

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 NOVEMBER 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, 13 November 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Matt Wright (Chairman)

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Peter Curtis, David Evans, Veronica Gay, Joe Johnson, Colin Legg, Mike Lowe, Ann Minshull, Paul Shotton and Carolyn Thomas

SUBSTITUTES:

Councillors: Brian Lloyd for Ray Hughes and Neville Phillips for Nancy Matthews

APOLOGY:

Councillor: Cindy Hinds

CONTRIBUTORS:

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure, Director of Environment, Head of Regeneration

For minute number 39 – Economic Development Manager and Mr. Jon Les Tomos from Mold Food Festival

For minute numbers 40 and 41 – Head of Assets and Transportation, Transportation Manager and Mr. Iwan Prys Jones from Taith

For minute number 43 - Head of Planning, Head of Streetscene Services

IN ATTENDANCE:

Environment and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor Carolyn Thomas declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – Rural Development Plan & Presentation on Mold Food Festival.

Councillors Carolyn Thomas and Veronica Gay declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 – Review of Subsidised Bus Services, Update.

38. MINUTES

The draft minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 18 September and 9 October 2013 had been circulated with the agenda.

18 September 2013

Councillor Neville Phillips referred to resolution (c) on page 3 and, on behalf of Councillor Nancy Matthews, said that there was a need to ensure that the results of the Cardiff energy switching pilot scheme were included on the agenda for a meeting in December 2013 or January 2014. The Director of Environment explained that he had been advised the previous day that the pilot

scheme would not take place until the New Year so December would be premature to include it on the Committee's agenda. He would obtain information on when the project would take place and would submit the findings to this Committee after it had been concluded.

9 October 2013

Accuracy

The Chairman advised that he had submitted an apology for the meeting but it had not been recorded.

Following a comment from Councillor Haydn Bateman, the Director of Environment said that the word 'planning' on the penultimate line in the paragraph before the resolution on page 10 should read 'planing'

RESOLVED:-

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

39. RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN & PRESENTATION ON MOLD FOOD FESTIVAL

The Chairman introduced Mr. Jon Les Tomos from the Mold Food Festival to the Committee.

Mold Food Festival

Mr. Tomos provided a detailed presentation on the Mold Food Festival, the main features of which were:-

- The first meeting – 28 September 2005
- February 2006
- At the beginning and now
- Aims
- Benefits
- Developing skills and knowledge
- Management and Leadership
- Working partners
- Future:- finance
- Future development
- 2014

The Chairman also welcomed Councillor Derek Butler to the meeting, in his new role as Cabinet Member for Economic Development. The Cabinet Member thanked Mr. Tomos for the presentation and welcomed the growth in attendees and stall holders since the first Food Festival but raised concern about the funding for the future.

Councillor Peter Curtis asked about the involvement of Flintshire County Council financially and in terms of resources and also queried what funding was

received from Welsh Government (WG). The Head of Regeneration said that essentially it was a volunteer driven project and explained that Flintshire County Council supported the event financially and that a commitment had been given to provide funding of £3,000 per year for the next three years. He added that the authority also provided the car park and the shuttle bus as other forms of assistance to the festival. Mr. Tomos said that the contribution of Flintshire County Council had been critical for the Mold Food Festival from the very start. The support from WG had reduced and had to be applied for each year. The maximum that could be applied for this year was £9,000 and even though the application had been submitted, a response was still awaited.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas said that in the past, funding had also been received from the Rural Development Partnership and Cadwyn Clwyd. Mr. Tomos acknowledged the support from the RDP and said that it was essential to build reserves and added that any contributions received were vital for the future sustainability of the festival.

Councillor Thomas welcomed the extra events that had been included at this year's festival and said stallholders had indicated to her that the festival was sited at the best venue due to the hard standing. She asked that it remain in Flintshire as it meant a lot to local businesses and entrepreneurs as it was a very successful way of promoting their products.

The Chairman said that he had attended the Conwy Food Festival and concluded that he preferred the event at Mold. He said that the music side of the event made it exciting and interesting and promoted local music. However, he said that when the shuttle bus dropped those attending the festival at the bus station, the signage to the festival site was confusing. Mr. Tomos said that other methods of directing attendees to the festival were being considered such as ambassadors similar to those that had assisted the Olympics.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Tomos for his presentation and for the work that he put into organising the food festival.

