

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 MARCH 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Wednesday, 6 March 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Matt Wright (Chairman)

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Chris Dolphin, David Evans, Veronica Gay, Cindy Hinds, Joe Johnson, Colin Legg, Nancy Matthews, Paul Shotton and Carolyn Thomas

SUBSTITUTES: Councillors Mike Reece (for Peter Curtis), Ian Dunbar (for Ann Minshull) and David Wisinger (for Derek Butler)

APOLOGIES: Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Waste & Recycling and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Leisure

ALSO PRESENT: Leader of the Council and Councillors Patrick Heesom and Christine Jones

CONTRIBUTORS: Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Environment, Director of Environment, Head of Assets & Transportation, Head of Regeneration, Interim Public Protection Manager and Energy Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment & Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

68. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2013 had been circulated with the agenda.

Accuracy

Councillor V. Gay said that in paragraph 2 of page 4 of the minutes, she had asked why £9000 was in the Saltney budget for the public conveniences when they had been closed.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the above amendment, the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

69. ENVIRONMENT QUARTER 3 SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Public Protection

The Interim Public Protection Manager introduced the report for Public Protection and highlighted the following areas where targets had not been achieved:

Animal Health reported an improvement on the previous quarter but had not reached target with High Risk Businesses. The indicator needed to be re-profiled.

Trading Standards – High risk businesses – performance not reached due to a vacant post, but the department was confident they would achieve 99% by end of year.

The Interim Public Protection Manager then highlighted developments in a number of areas including awareness raising about cold callers and consumer rights, an illegal money lending case going to Crown Court and a farmer who had been given a custodial sentence for persistent flouting of TB regulations.

Councillor A.I. Dunbar asked if the government were due to relax restrictions on cold calling. The Interim Public Protection Manager said that he was not aware of any proposals but would check with Trading Standards and get back to him.

Councillor C. Hinds asked about the numbers of prosecutions for dog fouling. The Head of Public Protection said that incidents had to be witnessed in order for tickets to be issued which did prove difficult. Councillor Hinds said that offences were more likely to occur early morning and late at night. A Dog Watch scheme had been set up in Mold, Broughton and Connah's Quay. He confirmed that there were no pending prosecutions at the moment.

Councillor N.M. Matthews said that wider publicity was needed to ensure wider participation in Dog Watch. Councillor V. Gay asked if small flyers could be left in community settings to advertise Dog Watch and to encourage the public to report incidents/regular timings of incidents.

The Chair said that some Members might not be aware of Dog Watch and asked that a note be circulated to Members of the Committee.

Councillor J. Johnson asked if there were any examples of good practice in enforcement from other local authorities. The Interim Public Protection Manager said that all authorities acknowledged the difficulty in issuing fixed Penalty Notices and that Flintshire was adopting a long term strategy. He agreed to check with the Welsh Local Government Association to see if they could offer any examples of good practice.

Councillor Matthews asked if there had been any health and safety issues with tattoo parlours in Flintshire. The Interim Public Protection Manager said that the Council were looking at putting in place a rating scheme for Tattoo parlours, similar to the one in place for food premises.

Councillor P. Shotton said that there was a lack of awareness in the community of the work of the Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator. He asked if the service could be advertised in the next edition of Housing News and the Council newspaper. The Interim Public Protection Manager said that it was an excellent suggestion and that he would action it.

Councillor Gay said that she had not received Neighbourhood Warden Neighbourhood reports recently. The Interim Public Protection Manager said that he would make enquiries with the Neighbourhood Wardens.

Councillor C.A. Thomas thanked the Interim Public Protection Manager for his report and raised the issue of people burning tyres in her ward at weekends and in the evening. She asked what could be done out of office hours as she appreciated the offenders had to be caught at the scene. The Interim Public Protection Manager said that there was no dedicated out of hours service, but would ask Pollution Control to investigate if details of location and timings could be forwarded. The Director of Environment suggested that if this was a county-wide issue, more prevalent at the weekend, that he could arrange for officers to spend a weekend monitoring specific areas that had reported issues in the past.

