

CABINET
16 OCTOBER, 2012

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 16 October, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor J.B. Attridge (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: R.C. Bithell, H. Brown, C.M. Jones, R.K. Jones, W. Mullin and A.P. Shotton (part only/arrived part way through meeting after taking a pre0-arranged telephone call in his role as WLGA Spokesman for Finance & Resources)

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors: R.G. Hampson, P.G. Heesom, D.I. Mackie, C.A. Thomas and A. Woolley

APOLOGIES:

Councillor R.P. Macfarlane, Chief Executive and Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

IN ATTENDANCE:

Director of Environment, Director of Community Services, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Finance, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of ICT and Customer Services and Committee Officer

78. VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment advised that there would be a change to the order of business and that agenda item numbers 7, 8 and 15 would be considered before agenda item number 4.

79. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor R.C. Bithell declared a personal interest in minute number 81.

Councillor R.C. Bithell declared a personal interest in minute number 87 because he was a Flintshire County Council representative on the Daniel Owen Community Association Board. Councillor H. Brown also declared a personal interest in minute number 87 because she was a member of the Aston Park Community Centre.

80. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 September were confirmed as a correct record.

81. SUPPORTING PEOPLE OPERATIONAL PLAN 2012/13

The Cabinet for Housing introduced the Supporting People Operational Plan (SPOP) 2012-2013 which provided an update on the progress made against the action contained within the Supporting People Strategy and the SPOP for 2011/12. The SPOP also included an action plan for 2012/13 which was split into three sections to reflect the following three policy areas covered by housing related support services:-

- Community Care;
- Community Safety; and
- Homeless Prevention

The Flintshire Supporting People Planning Group planned to meet the reduction in Supporting People Grant in 2012/13 without cutting any services by carrying out the continuation of planned realignment of Social Services budgets.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the achievements made against the updated action plan for 2011/12 be noted;
- (b) That the proposals in the Supporting People Operation Plan for 2012/13 be approved; and
- (c) That the Supporting People Operational Plan as a final version be approved.

82. WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Housing provided an update on the aim to implement a range of measures that would manage and mitigate, as far as practical, the impact of the Welfare Reforms upon the local communities and Local Authority. The significant risks emerging from the welfare reforms included:-

- The loss of income to the Local Authority and to the local economy;
- The lack of available resources to deal with demands from residents for access to advice and support services;
- The increase in homelessness applications; and
- The welfare reforms all being implemented within the same timeframe.

The development and successful implementation of the Flintshire Welfare Reform Strategy was being managed corporately by a Welfare Reform Programme Board, Chaired by the Leader of the Council. An update of the work being progressed was outlined within the report.

A number of concerns were raised around the impact the welfare reforms would have on the most vulnerable people within the community.

Councillor R.K. Jones asked how the Council was communicating the impacts to residents who would be affected by the welfare reforms.

The Cabinet Member for Housing explained that work had been undertaken to identify residents who would be affected and that the Housing Officers would be visiting residents in their home to explain clearly the impacts. The reduction in Housing Benefit would also apply to tenants of all Registered Social Landlords (RSLs); therefore the Council was working in partnership with RSLs to identify households which would be affected to establish the countywide impact of the welfare reforms.

The Head of Finance provided an update on the multi-agency work which was being progressed and the approach being taken by the Welfare Reform Programme Board to mitigate the impact of the welfare reforms.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment asked that all Members be encouraged to attend the briefing session on welfare reforms which had been arranged for 12 November, 2012.

RESOLVED:

That Flintshire County Council continues to engage in local and national discussion on the issues arising from Welfare Reform and that Members and Officers are proactive through relevant government and professional groups to make representations to mitigate the impacts on the Council and the people in the community of Flintshire.

Note: - The Leader of the Council chaired the remainder of the meeting.

83. TENANCY AGREEMENT FOR COUNCIL HOUSING

The Cabinet Member for Housing introduced an updated version of the Secure/Introductory Tenancy Agreement for approval following earlier proposals in July, 2011. The revised agreement was attached at Appendix 1 of the report and included the suggested amendments which would be incorporated into the final version.

Following legal advice, Section 5 of the new agreement which explained that the Council reserves the right to defer home improvements where there was an existing breach of tenancy would form part of the Housing Policy which ran alongside the Secure/Introductory Tenancy Agreement. Advice had also been received which confirmed that tenants could not be made to purchase contents insurance; therefore work had been progressing to identify tenants interested in taking out such insurance cover.