Rural Development Plan (RDP)

Councillor Paul Shotton welcomed the indicative increase in the European Structural Funds programme for east Wales from £110m to £330m. He also highlighted the Flintshire Enterprise Bursary project which had awarded 58 bursaries and said that the original target had increased to 60 from 48 through an enhancement to the scheme in March 2013. In response to a question from Councillor Shotton about an update on the Talacre Overspill car park area and the enhancement of the Daniel Owen Square in Mold, the Economic Development Manager said that an outline agreement had been reached for the Talacre car park area and that Cabinet had agreed to move the issue forward. A planning application had been submitted to update the Daniel Owen Square and if planning approval was granted, work would commence on the scheme in January 2014.

Councillor Neville Phillips asked a question on behalf of Councillor Nancy Matthews about one of the bursaries referred to on page 22; it was agreed that a written response would be provided. Councillor Phillips asked what proportion of

the total fund was spent on administration at County Hall or Cadwyn Clwyd. The Economic Development Manager said that the amount was capped at 10% of the programme value for Flintshire County Council and 15% of the value for Cadwyn Clwyd. Councillor Colin Legg queried how much the bursaries were worth and whether there was a finite pot of money available. The Economic Development Manager responded that the bursaries were worth up to £2000 with the total budget being £260,000. Councillor Legg also suggested that some of the monies be moved to contribute to the Mold Food Festival to increase the amount from the £3000 currently provided. In response, the Director of Environment said that £3000 was the amount of money given to the festival but reminded Members that the shuttle bus, car parking at County Hall, signage and Streetscene Services were all provided by the Council at no cost to the festival.

In response to a question from Councillor Haydn Bateman on whether the festival was reaching its capacity, Mr. Tomos said that a health and safety audit had been undertaken so that the number of visitors on the site at any one time could be identified. He confirmed that the site was nearing capacity.

Councillor Bateman also asked about the disputes about Interim Certificates on the Gronant Pegasus Scheme and the three costing options for the Talacre scheme which were reported on page 26. The Director of Environment advised that the Pegasus Scheme was a complex set of works and that discussions were ongoing with the contractors for potential claims for those works. On the Talacre scheme, the Economic Development Manager said that option B had been put forward to use a limestone crush and run for two sections to keep within the RDP budget. He added that tarmac was more durable in the longer term but that each option was considered on its own merits.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

40. REGIONAL BUS STRATEGY

The Director of Environment provided a background on the Regional Bus Strategy and introduced Mr. Iwan Prys Jones from Taith.

Mr. Jones provided a detailed presentation on Taith – Regional Bus and Community Transport Strategy, the main features of which were:-

- Regional Bus Network Strategy
- Wales Transport Planning Framework
- Network Strategy Contents
- Regional Passenger Transport Hierarchy
- Journey to Work Analysis - key flows (2001 Census)
- Journey to Work Analysis – Containment (2001 Census), Flint O-D Pairs (2001) and Mold O-D Pairs (2001)
- Key Employment Areas – Wider Region
- Employment Growth Areas
- Average Annual Daily Traffic (2011)
- Journey to Work – Public Transport Mode Share (2011)
- Bus Routes connecting key centres and frequencies

- Car/public transport journey time comparison
- Key issues for public transport
- Next steps

Councillor Carolyn Thomas asked whether any funding had been carried over from the previous year. She said that some ambulance service provision was provided by Community Transport and queried whether this was still to be undertaken and whether funding could be sought from the Health Board. She referred to complaints that she had received about speeding buses and the services running late and asked who complaints should be referred to. She also commented on the shuttle bus service and asked if its use was to be reviewed. Councillor Thomas also requested that the presentation slides be emailed to the Committee.

In response, Mr. Jones said that a small allocation had been carried forward from the previous year but as yet, cut backs on the services had not been as anticipated. He said that a review of the reimbursement rate for the concessionary travel scheme was to be undertaken by WG which could have consequences for bus services within the County. He added that a significant amount of work was required with the Health Board to develop the issue of community transport operators providing ambulance service provision.

