

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
22 OCTOBER 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 22 October 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Hilary Isherwood (Chair)

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Peter Curtis, Chris Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, David Evans, Veronica Gay, Cindy Hinds, Ray Hughes, Joe Johnson, Nancy Matthews, Ann Minshull, Paul Shotton and Carolyn Thomas

SUBSTITUTION:

Councillor Dave Mackie for Colin Legg

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor Richard Lloyd attended as an observer

CONTRIBUTORS:

Cabinet Member for Environment, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure, Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise), Chief Officer (Planning and Environment) and Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation)

Mr. Nick Taylor and Mr. Mike Dodd for minute number 25

Parking Services Manager for minute number 26

Enterprise Manager & Economic Development Manager for minute number 27

IN ATTENDANCE:

Environment and Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Chief Officer (Planning and Environment) circulated information to Members on Enforcement cases which had been requested at the previous meeting.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Peter Curtis declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 (West Flintshire Community Enterprises – presentation) as he was the Secretary of the West Flintshire Community Enterprises.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 (Improvement Plan Monitoring Report) as she was on the Board of Cadwyn Clwyd.

24. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 September, 2014 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Matters Arising

Councillor Carolyn Thomas asked that it be noted that she strongly supported the staffing structure for Planning and Environment and requested that the minutes be amended to reflect her comment.

RESOLVED:

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

25. WEST FLINTSHIRE COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES

The Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise) introduced Mr. Nick Taylor, Chair of West Flintshire Community Enterprises (WFCE) and Mr. Mike Dodd, Social Enterprise Development Lead Officer to Communities First.

Mr. Taylor and Mr. Dodd provided a detailed presentation on the WFCE the main features of which were:-

- Background
- Current and Planned Projects
- Arts & Crafts Mill
- Bubble Gum
- Artisan Shop
- Future Plans and Opportunities
- Greenfield Docks

Councillor Nancy Matthews sought clarification on how WFCE was funded and the sort of grants that could be applied for. Mr. Dodd explained that £100,000 funding had been provided to set up West Flintshire Community Enterprises (WFCE). He added that WFCE charged rent on the office space above the Artisan Shop and for delivery of training in the IT suite/training room which would provide WFCE with an income. Mr. Dodd said that it was more important to break even in the first year rather than make a profit and it was hoped that the revenue from the Artisan shop would increase in line with increases in the rent for the shop. Mr. Taylor explained that bids were submitted in association with other partnerships which was a positive way of submitting an application. Mr. Dodd confirmed that WFCE did not employ a grant funding officer.

Councillor Chris Dolphin referred to his ward and felt that he would like to discuss issues relating to Social Enterprise in Carmel and Whitford with Mr. Taylor and Mr. Dodd. He commented on the work undertaken in the Greenfield Docks area and asked whether it was problems with planning permission that were preventing the work progressing. He supported the proposals suggested in the presentation but queried why the process was taking so long. Councillor Dolphin also felt that the issue relating to the transfer of the asset of the Old Gatehouse needed to be resolved.

The Cabinet Member for Environment raised significant concern about the comments of Councillor Dolphin in relation to the Planning Department and referred to the process that needed to be followed when submitting a planning application. Mr. Dodd indicated that discussions had taken place with Planning Officers and progress had been made. The Chief Officer (Planning and Environment) advised that officers would undertake discussions with any potential developers and added that he was happy to address any problems which had arisen.

Councillor Joe Johnson asked for further information on the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) and where the cards could be obtained from. Mr. Dodd said that the cards were currently only available from offices in Rhyl or Sandbach but that he was to apply for a licence to deliver them in Holywell. He also commented on the fee for the cards and how this could be funded for those unable to afford it.

The Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise) commented on the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme and suggested that the proposed CSCS Testing Centre could be used to deliver the contractual training requirements for the programme.

Councillor Peter Curtis spoke of his background with the Communities First project and his involvement with the WFCE. He commented on the work which had been undertaken with Planning on the Greenfield Docks project and added that it was necessary to identify whether there was contamination on the site. The café facility in the Artisan shop, which provided wholesome food at a reasonable cost, had been extremely successful. He said that initially WFCE had been seen as a threat to Communities First but he was pleased to report that both projects were working hand in hand. He encouraged other Members to undertake a community enterprise in their area.

