

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

25 JUNE 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Flintshire County Council of Flintshire County Council held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 25 June 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Carolyn Thomas (Chairman)

Councillors: Alex Aldridge, Bernie Attridge, Glyn Banks, Haydn Bateman, Chris Bithell, Amanda Bragg, Derek Butler, Clive Carver, David Cox, Peter Curtis, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Alan Diskin, Glenys Diskin, Chris Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Carol Ellis, David Evans, Ted Evans, Jim Falshaw, Veronica Gay, Robin Guest, Ron Hampson, George Hardcastle, Cindy Hinds, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Rita Johnson, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Stella Jones, Colin Legg, Phil Lightfoot, Brian Lloyd, Richard Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Ann Minshull, Billy Mullin, Tim Newhouse, Mike Peers, Mike Reece, Gareth Roberts, Ian Roberts, Tony Sharps, Aaron Shotton, Paul Shotton, Ian Smith, Nigel Steele-Mortimer, Owen Thomas, David Williams, David Wisinger, Arnold Woolley and Matt Wright

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Helen Brown, Rosetta Dolphin, Brian Dunn, Alison Halford, Patrick Heesom, Hilary Isherwood, Kevin Jones, Hilary McGill, Neville Phillips and Sharon Williams

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Director of Community Services, Director of Environment, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Finance, Democracy & Governance Manager, Team Manager - Committee Services and Committee Officer

Policy & Performance Manager (for minute number 24)

14. COUNCILLOR PETER MACFARLANE

During prayers, Councillor R.C. Bithell spoke in remembrance of the late Councillor Peter Macfarlane. The Chair asked that all those present observe a minute's silence after which the Leader of the Council and Group Leaders were invited to speak on behalf of their groups.

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to Councillor Macfarlane's 26 years' service in the former Alyn & Deeside District Council and Flintshire County Council including his positions on the Executive and Cabinet during that time. He spoke of Councillor Macfarlane's commitment to the Connah's Quay Golftyn ward and the respect that he had earned from Members and officers, together with the admiration of people in Connah's Quay. In his last role as Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Leisure, Councillor Macfarlane would be particularly remembered for his work on regeneration and dedication to attracting investment and employment for Flintshire. The Leader went on to comment on Councillor Macfarlane's lifetime career in public service, having earlier served with the Royal Air Force and the Fire Service and said that he had been regarded as a man of great principles and values, and would be sadly missed as a personal friend, confidante and loyal ally.

Councillor L.A. Sharps echoed these comments and said that Councillor Macfarlane had been an honest debater and had represented his ward to the best of his ability. He added that the tributes paid at Councillor Macfarlane's funeral service had been most befitting.

Councillor M.J. Peers added his tribute and in highlighting Councillor Macfarlane's commitment to his former role as Executive Member for Finance, said that he had been a learned Member and had been perceived as a gentleman.

Councillor C.S. Carver said that Councillor Macfarlane had been a well-respected Council Member and would be sadly missed.

Councillor R.J.T. Guest, who had served on various committees with Councillor Macfarlane, paid tribute to his friendly personality and said that his honesty and integrity would be greatly missed.

Speaking on behalf of the New Independence group, the Chair also paid tribute to the sad loss of Councillor Macfarlane.

15. PRESENTATIONS

Kellie Williams - Teacher of the Year in a Primary School in Wales (Pearson Teaching Awards)

The Chair welcomed Ms. Kellie Williams of Cornist Park County Primary School in Flint, who had been announced as the winner of the Pearson Teaching Award for Teacher of the Year in a Primary School in Wales 2013, an annual celebration recognising the life-changing impact of an inspirational teacher on the lives of the young people they taught. Ms. Melissa Kendrick, Head Teacher of Cornist Park CP School, who was also present, had nominated Kellie for her work in developing the Foundation Phase and bridging the transition between Years 2 and 3.

As Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor R.C. Bithell congratulated Kellie, on behalf of the Council, for her achievement out of the 24,000 nominations received by the Pearson Teaching Awards this year. He welcomed the recognition of high calibre teachers, locally and nationally, who were endeavouring to promote the development of children and seek the best possible outcomes, particularly during times when there was some criticism of schools, education and teachers. In thanking Kellie for her commitment and dedication, he wished her every success for the future.