In response to the issue of alleged speeding buses by Councillor Thomas, the Transportation Manager said that any complaints about this specific service should be reported to the bus operator or North Wales Police directly as this was a commercially operated bus service, however, the Transportation Manager noted that she was due to meet the bus operator responsible for running this service this week and would draw Councillor Thomas's concerns to the operator during that meeting. She added that she was aware of issues about reliability of some services, the Transportation Manager noted that this item would also be drawn to the bus operators attention this week. On the issue of the shuttle bus, the Transportation Manager said that a survey would be undertaken. Mr. Jones also added that Taith would monitor the services so that regular problems on certain routes could be identified and reviewed which could result in funding to an operator being reduced.

Councillor Paul Shotton said that bus services were not profitable on coastal routes but the rural areas relied on the services, however he felt that there was a communication issue as up to 50% of residents did not know that the services existed. He also asked if ticket integration for bus and rail services had been considered. Mr. Jones responded that it was important for community transport operators to work together to raise awareness. He added that the issue of integrated ticketing would be considered.

Councillor David Evans said that the cost of travel on trains and buses was an important factor as the amount for a family to travel on a bus or train was extortionate. He suggested that the prices could be reduced during off peak times to allow cheaper travel to encourage use of the services.

Mr. Jones said that it was a hugely complex area and on the issue of ticketing, he said that there was a need to establish a suite of tickets, such as family tickets, that worked across North Wales and into other areas such as

Chester. He agreed that there were times when the buses were underused but said that the peak time for some buses appeared to be during conventional off peak times due to concessionary bus pass users. He also agreed that there was a need to make prices cheaper and simpler.

Councillor Peter Curtis asked whether operators of bus and rail services contacted organisations such as Visual Support or the Deaf Association to identify any problems that arose when using the services. He felt that the organisations would welcome discussions with the operators.

Mr. Jones said that it was proposed to develop a series of outcomes and the level of financial support that the operators would receive would be based on the result of the outcomes. He spoke of a proposal to reduce the level of subsidy that an operator could receive if the bus company did not sign up to the Customer Charter.

Councillor Ann Minshull said that residents were concerned that the concessionary bus passes were to be withdrawn and had indicated that they would contribute a small fee for the service to continue. On the issue of empty buses, she concurred with the idea to reduce charges during off peak hours to encourage more people to use the services. Mr. Jones responded that there were no proposals to change the eligibility criteria for the concessionary bus passes at present, however he added that discussions around the reimbursement to operators for those who used the passes was to be undertaken which could result in a reduction in the number of services if the rebate reduced significantly. He also confirmed that each operator received their rebate no matter how many stops the user travelled and added that the scheme was designed to leave bus operators no better and no worse off; they received approximately 73% of the cost of the journey back through the concessionary fee per passenger. The suggestion for reduced fares in off peak hours could be explored as part of the Regional Bus Network Strategy.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be received.

41. REVIEW OF SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICES, UPDATE

The Head of Assets and Transportation introduced a report to provide an update on the review of subsidised bus services following the consultation exercise and to confirm the proposed action to be taken in relation to specific bus services.

He detailed the background to the report and advised of the consultation that had been undertaken which included promotional material being placed in public buildings; website and questionnaires; Town and Community meetings and engagement with this Committee. He detailed the sources that the feedback had been received from such as petitions, letters, Town and Community Council communications and surgeries which had been held in some parts of Flintshire. It was reported that there had been a high level of interest in the consultation exercise, including a clear engagement from concessionary pass holders who were generally high users of the County's bus services. The Head of Assets and

Transportation detailed the feedback from the consultation process and said that the review has used the criteria of the policy approved by Cabinet in April 2013 to develop the future bus service delivery models within the County.