On the issue of asset transfer and social enterprises, Councillor Carolyn Thomas said that it was important that information was available to provide details which included who to contact and where grants could be obtained from. The Cabinet Member for Environment confirmed that a pack containing all of the required information was being prepared and would be shared with the Committee once it was available. He appreciated that there were legal issues which could slow down the process of asset transfer but added that the Chief Officer Team were aware of the need to streamline the process. The Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure added that the Flintshire Local Voluntary Council would also be able to assist with information on community asset transfer. Councillor Veronica Gay queried whether One Voice Wales could also be included in any details on asset transfer. Councillor Curtis spoke of the importance of having a person who had experience of preparing grant applications to ensure all available funding was sought.

The Chair thanked Mr. Dodd and Mr. Taylor for their presentation and suggested that an update on WFCE could be provided in the future.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be received.

26. 12 MONTH PROGRESS REPORT FOLLOWING THE INTRODUCTION OF CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT MEASURES

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced the report to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) arrangements since the launch of the service in October 2013. He introduced Joanna Jones, the Parking Services Manager to the Committee.

The Parking Services Manager detailed the background to the report and explained that five Civil Parking Enforcement Officers (CPEO) were employed by the Council. The CPEOs worked a flexible 37 hour week with a Summer/Winter shift pattern which covered seven days of the week. They were provided with personal video monitoring equipment and they carried a lone working personal safety device. The Police had been required to provide assistance to deal with verbal abuse from members of the public on three occasions, one of which was still ongoing.

The daily routes of the CPEOs were created from information/complaints gathered from Councillors, Police, Headteachers and members of the public and every effort was made to ensure that where possible each town in the County was visited each week? . Specific problem areas were patrolled more regularly and this included patrols around schools at the start and end of the school day. The income received from on-street enforcement was allocated within the CPE financial model to offset associated costs and it was important to ensure that the model was sustainable and reported a break-even financial position on an annual basis. The Parking Services Manager also referred to the Wales Penalty Processing Partnership (WPPP) which was hosted by Denbighshire County Council to process the penalty notices that were issued. There had been a significant increase in usage in all car parks across the County over the past year and the number of penalty notices had fallen in certain areas.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) advised that it was proposed that a pilot Resident Parking Scheme be introduced in an area of the County, which had not yet been identified, where such parking problems were currently being experienced. A report would be submitted to this Committee on the outcome of the pilot scheme once it had been completed to establish whether the scheme would be rolled out across the County. He also advised that a report on the Blue Badge scheme was to be submitted to Cabinet in November 2014 with details on the assessment criteria and the proposals of the service by the CPEOs.

Councillor Haydn Bateman thanked the Parking Services Manager for the report. He sought clarification on how prevention of parking on grass verges and pavements was being undertaken. The Parking Services

Manager explained that CPEOs could only issue a penalty notice if there was a traffic restriction in place in front of the vehicle and that it would be a matter for the Police if a traffic restriction was not in place. On the issue of the location for the pilot Resident Parking Scheme, Councillor Bateman suggested that Stanley Street in Mold be considered. Councillor Dave Mackie, on behalf of Councillor Mike Peers, asked that Church Road in Buckley and Drury Lane in Drury be put forward as possible areas for the pilot scheme. The Cabinet Member for Environment commented on other suggestions that he had received.

In response to a comment from Councillor Ian Dunbar about a problem in his ward of parked cars which blocked the road, the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) advised that CPEOs could only issue a penalty notice if the vehicles were parked illegally and asked Councillor Dunbar to provide him with the details following the meeting. The Cabinet Member for Environment indicated that unless traffic regulation orders were in place, the CPEOs were unable to issue a penalty notice.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas referred to the provision of new yellow lines in the County and asked whether CPEOs would issue fines for dropping of litter. She highlighted paragraph 3.08 where it was reported that the policy on reintroducing car park charges at towns in the County other than Mold, which already charged for parking, may have to be reconsidered in the future. The Cabinet Member indicated that a report was to be submitted to Cabinet which recommended the introduction of charging for every Council car park across Flintshire. On the issue of yellow lines, the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) said that a large number of requests for new road markings had been received and work was ongoing to prioritise the requests.