Councillor G.H. Bateman asked for further information about the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Mold. The Interim Public Protection Manager explained that there was an Air Quality Monitoring Station at Mold and that recent air quality levels had exceeded the tolerable levels due to car pollution. The AQMA required the Council to make improvements in the area. Councillor Bateman asked why there had been an increase in calls to Pest Control about rats. The Interim Public Protection Manager said that he did not know the reason for this, but would make enquiries.

Councillor C.J. Dolphin asked if Public Protection had any enforcement powers regarding graffiti. The Interim Public Protection Manager said that he would investigate and refer back to him.

Regeneration

The Head of Regeneration introduced the quarterly report for the service area and highlighted the following areas of activity:

- The Business Plan for the Deeside Enterprise Zone (DEZ) was now with the Welsh Government and a decision was imminent. Promotional events for the DEZ were now being organised, the first of which was an event at the Welsh Government Office in London.
- Toyota had confirmed 70 new jobs at its engine plant in Deeside and a local supplier to Jaguar had confirmed 26 new jobs.
- The Flintshire Business Week 2012 was attended by almost 2000 delegates and paid for by £130,000 cash and in kind sponsorship.
- Airbus had a full order book for 600 aircraft, with the wings to be made at Broughton.

- Rural and town regeneration funding would be used to enhance Holywell and Mold town centres and Talacre.
- Agreement had been received from the Welsh Government to restructure the Communities First programme and deliver it from two major clusters, the West Cluster, focussed on rural Flintshire and the East Cluster, focussed on Deeside.
- An advanced manufacturing centre has opened at Holywell High School, the first in a school in Wales. A local businessman has donated a range of high technology prototyping machinery to the school.

Councillor A.I. Dunbar thanked the Head of Regeneration for the presentation he had given at the Connah's Quay Community Council. He voiced concern about the numbers of void shops and asked if young business people could be offered leaseholds and business rates at reduced prices in order to encourage take up. The Head of Regeneration said that an Empty Shops Scheme was being developed which would bring together landlords and potential new retailers. A new Enterprise Club designed to encourage more young people to set up in business, had been launched and currently had 26 members.

Councillor Dolphin said that he was supportive of regeneration schemes for Holywell, but expressed concerns at any possible loss of a Crown Post Office in the High Street. He urged the Council to do everything within their power to ensure post offices remained in high street locations.

Councillor Thomas asked if the empty shop scheme was available throughout the county. She pointed out that the proposed closure of public conveniences in rural areas was in conflict with the tourism and rural areas strategy. The Head of Regeneration said that the empty shop scheme would initially operate as a pilot in the Deeside and Holywell areas, which was those areas worst affected by shop closures. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for the Environment said that the closure of some public conveniences was to be delayed whilst meaningful discussions took place with a view to finding suitable alternative management arrangements at Cilcain and Caerwys.

The Chair said that the Committee welcomed the extended period for discussion in relation to public conveniences.

Assets and Transportation

The Head of Assets and Transportation introduced the quarterly report and reported on the following highlights:

- Flintshire Futures and Flintshire Connects were now exploring facilities within the Flint and Connah's Quay areas.
- Options in relation to the feasibility study for Clwyd Theatr Cymru were being explored and the office rationalisation process continued with the

review and development of strategies linked to the Mold Campus and Connah's Quay Offices.

- Third party lease terminations continued to be progressed.
- Third phase of refurbishment at the Alltami Depot was imminent.
- Integrated transport solution to be investigated after the review of subsidised transport had been concluded. The exploration of a regional transport solution continued to be progressed through TAITH.
- Work on the agricultural estate rationalisation programme had continued.
- Design development work and cost planning continued to progress in relation to the new school at Shotton.
- Continued exploration of potential opportunities for renewable technologies for use in schools.

Councillor D. Evans thanked the Head of Assets and Transportation for the completion of the bus bay works at Shotton which was making a difference. He asked if cycle lanes could be introduced from the Deeside strip to the Sandycroft area and also voiced concern at the insufficient links into phase 4 of the Deeside Industrial Park. The Head of Assets and Transportation said that TAITH were conducting a feasibility study to see if a route could be established into Sandycroft. At Shotton, work would be undertaken to create an integrated traffic light system, but funding for any such schemes was currently uncertain for 2013-14.