Commenting on translation costs, the Cabinet Member for Housing suggested that, in line with previous requests from tenants on which language they would prefer their communications, copies of the Secure/Introductory Tenancy Agreement only be translated to those tenants who had requested communications in Welsh. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services

advised that this could be carried out as it met with the guidelines issued by the Welsh Government that residents should receive communication in the language of their choice.

RESOLVED:

That the final draft of the Tenancy Agreement and timetable for implementation be approved.

84. IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2012 – 2017

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Management introduced the Improvement Plan 2012-2017 which built upon the 10 Council Priorities and the Directorate priorities. The Plan also included details of the following three additional Improvement Priorities which were in line with the Leadership's Programme for Change:-

- Social Enterprise/Co-operatives
- Apprenticeships and Youth Unemployment
- Community Development and Events

A copy of the Plan had been made available in the Members Library and would be distributed to all Members prior to presentation to County Council on the 25 October, 2012.

The Leader of the Council welcomed the additional Improvement Priorities explaining that further development and details of the additional priorities would be reported to Cabinet before the end of the calendar year.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Improvement Priorities within the Improvement Plan be re-set for endorsement by County Council;
- (b) That the three additional Improvement Priorities, in line with the Leadership's Programme for Change, be noted; and
- (c) That details of the three additional Improvement Priorities be presented to Cabinet before the end of the calendar year.

85. CITIZEN CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT – STRATEGIC APPROACH

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Management introduced a report which sought Cabinet approval of a set of core Consultation and Engagement Principles, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, and the development of a Strategic Forward Work Programme.

The Head of ICT and Customer Services explained that the introduction of the Principles and Strategic Forward Work Programme were in

line with the Leadership's Programme for Change and addressed the recommendation of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) that the Council should develop an improved corporate approach to engagement with communities and users of services.

The Leader of the Council welcomed the report specifically the development of a central database of activity which would avoid duplication and over consultation with specific groups of people.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the core principles attached at Appendix 1 of the report be approved;
- (b) That the development of a Corporate Activity Forward Work Plan (FWP), in consultation with relevant services, portfolio holders and other interested parties, for further approval by Cabinet in order to start a programmed activity of works be approved;
- (c) That the development of Directorate Activity Forward Work Plans, at Head of Service Business Level or Directorate Plan Level, in consultation with relevant portfolio holders and other interested parties, in order to begin a programmed activity of works be approved; and
- (d) That the development of a central database/calendar of activity to identify who is doing what and when, consider potential areas for collaboration, avoidance of duplication and over consultation with specific groups of people be approved.

86. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2013/14 – 2017/18 AND BUDGET 2013/14

The Head of Finance introduced a report which provided an overview of the Council's approach to strategic financial planning and reminded Members of the financial challenges which provided the backdrop to the financial planning environment. The report also provided an update on the development of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2013/14 - 2017/18 and the planning for the 2013/14 revenue budget and 10 year Capital Strategy.

The Head of Finance provided a detailed update on the drivers for the development of the MTFP and strategic financial planning which covered the following areas:-

- Financial Planning Framework
- Financial Challenges
- Value for Money
- Funding
- Costs
- Efficiencies

Detailed budget planning for 2013/14 was being carried out in accordance with the financial planning and operating principles set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and utilises the forecasting model detailed within the report. The budget timetable for 2013/14 was attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Head of Finance for providing a detailed report and the Cabinet Members for the work they had been undertaking in planning for the 2013/14 budget setting. He commented on the financial challenges ahead and suggested that a summary report on the future financial projections for Wales, considered during a recent Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) conference, be shared with Members. He gave a commitment that work would continue to identify efficiencies in order to protect front line services.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

87. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER SCHEME

The Director of Environment introduced the Policy for the transfer of assets for community use and explained that the Council was currently undertaking a review of assets through an ongoing rationalisation programme as part of the Assets work stream within the Flintshire Futures programme.

The Leader of the Council welcomed the Policy which he said would assist in supporting social enterprise and community groups.

Councillor R.C. Bithell thanked the Director of Environment for the report which addressed a Notice of Motion he had submitted to County Council on 25 September, 2012. He said that the Policy would allow community groups to carry out their own repairs and maintenance to ensure Council buildings remained an asset to the community.

In response to comments on providing advice to community groups, the Leader of the Council confirmed that work would continue to review how advice was provided to all community groups in Flintshire.

RESOLVED:

That the report and Policy for the transfer of assets for Community Use, attached in Appendix A, be supported.

88. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2011/12

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Management introduced the draft Annual Performance Report 2011/12 for recommendation to County Council.

The Report reviewed progress against the Improvement Priorities as detailed in the Improvement Plan 2011/12.

A copy of the Report was available in the Members' Library and would be distributed to all Members prior to presentation to County Council on 25 October, 2012.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Annual Performance Report 2011/12 be approved.

89. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2012/13 (MONTH 4)

The Head of Finance presented the latest revenue budget monitoring information (Month 4) for the Council Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2012/13.

Members were informed that the projected year end position as estimated at Month 4 was a net overspend of £1.028m on the Council Fund and a net underspend of £0.052m on the HRA. The in-year over/ (under) spends as detailed in the report reflected a number of risks and assumptions. Appendix 6 of the report detailed the movements to date on unearmarked reserves and the level of contingency sum available. On the HRA, the projected outturn reflected an additional allocation of £0.250m from balances to fund additional CERA contribution towards funding of the HRA capital programme.

The Leader of the Council commented on the work being undertaken to address the projected overspend and the additional financial pressures that would be faced following the introduction of the welfare reforms as outlined within the risks and assumptions detailed within the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the overall report and the management actions being taken to address the projected overspend be noted;
- (b) That the Council Fund contingency sum (overdrawn balance) as at 31 March, 2013 (paragraph 5.03) be noted; and
- (c) That the projected final level of balances on the Housing Revenue Account (paragraph 6.03) be noted.

90. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012/13 (QUARTER 1)

The Head of Finance introduced the first quarter's capital programme information for 2012/13 which detailed the cumulative information relating to each programme as shown in Appendix A of the report.

In response to a question on the sale of agricultural estates, the Director of Environment explained that the continuing economic climate was impacting the ability to achieve the anticipated capital receipts, a situation which was likely to continue until the economy improves.

RESOLVED:

That the report be approved.

91. COUNCIL TAX AND LONG TERM EMPTY HOMES IN WALES

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Management introduced a report which outlined background information and sought support on Welsh Government proposals to amend legislation allowing Local Authorities the discretion to charge additional council tax on long term empty properties in Wales. The current level of empty properties and length of time they had been empty was detailed within the report.

The Leader of the Council welcomed the report and the proposals to tackle long term empty properties which attracted anti-social behaviour within the community. He suggested that officers take notice of the Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGA's) response in preparing Flintshire County Council's reply to the consultation.

In response to a question on non domestic properties, the Head of Finance explained that the proposals would not amend legislation for non domestic properties but suggested that a comment could be included within the response that similar powers would be welcomed in respect of non domestic properties which could also present problems for the community.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the principles of the proposals be supported;
- (b) That officers be authorised to respond appropriately to the consultation, in line with the recommended responses shown in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (c) That officers take cognisance of the WLGA's response in preparing Flintshire County Council's reply to the consultation.

92. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEAR UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Management introduced the Treasury Management Mid Year Report for 2012/13 for recommendation to the County Council. The key points contained within the Treasury Management Mid Year Report were outlined within the report.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Management thanked the Clwyd Pension Fund Manager and his team for their work in preparing the report and managing the investments of Flintshire County Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Treasury Management Mid Year Report 2012/13 be approved and recommended to County Council.

93. WEPRE PARK 10 YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Director of Environment introduced a report to advise Cabinet of the Wepre Park 10 year management and maintenance plan developed as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) second round submission. The 1st round pass had been granted which provided £30,000 of development funding to submit a 2nd round application. This application had been made on 31 August, 2012. Details of the Management Plan vision and its aims and objectives were outlined within the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the draft Management Plan be approved; and
- (b) That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Environment, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Leisure to make any changes deemed necessary to meet the future needs of the Park.

94. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS

An information report on the actions taken under delegated powers was submitted.

The actions taken were as set out below:-

Lifelong Learning / Community Services / Environment / Corporate Services	2012 Modern Trainee Scheme – additional 31 positions required to be created.
Lifelong Learning	Disposal of an area of land of 9m ² within the Playing Field adjoining The Greens and Meadow View, Sealand Manor, Sealand, Flintshire for the siting of a cabin containing District Gas Governor apparatus together with granting of an Easement to the Statutory Undertaker in order to facilitate the installation of the gas main supply pipe to an adjoining Council Housing Estate.
	Leisure Services Tariff 2013.

95. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 9.30 a.m. and ended at 11.00 a.m.

96. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were two members of the press and one member of the public in attendance.

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Chairman