Councillor Ann Minshull asked if the CPEOs experienced any language difficulties when dealing with parking issues. The Parking Services Manager responded that some problems were experienced but the CPEOs had not identified it as a major concern.

On the issue of the pilot Resident Parking Scheme, Councillor Dave Evans felt that the criteria for the scheme should be sent out to all Councillors to allow them to put forward suggestions in their wards. The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) said that only one scheme would be chosen for the pilot scheme and that Members would have the opportunity to put forward their suggestions for the second phase of the project. The Cabinet Member for Environment indicated that the report considered at Cabinet had given delegated authority to officers to choose an appropriate area for the pilot scheme and that asking Members for their suggestions at this stage could delay the process. Councillor Veronica Gay reiterated the request for the criteria to be sent to all Members. Councillor Evans also requested details of the locations for on and off street parking fines and whether information on parking hotspots was being analysed and whether this would be used to eliminate future problems. The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) confirmed that problem areas would be looked at and

alternative proposals considered. He added that the level of detail requested on parking problems could be provided.

Councillor Chris Dolphin asked if there would be a cost to residents for the Resident Parking Scheme permit. The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) confirmed that no proposals for charges had been submitted at this stage but that this would be reviewed once a pilot scheme area had been identified. Councillor Bateman indicated that a charge of £100 per property was imposed by Chester Council and that 70% of the residents had to agree to participate in the scheme before it could be implemented.

Councillor Joe Johnson referred to a number of double yellow lines which he did not feel were necessary and asked if the lines would be removed. The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) advised that requests for removal or inclusion of traffic markings would be prioritised and necessary consultation would be undertaken. Councillor Cindy Hinds commented on a problem in her ward, particularly during school start and finish times, where cars parked in an area outside old age pensioner's bungalows had caused a problem for an ambulance which needed to access a property. The Cabinet Member for Environment spoke of traffic restriction orders and said that enforcement would be used in areas where the orders were in place but breached.

In referring to the small number of CPEOs employed by the authority, Councillor Veronica Gay asked how they could deal with the large number of problem areas around schools and asked if consideration had been given to employing CPEOs in partnership with Town and Community Councils to allow them to concentrate on particular areas. She also referred to the lack of disabled parking areas in Saltney and asked if this was to be reviewed. The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) requested that Councillor Gay provide him with the details following the meeting.

Councillor Peter Curtis referred to parking issues in his ward and said that there was a need for flexibility and common sense approach as some cars were wider than the spaces provided in the car parks. He sought clarification on the Blue Badge Scheme and was advised by the Parking Services Manager that Flintshire employees would be carrying out the assessments for the badges. The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) advised that a report which was to be submitted to a future meeting of Cabinet would provide more details.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the progress of the CPE Service in the first year since its launch be noted; and
- (b) That a further report providing feedback on the pilot Residents Parking Scheme is brought to a future meeting once a full evaluation has taken place.

27. IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORT

The Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise) introduced a report to consider elements of the 2014/15 Improvement Plan Monitoring Report relevant to the Committee for the period April to July 2014.

Representatives from each of the service areas gave a short presentation on the Improvement Plan progress, outlining the progress status, how the achievements would be measured and the actions/arrangements in place to control the risk. They also answered questions, as shown below, on each of the following service areas:-

- Business Sector Growth
- Town and Rural Regeneration
- Social Enterprise
- Traffic and Road Management
- Transport Infrastructure and Services
- Carbon Control and Reduction

Business Sector Growth

The Chair sought clarification on the number of new jobs that had been created and the Enterprise Manager explained that the total was made up of full and part time posts.

