25 (month 4) report, the Committee has no specific comments to raise with Cabinet.

40. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023/24 TO INCORPORATE THE COUNCIL PLAN END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023/24 ([Link to recording](#))

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented a report on [report](#) to consider the Annual Performance Report 2023-24, noting the Council Plan (2023-28) end of year performance for 2023-24. The Strategic Performance Advisor provided an update on data statistics since publication of the agenda.

The recommendation was supported, together with an additional motion.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee supports the 2023/24 Annual Performance Report, combined with the Council Plan End of Year 2023/24 Performance Report, noting the performance achieved; and
- (b) That future reports reflect the Council's performance with explanations where targets are not achieved and ensuring that the two documents can be cross-referenced easier to benefit the reader.

41. SETTING OF WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES ([Link to recording](#))

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented a [report](#) to review the Council's response to the four recommendations for improvement advised by Audit Wales, prior to submission to Cabinet.

The recommendation was amended to reflect the debate.

RESOLVED:

The having considered the response to the recommendations for improvement, the Committee raises the following points with Cabinet:

- That the Committee accepts Recommendations R1 and R4; and
- That the Monitoring Officer and two Cabinet Members review the questions asked by Audit Wales and notes the Committee's disappointment that the questions asked on Recommendations R2 and R3 did not link to budgets or resources.

42. CORPORATE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2023/24 ([Link to recording](#))

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented a [report](#) on the findings of the Corporate Self-Assessment 2023/24 including opportunities for improvement.

During discussion on stage two of the process, it was agreed that the full membership of the committees mentioned should be given the opportunity to take part in future challenge sessions.

On that basis, the recommendations were supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- (a) Accepts the findings of the Corporate Self-assessment 2023/24;
- (b) Accepts the opportunities for improvement identified in the Corporate Self-Assessment 2023/24;
- (c) Suggests the inclusion of a Cabinet Member on the project board¹; and
- (d) Requests that the section on Consultation and Engagement be added into the report for this year and future years.

43. FLINTSHIRE CONNECTS ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24 ([Link to recording](#))

The Chief Officer (Governance) and Customer Contact Service Manager presented the [report](#) detailing performance of Flintshire Connects during 2023-24, prior to consideration by Cabinet.

Following discussion on the proposals, the recommendations were supported.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes Flintshire Connects annual performance for 2023-24; and
- (b) That in light of reducing footfall at Flintshire Connects Centres, the Committee supports:
 - i) a review of the service, commencing with public consultation on why usage is reducing, and what functions the service could/should provide; and
 - ii) the consultation which should also explore the potential impact on those with protected characteristics of possibly reducing opening hours to reflect the reduced usage by residents.

44. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

None.

(The meeting started at 10am and ended at 2.50pm)

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Chair

Meetings of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee are webcast and can be viewed by visiting the webcast library at <http://flintshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

¹ Following the meeting, it was clarified that the project board is no longer in place for this piece of work, however input by Members of Cabinet, Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Governance & Audit Committee is part of the reviewing process.