

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
2 APRIL 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 2 April 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Matt Wright (Chairman)

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Peter Curtis, Chris Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, David Evans, Veronica Gay, Joe Johnson, Colin Legg, Nancy Matthews and Carolyn Thomas

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Cindy Hinds, Ray Hughes, Ann Minshull and Paul Shotton

ALSO PRESENT: Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

CONTRIBUTORS: Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection & Leisure, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Director of Environment, Head of Regeneration, Head of Assets & Transportation and Directorate Support & Performance Manager

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

71. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

72. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2014 had been circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

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

73. IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Environment introduced Lynne Fensome, who was responsible for collating the performance data on behalf of the Directorate. He introduced the report for the Committee to note and consider elements of the 2013/14 Mid Year Improvement Plan Monitoring Report relevant to the Committee for the period October to December 2013.

The Heads of Service each gave a short presentation on performance within each of the sub-priority areas, highlighting work which had been undertaken to improve performance and areas where improvement was needed, as outlined within each report.

Business Sector Growth in Deeside

It was noted that in the absence of nationally agreed performance indicators (PIs) for economic development, locally identified PIs were used.

In response to queries from Councillor Nancy Matthews about the Deeside Enterprise Zone (DEZ), it was explained that the majority of jobs created were on the Deeside Industrial Park which formed part of the DEZ. All Enterprise Zones would have access to high-speed broadband, with a proposal for the companies in Deeside to connect to cable delivered to the kerb edges.

Councillor Veronica Gay referred to the number of enquiries for companies to invest in the DEZ and asked about the potential to use software to enable enquiries to be logged, similar to that used by some other Councils. The Head of Regeneration explained that the Welsh Government (WG) was the lead in promoting Enterprise Zones in Wales and that a range of information was accessible on the DEZ website. The 'Evolutive' database was used to collate information on enquiries received and links had also been established with estate agents for commercial properties.

Following comments from Councillor David Evans, the Head of Regeneration said that a great deal of interest had been generated on the site due to its size in comparison with others in the UK. It was recognised that timing was a key issue to ensure that enquiries were actioned promptly. He went on to give examples of companies who had shown interest and said that developers had also been approached by outside interests. The Director referred to comments on the proposal to build houses on the site and stated that no decision had yet been reached on the number of units to be approved within the planning applications submitted by both landowners, Praxis and Pochin Rosemound Development Ltd (PRDL). A special Planning Committee to be held at the end of the week would determine the application submitted by PRDL but would set a number of conditions to be satisfied, including agreement on the number of houses to be built.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development gave further examples of larger companies who had enquired about the site and spoke about the significance of the three year extension to Enhanced Capital Allowances available to companies investing in Enterprise Zones.

The Chairman reinforced the need to deal with enquiries on the site in a timely manner.

Following concerns raised by Councillor Ian Dunbar on the potential for flooding, the Director said that remodelling work had been undertaken to

confirm that the proposed flood attenuation measures for the site would not create flooding issues elsewhere along the river.

In highlighting the importance of boosting manufacturing in the area, Councillor Colin Legg acknowledged the progress made by the Head of Regeneration with support from Cabinet.

Town and Rural Regeneration

In response to clarification sought by Councillor Chris Dolphin on achievement measures in relation to Linking Flintshire's Communities and the Community Key Fund, the Chairman requested that future performance reports include example case studies.

Councillor Dunbar felt it was important that the Deeside Forum maintained focus on town centres and not just the DEZ. He referred to the decline in use of some town centres, including Connah's Quay, of which the rise in internet shopping was only part of the problem. The Head of Regeneration explained that the focus of the DEZ was in terms of creating employment opportunities and investment in manufacturing businesses whereas the work on the Deeside strip was a separate issue. However, both areas of work could benefit from each other. The steady decline in use of town centres had escalated over a period of time mainly due to an increase in consumers' use of supermarkets although there may be potential to explore options for two town centres within close proximity to operate as a single entity. The Chairman reminded Members that Town Centres was an item included on the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

Councillor Peter Curtis spoke of the need for various groups within communities to work together for the benefit of their towns, for example, Streetscene, Flintshire Connects and local businesses.

More information was requested by Councillor Haydn Bateman on the parking projects at Gamfa Wen in Talacre. The Head of Regeneration advised that through the Rural Development Programme, work was being undertaken to address serious parking problems in the area during busy times following a positive outcome to discussions with Natural Resources Wales.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment took the opportunity to share information on the availability of toilet facilities at Talacre.

The Chairman noted that the PI for 'scale and take up of the Business Grant Scheme in town centres' should have been allocated a green status instead of amber, as the current outturn had surpassed the target.