On the Implementation of the “masterplan” for the Northern Gateway site to facilitate development of a key part of the Enterprise Zone, the Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise) advised that funding had now been confirmed for the flood defence works and it was anticipated that the work, which had been delayed slightly, would commence shortly. It was hoped that the completion of this work would allow housing and economic development schemes to progress.

Councillor Paul Shotton welcomed the commencement of the works and the creation and safeguarding of jobs within the Deeside Enterprise Zone (DEZ). The Cabinet Member for Economic Development indicated that the 60% conversion rate in businesses investing in the area was the best result in the country for Enterprise Zones. Councillor Ian Dunbar welcomed the progress of the work on the DEZ.

The Chief Officer (Planning and Environment) advised that a diversion order for the right of way on the site was being finalised.

Town and Rural Regeneration

Councillor Nancy Matthews sought clarification on the supported renewal projects and the sustained community facilities which were referred to on page 29. The Economic Development Manager advised that he would provide full details following the meeting.

Councillor Paul Shotton gave congratulations on behalf of residents on the Vibrant and Viable Places programme which was underway across Deeside towns which had enhanced overgrown and tired areas.

Social Enterprise

The Environment and Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator advised that this area was led by the Chief Officer (Social Services) who was not able to be in attendance at this meeting. The Cabinet Member for Environment raised concern at this.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas requested that a report on Social Enterprise be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee. The Cabinet Member for Economic Development indicated that it was reported that a workshop event on Social Enterprise was to be held in October 2014.

Traffic and Road Management

In thanking Cabinet for the proposals for safer routes to schools and the 20 mph signs outside schools, Councillor Ian Dunbar sought clarification on whether the speed limit was compulsory. The Cabinet Member for Environment confirmed that some of the limits were mandatory and the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) advised that he would circulate a list of the mandatory speed limits to Members following the meeting.

Transport Infrastructure and Services

On the issue of the rural transport project, Councillor Carolyn Thomas raised concern that it was reported that development of the scheme would be through funding from Cadwyn Clwyd. She explained that this was no longer available as it had been returned to Welsh Government because it had not been spent. She sought assurance that if funding was available, it be applied for and used instead of being returned.

Councillor Veronica Gay referred to the Broughton cycleway and asked how it would affect traffic flow. The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) explained that the work would commence in January 2015 on the left hand side from Saltney to Broughton and it was expected it would be completed by the middle of March 2015. A one-way system for traffic would be in operation for the period of the work.

Carbon Control and Reduction

Councillor Paul Shotton queried whether any land in Flintshire County Council ownership had been identified as potential sites for renewable energy schemes. He also asked that a report on renewables be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee. The Cabinet Member for Environment indicated that a report had been submitted to Cabinet and suggested that a workshop be arranged once a list of sites had been agreed. A report could then be submitted to this Committee before the final decision on a location was taken.

The Chief Officer (Planning and Environment) explained that it was intended to review the Council's land holding and that this work would take a few months to complete. He confirmed that Local Members would be involved in discussions on proposed sites.

RESOLVED:

That the reports be received.

28. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

She advised Members that the site visit to Talacre and North Wales Food Project had been arranged for 2pm on Monday 17 November 2014. A letter providing details of the visit would be circulated to the Committee. The Chair suggested that a meeting could be held prior to any future site visits to encourage attendance on the visits.

The Environment and Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator detailed the reports to be considered at the meetings scheduled for 3 December 2014 and 14 January 2015. She explained that a site visit to a Household Recycling Centre (HRC) would take place in early January 2015 and in response to a query from Councillor Nancy Matthews, the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) advised that a report on all HRCs could be considered prior to the visit.

During earlier discussions, it had been agreed that reports on the following be submitted to future meetings:-

- Update on Flood Alleviation Scheme
- Renewable energy
- Blue Badge Scheme

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) advised that he would be submitting a report on the Winter Maintenance Review to the 23 April 2015 meeting. Councillor Cindy Hinds asked that a workshop for Members be arranged on Community Enterprises. Following a query from Councillor David Evans about enforcement of alcohol free zones, the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) agreed to provide a response following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be noted and amended to reflect the above suggestions.

29. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00am and ended at 12.32 pm)

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Chair