

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

23 OCTOBER 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Flintshire County Council of Flintshire County Council held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Wednesday, 23 October 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Carolyn Thomas (Chair)

Councillors: Alex Aldridge, Bernie Attridge, Glyn Banks, Haydn Bateman, Marion Bateman, Chris Bithell, Derek Butler, Clive Carver, David Cox, Peter Curtis, Ron Davies, Glenys Diskin, Rosetta Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Carol Ellis, David Evans, Jim Falshaw, Veronica Gay, Robin Guest, Ron Hampson, Cindy Hinds, Ray Hughes, Hilary Isherwood, Joe Johnson, Christine Jones, Kevin Jones, Richard Jones, Stella Jones, Colin Legg, Phil Lightfoot, Richard Lloyd, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Ann Minshull, Billy Mullin, Mike Peers, Neville Phillips, Mike Reece, Gareth Roberts, Ian Roberts, Aaron Shotton, Paul Shotton, Nigel Steele-Mortimer, David Williams, David Wisinger, Arnold Woolley and Matt Wright

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Amanda Bragg, Helen Brown, Adele Davies-Cooke, Alan Diskin, Chris Dolphin, Brian Dunn, Ted Evans, Alison Halford, George Hardcastle, Dennis Hutchinson, Rita Johnson, Brian Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Hilary McGuill, Tim Newhouse, Tony Sharps, Ian Smith, Owen Thomas and Sharon Williams
Director of Lifelong Learning

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Director of Community Services, Director of Environment, Head of Legal & Democratic Services, Democracy & Governance Manager and Committee Officers

Policy & Performance Manager (for minute number 49)

Member Engagement Manager (for minute number 52)

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

47. COUNCIL MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

48. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2012/13

The Chief Executive introduced the report and delivered a presentation for Members to endorse the 2012/13 draft Annual Performance Report for publication following approval by Cabinet. He thanked the Policy & Performance

Manager and Performance Team Leader for their work on the report and reminded Members that the document would need to be adopted by the statutory deadline of 31 October. The Annual Performance Report met the statutory requirement to review the Council's progress against the Improvement Priorities and overall progress for the previous year 2012-13. A public summary would be produced for inclusion in 'Your Community, Your Council'.

The Policy & Performance Manager provided an explanation on the statutory requirements for the content of the report. She reminded Council that it was important to recognise that performance indicators were only part of the total picture. It was noted that 56% of Improvement Targets continued to improve or remained at top ranking whilst 44% showed a downturn (which in the majority of cases was marginal), with 61% meeting or exceeding the target set. In national rankings, Flintshire had performed better than the Wales average in 59% of indicators and was placed top of ranking in five indicators and bottom in one. A total of 37 indicators were in the top and middle quartiles compared with 21 last year.

The Chief Executive said that during the current transitional year, the former ten Improvement Priorities for 2012/13 had been condensed for 2013/14 and it was important for the report to compare the performance across both. The statement of progress as at 31 March 2013 set the close of the year reported to Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny showed that good progress had been made in five of the Improvement Priorities with satisfactory progress achieved in the remainder.

The Policy & Performance Manager highlighted changes to the format and content of the Plan to make it easier to read and identify outcomes, together with examples of good practice and areas for improvement. Outcomes for each sub-priority would be determined and linked to the Improvement Plan for tracking. Links to the Improvement Plan would help the reader to understand past and future actions. The Chief Executive said that an up-to-date progress statement against the eight new Priorities which had recently been reported to Cabinet would be submitted to Overview & Scrutiny committees to review in their respective portfolios.

In moving the recommendation in the report, Councillor Aaron Shotton thanked the officer team for putting together the report and referred to the complex nature of the new Improvement Plan in which the approach to Priorities and Improvement objectives had been streamlined. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Bernie Attridge.

Councillor Richard Jones queried the recommendation to endorse the report as Members had previously been requested to approve. He welcomed the continuous improvement in trends and queried consistency in the practice for business cases on regional partnerships to show evidence of benefits specifically for Flintshire and the need to ensure that the value of services was not reduced. On sub-priority 2.2 to achieve the set efficiency targets from collaborative projects, he felt that actions should be set out on how to achieve a 'Green' rather than an 'Amber' outcome.

The Chief Executive confirmed that a summary would be produced and that the wording on the recommendation was due to terminology used. In response to concerns about collaborative projects, he was unaware of any new projects where the adopted three stage reporting Protocol had not been followed and would follow this up with the Member Engagement Manager. To further strengthen the Protocol it was intended to include involvement by the Audit Committee. On the last query, he said that efficiencies on collaborative projects had been delivered broadly on time and that this was about the level of confidence in the region's ambitions to deliver major cost savings. Any further information required by Members was readily available.

Councillor Mike Peers suggested that a 'road map' would be beneficial and that greater transparency was needed on the changing number of Priorities. On secondary priority 6.13, he said that consistency was needed due to differences between an outline plan and a 'master plan'. He felt that there was some repetitiveness in the Improvement Priorities and that there was a resistance to change on pace and ambition running through the document. He went on to suggest that a prioritised action plan was needed to show recovery plans for the areas marked 'what we didn't do so well' in the report.

The Chief Executive said that the timing of information was due to the data clearance process with input from WAO and confirmed that the review of Priorities for next year's Improvement Plan would be open and subject to Member involvement. The former ten Improvement Priorities had been condensed into the new set of seven for 2013/14 with an additional eighth Priority to support those vulnerable to poverty through welfare reform. Assurance was given that detailed action plans with targets were in place to address areas in need, which were available for scrutiny, although it was not possible to summarise these within the report.