During the course of the review a number of commercial services had been reduced or terminated by existing operators and the Council had filled and would continue to fill the gaps whilst it considered how to ensure the provision of more long term, affordable and sustainable services. Paragraph 3.01.2 detailed how the services were generally run within the county which included:-

- commercial bus services
- tendered subsidised bus services
- de-minimis
- demand led
- and education related

It was reported that during the current financial year, Taith had ensured that existing community transport support arrangements had continued, despite some major schemes seeing a significant reduction in funding when the community transport concessionary fares initiative ceased. The issues that were still to be overcome were detailed in paragraph 3.02.3.

The Head of Assets and Transportation explained that a Rural Transport Project Officer had been appointed on a 12 months fixed contract as part of a rural development plan bid in conjunction with Cadwyn Clwyd. Some of the work which had been undertaken within the rural communities was detailed in the report. Appendix 4 provided information on service; route; cost per passenger; options presented to Committee on 23 July 2013; summary of consultation response and the proposal for each service having considered feedback and the application of the Policy by officers.

The Environment and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator read out a question from Councillor Cindy Hinds about funding of school transport. In response the Cabinet Member for Environment said that where parents had chosen to send their child to the nearest school which was three miles or more from their home, then a bus service would be provided to take the child to and from school. However the issue raised by Councillor Hinds was that the school that the children attended was not their nearest school and as it was parents' choice, they should pay for the transport, not Flintshire County Council.

Councillor Peter Curtis referred to the shuttle bus which was customer led and raised concern about the buses travelling around the county empty. The Transportation Manager said that it was a demand led service and during the peak hours of 5am and 9am seven buses were used but during off peak times, only one bus was used as there was little or no demand for the service. Councillor Curtis said that there were areas with a very limited service and asked if the buses could be re-routed to those areas instead. The Transportation Manager said that this was not possible as they were being used for other services already. Councillor Colin Legg asked if it was possible to have buses from outlying areas to Mold and Holywell on market days to encourage bus use. The Transportation Manager said that where there was a peak of bus users,

better organisation of bus routes was considered but added that it was important to balance the needs of all bus users.

Councillor Veronica Gay referred to two buses that were funded by Cheshire West & Chester Council (CW&C) that only served some parts of Saltney and took passengers into Chester but did not take residents to the local shops. She asked if re-routing of these buses could be discussed with CW&C. The Transportation Manager confirmed that regular meetings were held with officers from CW&C but reminded Members that Flintshire County Council had no control over commercial services.

Councillor Haydn Bateman asked if the school buses could be utilised after they had completed the school runs each day. The Transportation Manager said that the buses could not be used on the service as the buses were not accessible for disabled users. In response to a further question from Councillor Bateman, the Transportation Manager said that the majority of respondents to the paper based survey were over 60 years of age.

The Chairman felt that some of the rural communities could suffer in the process and asked if agreeing routes with Town and Community Councils and the rural transport officer and local members to pick up from other villages could be considered. The Transportation Manager said that a series of meetings had already taken place with Town and Community Councils but said that she would ensure that the issue was raised. She added that other options were being considered along with best practice from other Councils in Wales and England.

The Chairman suggested that the service performance tables be reviewed annually by the Committee including the actions taken by officers to improve the performance of services.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the implementation of the changes as set out within the report and supporting appendices be supported; and
- (b) That the service performance tables be reviewed annually by the Committee including the actions taken by officers to improve the performance of services.

42. IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Environment introduced the report for Members to note and consider elements of the 2013/14 mid year improvement plan monitoring report relevant to this Committee for the period April to September 2013.

Councillor Paul Shotton referred to Flintshire Business Week and the Dragons Den event and queried whether the number of enquiries had increased. He also commented on the Wales Rally and the opportunity to provide the service park at Toyota on Deeside Industrial Park. He said that it was pleasing to see that secondary schools were able to participate. In response, the Head of Regeneration said that it was about converting enquiries into decisions to invest and said that this now ran at 45 to 50%, well above the average for UK Trade

Industry which classed 20% as a good figure so the level achieved in Flintshire was very good. He said that the base for the rally had now been confirmed for three years. Over 400 pupils were expected to attend the Industry Awareness Event whilst the support to new small business via Dragons Den had led to 50 small businesses being set up.