As local Member for Flint Coleshill, Councillor D.L. Cox added his appreciation of Kellie's achievement. Councillor N.R. Steele-Mortimer echoed the comments made and passed best wishes to Kellie in the UK finals of the Teaching Awards later in the year. Councillor D. Butler was confident that Kellie would represent Flintshire well in the UK finals and added his congratulations to Ms. Kendrick who had been appointed as the new Head Teacher of Broughton Primary School.

The Fostering Team and Family Group Meeting Service - National Grand Parents Association Awards

The Chair welcomed representatives of the Fostering team and Family Group Meeting Service for their achievement as runner-up in the Local Authority of the Year category for services to Kinship Carers. She explained that in Flintshire, Kinship carers such as grandparents, aunts and uncles who were approved to care for a grandchild, niece or nephew were given the same opportunities for support, guidance and financial arrangements as general foster carers. The Kinship Care Services also included access to the Family Group Meeting Services which were used to assist families to make key decisions about care and support to children.

As Cabinet Member for Social Services, Councillor C.M. Jones extended congratulations on behalf of the Council in recognition of the highly effective service and also expressed her gratitude to Peter Robson, the Resources Services Manager and his team for their valued support.

Queen's Nominations

The Chief Executive said that forthcoming County Council meetings would include presentations to three active community members who had been recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours with an MBE: Ms. Mavis Crofts who had been recognised for voluntary services in the community and to foster carers Alice and David Oldfield.

Whilst expressing his disappointment at the lack of recognition nationally in recent years, the Chief Executive was pleased to report on recent successes in the Social Care accolades where Flintshire had been highly commended in the top three Councils in the Citizens Controlling Services category and joint winners in the 'Better Outcomes Through Working Together' category.

16. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions had been received.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

18. COUNCIL MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 16 April and 14 May 2013 were submitted.

The Democracy & Governance Manager referred to the number of declarations of interest which had been recorded for three separate agenda items at the meeting on 16 April 2013 and asked Members to raise any amendments with him after the meeting so that the minutes could be amended accordingly.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the above, both sets of minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

A copy of the Chair's communication had been circulated to all Members before the meeting.

Councillor C.S. Carver said that all Members should have been notified about the flag-raising ceremony which had taken place at County Hall on 17 June 2013. The Chief Executive explained that the information on the ceremony had been provided in a global email sent to all Members on Flintshire email addresses and had also been publicised in the local press. He apologised that some Members may not have been aware of this and said that this had been a formal ceremony rather than a public event.

Councillor L.A. Sharps pointed out that the Chair had represented all Members at the ceremony.

The Leader of the Council took the opportunity to pay tribute to officers who had worked hard to co-ordinate the Armed Forces Day, the first of such an event which had been hosted by Flintshire. He welcomed the opportunity for Flintshire to hold the inaugural event, the success of which had been acknowledged by all. In response to comments on the flag-raising ceremony, he hoped that this did not detract from what had been an excellent day. Support for the Armed Forces would be reaffirmed on 27 July 2013 at the signing of the Armed Forces Community Covenant, as part of celebrations to mark the fourth anniversary of granting the Freedom of the County to the Regiment of the Royal Welsh, to which all Members would be invited.

Councillor A. Minshull regretted that she had been unaware of the flag-raising ceremony, as the Royal British Legion had been one of her chosen charities during her time as the former Chair of the Council.

Councillor P.J. Curtis thanked officers who had negotiated reasonably priced fairground rides at the Armed Forces Day to make the event affordable to all.

20. PETITIONS

No petitions were submitted.

Councillor N.R. Steele-Mortimer said that no response had yet been received by Ysgol Trelawnyd School in response to a petition he had submitted on road safety at a previous meeting. As Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor J.B. Attridge was unaware that the response was outstanding and agreed to follow this up.

21. NOTICE OF MOTION

The Chair confirmed that no Notices of Motion had been received.

22. QUESTIONS

The following question had been submitted by Councillor N.R. Steele-Mortimer:-

What circumstances are residents charged for lost or stolen wheelie bins?
What is the cost of such a replacement wheelie bin to the Council and what is the charge to the resident?