Councillor Dolphin expressed concern about Community Asset Transfers and said that Flintshire should ensure that assets were well maintained prior to handover. The Director of Environment said that assets would be rationalised under Flintshire Futures and that this would result in some buildings being transferred to the community. He said that buildings in a state of neglect may not be effectively transferred to a small community group, unless they were able to access grants that the Council were unable to bid for.

Councillor Matthews asked if the Mold Flood Alleviation Scheme could look at all parts of Mold and not just one side of the town. The Chair advised that this was included on the Forward Work Plan.

Councillor M. Reece asked if solar energy panels could be placed on County Hall campus buildings. The Head of Assets and Transportation said that this was not an option at this time.

Councillor C. Legg asked for clarification about the regional transport solution. The Head of Assets and Transportation said that all six local authorities in North Wales were exploring options for planning and managing transport on a regional basis.

Councillor Thomas said that European Rural Development Project funding could be accessed for Community Transfers. She asked that Members lobby the Welsh Local Government Association to access the funding.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the 2012-13 Quarter 3 performance reports.

70. ENERGY SWITCHING SCHEME

The Head of Assets and Transportation introduced the report which was compiled in response to a Council resolution passed in January 2013 to bring a report on Energy Switching schemes to a meeting of the Committee.

Collective energy switching models allowed residents to register online via a web based auction system and a specialist company would then bid for the best deals from energy suppliers. Officers had recently held discussions with South Lakeland District Council to ascertain whether Flintshire should get involved in a bulk switching scheme ran by iChoosr. The iChoosr Bulk Purchase Scheme was available for electric and gas mains (where available) customers but did not accommodate pre payment customers.

Councillor N.M. Matthews thanked the Head of Assets and Transportation for the report. She said that there were a number of online energy comparison websites and that the Council should support the scheme. She asked if the Council intended to send a representative to the National Energy Action Cymru Conference in Llandudno on 21 March 2013. The Head of Assets and Transportation confirmed that a staff member was due to attend and that they would report back to the Committee. He added that there was a great deal of apathy with customers about energy websites and some customers were not comfortable in changing supplier.

Councillor C.J. Dolphin voiced his disappointment at the lack of progress to date on this matter and that the support of the Council was pivotal to the success of any local energy switching scheme. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member For Environment said that the Council would do all it could to assist with this scheme and was concerned that 90% of people in fuel poverty had pre payment meters which made them ineligible to join the scheme.

Councillor J. Johnson asked if residents in Flintshire could join schemes in other areas, such as Liverpool. The Head of Assets and Transportation said that this was feasible.

Councillor C. Hinds asked how vulnerable people without home computers could register for the scheme. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment said that advertisements could be placed in the Housing News, the Council Newspaper, local press and posters in libraries. Computer facilities were available in libraries and Flintshire Connects offices.

Councillor C.A. Thomas asked if the Energy Manager would meet with Gary Jones in the South Flintshire Housing Office was assisting communities to access gas mains schemes, as many customers in fuel poverty were not on gas

mains. The Energy Manager said that he was due to attend a meeting in the Sealand area, which Gary was due to attend.

The Chair said it was the moral obligation of the Council to be more proactive in this matter, in the light of so many residents struggling financially.

The Committee agreed that a more detailed report was required along with a proactive marketing plan for switching schemes.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That a further, detailed report about Energy Switching Schemes be submitted to the committee within 3 months; and
- (b) That a marketing plan be produced and submitted to the committee within 3 months.

71. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Environment & Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator introduced a report to enable the Committee to consider the Forward Work Programme.

It was proposed that at the meeting on 10 April 2013, there would be an update on the Food Waste Project as well as the North Wales Residual Waste Treatment Project. The missed collections technology agenda item would be deferred until the recycling site visit.

The meeting on 22 May 2013 would not be held at Loggerheads Country Park, but in County Hall. Councillor C.A. Thomas asked that David Sheil, AONB Manager, be invited to the meeting.

Councillor V. Gay asked that the Mersey Dee Alliance be put as an item on the Forward Work Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee approve the Forward Work Programme including the amendments listed.

72. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.55 am)

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Chairman