Councillor Neville Phillips asked if Flintshire County Council were making a contribution to the Wales Rally event. The Director of Environment said that the tented village service area was being held in Flintshire but the rally itself was not taking place in the County and therefore Flintshire County Council had not made a contribution to the event in monetary terms. The Cabinet Member for Economic Development welcomed the rally being held in the area for three years.

The Chairman welcomed the creation of jobs by existing companies in the county and asked if it was possible to provide data on how English enterprise zones were performing to allow Members to make comparisons with the Deeside enterprise zone. He also referred to page 115 and strengthening links between schools, colleges and employers and asked if the scheme was to be expanded. The Head of Regeneration agreed to provide comparative information in future reports and said that, where possible, the links would be improved.

The Chairman also referred to page 119 on the implementation of the 20mph advisory zones outside schools and asked whether an order for adoption of the zones had been agreed. The Head of Assets and Transportation said that some zones would be based on accident statistics but advised Members that because the signs were non standard, approval from Welsh Government (WG) was needed; negotiations with WG were ongoing on how to take this forward.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

43. ENVIRONMENT MID YEAR SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Director of Environment introduced the report to note and consider the 2013/14 mid year service performance report produced at the Head of Service Level under the adopted business model of the Council for the period April to September 2013.

The Chairman requested that due to the time, that the officers restrict their comments to exception reporting and then answer any questions from Members. The Director of Environment suggested that as the information was contained in the report, that officers just answer questions from Members.

Councillor Peter Curtis raised the issue of leaves causing obstructions and asked that sweeping them away be included in the maintenance programme for 2014/15. The Cabinet Member for Environment encouraged Members to contact the Streetscene supervisors if they had any concerns.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development raised concern that the report was not being given full consideration and referred Members to page 170 where the events supported by the tourism small grant scheme were reported.

He advised that the scheme was reviewed on an annual basis. He also referred to page 172 where the number of jobs which had been created (1,038) or safeguarded (946) within the County (of which 639 jobs had been created and 396 safeguarded within the Deeside Enterprise Zone) which he felt were impressive figures; he added that Flintshire County Council should be proud of its involvement. The Cabinet Member for Economic Development also highlighted page 175 on the Dragons Den event and the 50 entrepreneurs that had been supported through the Enterprise Club.

Councillor Neville Phillips asked if £3,000 was still paid to close the roads in Buckley each year during the Buckley Jubilee. The Head of Assets and Transportation said that he would make enquiries and advise Councillor Phillips.

On the issue of not giving the reports full consideration, the Director of Environment said that there was a need to manage future agendas accordingly. Councillor Curtis felt that limiting it to one presentation per meeting would help.

RESOLVED:

That the reports be noted.

44. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

She explained that the budget meeting scheduled for 16 December 2013 would not now take place as it had been agreed that workshops would be held in December to look at the budget and that formal Overview & Scrutiny meetings to consider the budget would be held in January 2014. The meeting scheduled for 16 December 2013 to consider Broadband and North Wales Residual Waste Treatment Partnership would be held at the rise of the budget workshop. The meeting on 22 January 2014 would consider reports on Town Centres & High Streets, a review of the Council's Waste Policy and North Wales Residual Waste Treatment Project. The Facilitator also detailed the items for consideration at the 26 February 2014 meeting.

Councillor Peter Curtis raised concern that the performance reports had not been considered in depth at this meeting and suggested that special meetings be held for performance issues to prevent consideration of a large number of items on agendas such as for this meeting. He felt that Members had missed out on receiving verbal updates that were provided by officers when introducing the performance reports for their service areas. The Chairman explained that the performance reports had not been available to submit to a previous meeting but that he would try to ensure that future agendas were not too long. He agreed that special meetings could be held when there were several items to submit to a particular committee meeting.

The Director of Environment said that the North Wales Residual Waste Treatment Project Joint Committee was due to meet on 16 January 2014 instead of in December 2013 as had been originally agreed and therefore it would not be

possible to submit a report for a meaningful discussion to the meeting on 22 January 2014. He advised that he would discuss with the Chairman and Environment and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator as to whether to delay the report to the 26 February 2013 meeting or to request that a special meeting be held to consider the item.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be approved subject to the amendments suggested.

45. 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 12.44 pm)

.....
Chairman