A copy of the response to the question, provided by the Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Waste & Recycling, had been circulated to all Members before the start of the meeting. A copy of the response is attached at Appendix 1 of the minutes. Councillor Steele-Mortimer welcomed the response and asked that his thanks be passed on to the Cabinet Member.

23. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS ON COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Chair confirmed that no questions had been received.

24. IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2013/14

The Chief Executive introduced the report to seek adoption of the Improvement Plan 2013/14, which was a statutory requirement. He explained that the timing of the report had allowed the new Cabinet to work on the new set of priorities and also took into account regulator feedback to improve the visual impact of the document. Whilst comments made by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) and Estyn had been complimentary, the need to streamline priorities and link with financial planning had been identified and progressed, with support from the Cabinet.

A presentation was delivered on the choosing of in-year priorities, format of the plan, benefits of the new approach, following the plan and next steps. The Chief Executive stressed the importance of presenting the plan as a set of priorities with input by Overview & Scrutiny Members on the format and influencing the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). In general, feedback to date had been positive and it was hoped that Overview & Scrutiny Members in particular were clear on the performance framework.

The Policy & Performance Manager explained the different approach taken to simplify and improve the presentation of the report, which would be web-based, allowing easier navigation to cope with changes and adapting priorities. The previous structure of priorities had been retained but streamlined into eight priorities with supporting sub-priorities to focus on impacts and achievements.

The Leader of the Council spoke of the difficult task of improving the presentation of the plan which dealt with real issues affecting communities. He welcomed the support from officers on the streamlining of priorities, which was Cabinet led, and had built upon those set by the previous administration. He

highlighted the priority on Housing with the Council's commitment to achieve the Wales Quality Housing Standard (WQHS) and the need for joint working by the voluntary and public sector on the sub-priority for Apprenticeships and Training. He stated that the plan should be reactive to challenges faced by the Council and welcomed a particular focus over the coming year on delivering affordable housing which could lead to the building of additional Council houses. Whilst it was acknowledged that difficult times lay ahead, linked to the MTFP, the Leader was confident that the streamlining of priorities set had been based on what was deliverable in-year within the current economic climate.

Councillor M.J. Peers congratulated officers on the improved format and echoed the Leader's comments on Apprenticeships. He commented on the financial model for the priority on Affordable Housing and asked if champions would be allocated to drive forward each priority. On the judging of performance mentioned in the plan, he suggested that Overview & Scrutiny be involved in the measuring of performance against outcomes and that it might be helpful to include information on areas of responsibility for each priority.

The Leader of the Council hoped that all Council Members would play a part in championing although it was predominantly a Cabinet responsibility to deliver on each priority area. He said that rigorous challenge from Overview & Scrutiny on progress would be expected.

The Chief Executive said that the revised priorities were a continuation of those previously set and agreed that there was a collective responsibility for all. It was intended for the web-based plan to include supporting information and to be re-published to reflect any significant changes. The plan would be revised annually with a reporting mechanism to Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet.

In welcoming the improved format, Councillor R.J.T. Guest said that priorities were self-evident but felt that the explanation on the handshake symbol in the plan was unclear. He said that the previous administration had faced criticism on setting too many priorities and was unsure if re-categorising some of these as sub-priorities could be viewed as a 'wish list' rather than becoming priorities next year.

The Chief Executive explained that the previous set of priorities had been split into primary and secondary. A sensible balanced approach had been agreed with the WAO to separate those of greater impact which would be dealt with in-year from others which were important but remained 'business as usual' with lesser corporate attention in-year.

Councillor R.B. Jones commented on the reduction in the number of County priority themes from five to four. He felt that a continual update of the plan was not required and should only be triggered by Overview & Scrutiny or Cabinet input, and that any scrutinising should be guided by the amount of cost involved.

The Chief Executive explained that the third County priority combined two previous themes which had overlapped. He acknowledged that there could be greater transparency on costs but that work on the MTFP would be published alongside the Improvement Plan to clarify 2014/15 budget planning. He

reiterated that priorities were a continuation of those previously set, some with no requirement for newly identified resources, and spoke about the impact on priorities of new Measures to be introduced by Welsh Government. He also confirmed that regular in-year reporting would take place and that the document would be amended periodically to ensure that it was current.

RESOLVED:

That the Improvement Plan 2013/14 be adopted.