Councillor Ian Roberts asked for clarity on the agreed procedure for local Members to be kept informed of progress where high level discussions were taking place on options for major developments within their wards. The Chief Executive confirmed that there was an expectation for all officers to conform to this practice.

Following the earlier comments made by Councillor Richard Jones, the Chief Executive confirmed the amendment to the wording in the recommendation from 'endorse' to 'approve'. On being put to the vote, this was agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the 2012/13 draft Annual Performance Report be approved for publication.

49. COMMUNITY REVIEW

The Democracy & Governance Manager introduced a report to recommend to Cabinet the Council's community review proposals for the purposes of consultation. He explained the Council's statutory duty to keep its Town and Community boundaries and electoral arrangements for communities under review and that this was the first comprehensive review undertaken in

Flintshire. Proposals received from interested parties in response to the first formal stage of the consultation process had been carefully considered in preparing the Council's draft proposals.

As a result of representations made at a meeting with Town and Community Councils in May 2013, clarification had been given that the objective of the seventh and eighth guiding principles was to ensure approximately the same proportion of electors to councillors across the different wards within a town or community.

In moving the recommendation in the report, Councillor Aaron Shotton referred to concerns previously raised by Members on the proposals from the former Boundary Commission and the work which had been undertaken to reach the current position with involvement by County Council, Town and Community Councils and the County Forum. He spoke of the need to ensure that Town and Community Council opinions were represented and to be mindful of avoiding any confusion to the electorate and for outcomes from the Public Services Commission to be clarified. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Billy Mullin.

Councillor David Wisinger pointed out that the proposal which he had submitted during the first stage of the review related to Queensferry and not Penyffordd. The Democracy & Governance Manager agreed to amend this.

Councillor Alex Aldridge referred to the need to acknowledge the potential for challenging times ahead and the role of Councils in the delivery of services.

Councillor Robin Guest echoed this view and spoke of the contribution made by local councillors. He also commented on the reviews of the community boundaries and County wards, suggesting that it would be easier if one body carried out both reviews to minimise confusion. In response to his query, the Democracy & Governance Manager explained that where there were no proposals to change an external community boundary, the town/community wards arising from the review should lie wholly within a single County Council electoral division. To avoid confusion at the 2017 Local Government Elections, as the proposal for Mold included changing the external boundary, the Local Democracy & Boundary Commission would be involved and could alter County electoral divisions to correspond with any new Town Council wards.

Councillor Richard Jones said that Flintshire was a well-performing county and that any changes from the review should not affect service levels which should be sustained and improved.

As local Member for the Mold Broncoed ward, Councillor Haydn Bateman endorsed the proposal for this area as he felt this to be a fair compromise.

Councillor Carol Ellis welcomed the proposal for an increased number of councillors in the Buckley Mountain ward to address inconsistencies in the ratio of electorate to councillors and felt that this should also be reflected at County level.

The Chief Executive recognised that a great deal of work had been carried out by the Democracy & Governance Manager in involving the Town and Community Councils.

Councillor Aaron Shotton responded to Members' comments and thanked the Democracy & Governance Manager's team for the complex work which had been undertaken.

RESOLVED:

That it be recommended to Cabinet:

- That the seventh and eighth guiding principles be clarified as indicated in paragraph 3.02 of the report;
- That the proposals in Appendix A be recommended to Cabinet for consultation;
- That the second formal consultation stage be as indicated in paragraph 3.06 of the report.

50. ELECTORAL REVIEW PROGRAMME

The Chief Executive introduced a report on the recently published ten year programme of electoral reviews which was required under the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013. The report included a programme published by the Local Democracy & Boundary Commission for Wales (LDBCW) which contained information on the review based on a variety of factors, following data obtained from principal councils. It was reported that the review of Flintshire was scheduled to commence in the final quarter of 2015, followed by draft proposals issued in mid 2016 to be finalised after the Local Government Elections scheduled for 2017.

The Chief Executive spoke of some flaws in the previous process undertaken by the former Boundary Commission and work carried out since to build relationships and give a greater degree of confidence in the outcomes of future reviews.

Councillor Billy Mullin proposed that the Council support the recommendations as outlined within the report. This was seconded by Councillor Bernie Attridge.

RESOLVED:

That the electoral review programme issued by the Local Democracy & Boundary Commission for Wales be noted.

51. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Member Engagement Manager introduced a report to enable the Council to approve the Annual Report of the Overview & Scrutiny function for the 2012/13 municipal year. The report detailed work undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny committees during the period and in line with Constitution requirements,

had been approved by the Constitution Committee prior to submission to full Council.

As Chair of the Constitution Committee, Councillor Robin Guest proposed that the Council support the recommendation in the report and thanked the Member Engagement Manager and his team for facilitating the Overview & Scrutiny process with involvement by all Council Members. He went on to thank Cabinet Members for their recognition of the work carried out by Overview & Scrutiny and reminded Members of the value of their contribution to the Overview & Scrutiny process by submitting topics of interest. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer.

Councillor Matt Wright thanked Members of the Environment & Scrutiny Committee and spoke about the positive relationship with Cabinet on the timing of policies, for example the Speed Limit Review.

In thanking Members of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Carol Ellis referred to the meeting which had been held to consider proposals put forward by the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. She said that this was the first time that such a meeting had been opened up to all Council Members, adding that the concerns raised at that meeting about the impact on hospital beds from the closure of community hospital beds had increased.

Councillor Mike Peers spoke of the importance of effective chairmanship of committees and thanked Councillor Ian Roberts, Chair of the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee who had arranged for an item he requested to be considered by that Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report for the 2012/13 municipal year be approved.

52. 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 11.15 am)

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Chair