Social Enterprise

In response to a query from Councillor Matthews on capital seed corn funding, the Head of Regeneration said that each social enterprise was different and that the possibility of offering grants/loans at low interest would

be explored. Funding secured for a part-time project manager would involve dealing with new projects to create social enterprises together with some existing ones with the potential to expand the range of services they provided.

Following comments from Councillor Dolphin on the policy and promotion of Community Asset Transfers (CATs), the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment gave examples of some transfers which had recently been authorised and said that the Cabinet was keen to see a more efficient way of dealing with these to speed up the rate of transfers taking place.

Apprenticeships and Training

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development commented on the success of the Business Entrepreneurship Network, which had been acknowledged by the Minister for Economy, Science & Transport.

Following a question from Councillor Evans on the 'Reaching Higher, Reaching Wider' initiative, the Head of Regeneration explained that funding secured from WG helped an organisation based in Wales to encourage more young people nation-wide to pursue science-based subjects.

Councillor Dolphin suggested that an invitation could be extended to West Flintshire Community Enterprises to attend a future meeting of the Committee to provide information on their role.

Traffic and Road Management

In relation to the planned implementation of 20mph advisory zones at the remaining schools in Flintshire, officers provided clarification on the reasons for the delay in receiving authorisation from WG on the signage. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment said that although this particular issue had been a challenge, there was a need to proceed with this important initiative which was already in place at 19 of the county's schools.

Councillor Curtis referred to the County Council issuing parking permits to individuals in essential public services, such as carers who needed to undertake regular visits as part of their work. The Director gave an undertaking to consider the practice of other Councils in North Wales on this issue to ensure a consistent approach across North Wales, with Denbighshire Council as the single enforcement body. A response would be reported back to the Committee.

The Head of Assets & Transportation agreed to respond to queries raised by Councillors Dunbar and Evans outside the meeting in relation to ward issues.

Following a query from Councillor Gay on parking, the Head of Assets & Transportation provided clarification on the Council enforcing yellow line restrictions whereas parking obstructions on pavements where there were no

lines were the responsibility of North Wales Police. Further information was available on the link to the Wales Penalty Processing Partnership (WPPP) site which could be accessed via the Council's website.

Traffic Infrastructure and Services

In response to clarification sought by Councillor Dolphin on the criteria used in the survey to ascertain the condition of roads, the Director agreed to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee.

Following a question from Councillor Bateman on cycleways, the Head of Assets & Transportation explained that the emphasis of funding available had changed from leisure use to supporting the local economy. This was being utilised to improve individuals access to local industry such as Airbus. Whilst the need to provide cycleway facilities between Mold and Flint was recognised, this route did not meet the current criteria for funding.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Dunbar on the Deeside strip, the Head of Assets & Transportation spoke about the restrictions due to the layout but reported that progress was being made to improve the traffic flow, despite a slight delay to the project. Explanation had been given to local residents and acknowledged by local groups who had originally requested that this work proceed. The Director referred to around £1m funding from WG to invest in the synchronisation of the traffic lights along the route and said that although the current impact of work was unavoidable, the benefits of relieving congestion should be seen in the long-term.

Carbon Control and Reduction

The Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection & Leisure reported that options were being explored to seek alternative methods of recycling heavier materials such as timber, as these did not currently meet the criteria for counting towards recycling figures.

In response to a query from Councillor Dunbar on Flintshire Connects, the Head of Assets & Transportation said it was his understanding that the planned completion date for the centre in Connah's Quay was June 2014.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be received; and
- (b) That feedback be provided to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

74. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Environment & Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented a report to seek views on the Committee's Forward Work Programme. She referred to the next ordinary meeting scheduled for the

morning of 7 May 2014 to discuss progress on the North Wales Residual Waste Treatment Project and suggested that this be changed due to detailed consideration of this topic at the previous meeting. It was agreed that this slot could instead be used for a workshop (from 9am to 12.30pm) to consider town centre planning if the speakers were available, otherwise an alternative date in May 2014 could be scheduled.

Of the items yet to be scheduled, it was noted that Natural Resources Wales had been invited to attend the meeting on 11 June 2014 with the item incorporating discussion on flood alleviation. On the Energy Switching Scheme Update, it was agreed that a briefing note from the Head of Assets & Transportation would be circulated to the Committee prior to scheduling this item for formal discussion. The Director spoke of the need to complete the speed limit review of A and B roads prior to consideration of the item on C roads and that the deferred item on Streetscene should remain on hold, pending the outcome of the restructuring exercise.

Items to be scheduled on the Forward Work Programme were:

- Heritage theme and conservation issues, previously suggested by Councillor Ray Hughes;
- West Flintshire Community Enterprises, suggested by Councillor Chris Dolphin earlier in the meeting;
- Rural development/farming and agriculture, suggested by Councillor Colin Legg, to give reassurance on the support available to farming businesses in Flintshire.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be updated accordingly.

75. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public in attendance.

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

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Chairman