25. CROSS WARRANTING OF OFFICERS IN PUBLIC PROTECTION

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Waste & Recycling, Councillor J.B. Attridge introduced the report to update Members on the development of joint working arrangements between the Council and Wrexham County Borough Council.

Councillor M.J. Peers requested that consideration be given to the resolutions agreed at the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting on 16 November 2011, relating to further reports. Councillor Attridge replied that this would be taken on board.

RESOLVED:

That delegated authority be given to the Director of the Environment, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Waste and Public Protection to:-

- Authorise officers from Wrexham's Public Protection Service to allow these officers to legally undertake duties in Flintshire County Council;
- Allow officers employed by Flintshire County Council to undertake work in Wrexham as and when required;
- Authorise officers from the Public Protection Services of other authorities in North Wales to allow those officers to legally undertake duties in Flintshire County Council when similar cross warranting arrangements have been agreed; and
- Allow officers employed by Flintshire County Council to undertake work in other North Wales authorities as and when required when similar cross warranting arrangements have been agreed.

26. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES – CONSULTATION ON THE SIZE OF COUNCIL

The Chief Executive introduced the report to agree the Council's response to the consultation paper of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales on Council size. He advised that a supportive response should be made and that good feedback had been received on the draft following consultation with Group Leaders. A key point raised by Group Leaders was the need for flexibility so that when the review proceeded to considering the detail of ward boundaries, a practical arrangement reflecting local community ties could be arrived at.

The Leader welcomed the new methodology and spoke of the flawed process in the previous review which had been correctly challenged. On councillor to population ratios (Question 3) he said there was a need to recognise the rural and urban area split in Flintshire, which would not be recognised by a standard ratio set. He went on to refer to the Community Review, information on which would be reported for agreement to Cabinet and Council.

Councillor H.G. Roberts disagreed with the view given in the consultation paper that the proposed approach was objective, transparent and underpinned by a robust methodology, and gave details of an alternative approach of his own.

Councillor M.J. Peers said that there was no clear split in the table showing population percentages living outside settlements to justify the demarcation point chosen of 50%. He raised concerns about the lack of a robust methodology and felt that councillor to population ratios should be flexible to take account of rural areas.

Councillor L.A. Aldridge said that the Boundary Commission would need to take into consideration the Public Services Commission and Ministerial announcements on local education authorities.

Councillor R.B. Jones spoke in support of the draft response.

Councillor C. Legg felt that close-knit urban areas and scattered rural areas should be distinguished and was concerned at the apparent slight erosion of democracy.

Councillor R.C. Bithell agreed and said that decision making processes should be close to people. He spoke of Local Government reform and hoped that previous mistakes would not be repeated.

Councillor I.B. Roberts said that views must be made clear on any Local Government reorganisation and questioned the use of population figures rather than electorate figures.

The Democracy & Governance Manager explained that the Boundary Commission had adapted the Scottish model for use in Wales and that the ratios for the four categories had been explained fully in paragraph 2.11 of the consultation document. In response to other comments made, he pointed out that the Council's draft response had alluded to consideration of the Williams Commission on Public Service Governance and the need for the number of councillors to be used as a flexible starting point to each review.

The Chief Executive spoke about the need to move forward and was satisfied that Flintshire had been given an appropriate 'fit' with comparable councils in the category in which it had been placed.

The Chair asked for clarification on the response to Question 3 on population ratios. The Democracy & Governance Manager said that the draft response of 'yes' should be expanded to reinforce the need for flexibility.

The Leader of the Council summed up the discussion and on being put to the vote, the draft response incorporating the amendment to Question 3 was carried by a large majority.

RESOLVED:

That the draft response to the consultation paper be agreed, with the response to Question 3 expanded to reinforce the need for flexibility.

27. LOCAL RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

A report was presented to consider a Local Resolution Procedure for complaints in respect to Members.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Council adopts the Flintshire Local Resolution Procedure at Appendix 4 with effect from 25 June 2013;
- (b) That paragraph 6.02 of the Code of Conduct is amended to include an obligation to adhere to the Flintshire Standard and to co-operate with the Local Resolution Procedure; and
- (c) That the Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to include the Local Resolution Procedure and the amendment to the Code of Conduct within the Constitution.

28. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were two members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.00 pm)

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Chairman