

COMMUNITY & ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
16 OCTOBER 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Monday 16 October, 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Dunbar (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

Councillors: David Cox, Jean Davies, Ron Davies, Rosetta Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, George Hardcastle, Ted Palmer, Mike Reece, Paul Shotton and David Wisinger

SUBSTITUTION: Veronica Gay (for Sian Braun) and Patrick Heesom (for Ray Hughes)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Adele Davies-Cooke

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Christine Jones, Cabinet Member for Social Services

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Bernie Attridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing; Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development; Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise), Enterprise and Regeneration Manager, Finance Manager Corporate Accounting and Systems, Finance Manager Community Services and Energy Officer

IN ATTENDANCE: Community & Enterprise Facilitator and Democratic Services Support Officer.

20. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

The Facilitator advised that it had been confirmed at the Annual Meeting of the County Council that the Chair of the Committee should come from the Labour Group. As Councillor Ian Dunbar had been appointed to this role by the Group, the Committee was asked to endorse the decision.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Ian Dunbar be confirmed as the Chairman of the Committee.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

22. FINANCIAL FORECAST AND STAGE ONE OF THE BUDGET 2018/19

The Finance Manager Corporate Accounting and Systems introduced the report which set out the current financial forecast for 2018/19 and emergent options and financial pressures for the Community and Enterprise portfolio.

The financial forecast as detailed in section 1.04 of the report had been revised to take into account decisions made as part of the 2017/18 budget, and updated with the

latest information on pressures from service portfolios. A settlement at or similar to the 2017/18 financial baseline was used as the basis for calculating the forecast for 2018/19 and no modelling for raised Council Tax levels had been included at this stage.

The Finance Manager Corporate Accounting and Systems concluded that stage one service portfolio proposals were being presented throughout October to all Overview & Scrutiny Committees for review. The Provisional Settlement for Local Government in Wales was due to be announced on 10 October, 2017. The Final Settlement was expected later in the calendar year and would follow the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget statement which was due to be made on 22 November, 2017.

The Chairman invited the Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) to present the Resilience Statement and Operating Models for the Community & Enterprise portfolio.

The Chief Officer outlined the Resilience Statement as appended to the report, which detailed efficiencies made to date and the impacts these efficiencies had on the services within the Community & Enterprise Portfolio.

The Finance Manager Community Services detailed the proposed efficiencies for 2018-19 which totalled between £0.837m and £0.893m, as detailed within the Future Operating Model, shown at Appendix 2. The proposed efficiencies included new arrangements for telephone charges to contact the Connects Service, adjustment to bad debt provision, workforce efficiencies and savings in CTRS Scheme.

Councillor Paul Shotton referred to Welfare Rights and the Flintshire staff members working with the Citizens Advice Bureau helping to support claimants with Universal Credit which had huge implications. He asked that the availability of free school meals be highlighted more by school governors. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing suggested lobbying anyone who had influence either nationally or locally as this was not taken up by all families who could access this service. Councillor Rosetta Dolphin referred to free school meals and suggested more conversations with parents would be beneficial to encourage this to be taken up.

Councillor Dolphin welcomed vacant homes being brought back into use to reduce the number of families having to be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. She also commented on the Welfare Rights Team and was surprised that there were only 2 members of staff within the team and asked if this had an impact on the service being delivered.

In response, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing commented on universal credit claimants having to wait up to six weeks and in some cases four to five months for their claims to be processed. He gave an assurance that no further budget efficiencies would be found within the Welfare Rights Team in addition to what was proposed in this report.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee was satisfied with the approach being taken to the Budget within the Community & Enterprise portfolio.

23. DOMESTIC ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME

The Enterprise & Regeneration Manager introduced the report and gave an overview on the following:-

- The Domestic Energy Efficiency Programmes which had been delivered in Flintshire over recent years to households in both the Council stock and private sector;
- The total of 4325 households who had received support in the last five years; and
- An outline on the measures which would save households money in the future and also would save over 123,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions.

There was limited Welsh Government (WG) funding for domestic energy efficiency programmes to private sector homes currently available and the future of energy funding was unclear.

The main programmes of work which were outlined in the report, included:-

- Solar photo-voltaic panels
- External wall information
- Gas infill Schemes
- Off-gas pilot project
- Affordable Warmth Crisis Fund and Healthy Homes Healthy People and
- Energy Advice and Community Engagement through the North Wales Energy Advice Centre

Councillor Paul Shotton welcomed the loft insulation and solar panel initiatives which would provide savings for residents and asked if there were any other energy saving innovations being considered for the future. The Enterprise & Regeneration Manager reported that efficiency tariffs and social tariffs were currently being looked at.

Councillor George Hardcastle also agreed with Councillor Shotton's comments and asked if the solar programme was purely for bungalows. He also asked how much it cost to install these and what would happen if the resident did not want them installed.

In response, the Enterprise & Regeneration Manager reported that these panels were not solely for use on Bungalows but the programme had been designed to provide maximum benefit to tenants. The cost of installation was between £3,500 and £4,000 for a full set of panels. If a resident refused to have solar panels installed then the installation would not proceed. But in future if a new resident at the property wanted to have them installed this would be added to the potential programme for that year and if possible they would be installed.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the domestic energy efficiency programmes delivered in Flintshire.

24. **COMMUNITIES FIRST**

The Enterprise & Regeneration Manager introduced the report and provided background to the Committee on when the Communities First programme had been established in 2001 to tackle poverty. In February 2017 the Welsh Government (WG) announced the phasing out of the programme on 31 March 2018. The 'Communities 4 Work' employment programme would not be affected and would continue until March 2020.

The WG would be operating two new programmes from 1 April 2018 onwards:-

- The Legacy Fund, would offer small scale funding to Local Delivery Bodies to enable them to continue to deliver effective Communities First activities, for a further two years.
- The second programme, the Employability programme, would provide Local Delivery Bodies with the management infrastructure for the Communities 4 Work programme.

The Enterprise & Regeneration Manager reported the role of the offices in Flint, Holywell, Mold and Deeside was to get people into work and that there had been significant delivery and focus in Flintshire with support and training provided. The LIFT Mentoring Programme which was attached to Communities First and was funded until 31 March 2018. The Legacy Fund would deliver some options.

He outlined the proposals in the employability work stream within the North Wales Deal programme which were designed to get more people in poverty in work:-

- North Wales Employment Escalator
- The Skills Bank
- Enhanced Careers and Guidance Programme
- Work Place Bursaries Programme and
- Apprenticeships and work placements

Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, referred to the report and specifically all of the initiatives that had been delivered and the range of recruitment schemes that had enabled people to gain employment. He felt that the report overall highlighted the good working relationship the Council had with local businesses.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

25. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration. It was agreed that the SARTH item be moved to the Spring meeting together with an update report on the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and New Homes.

Councillor George Hardcastle referred to the speed at which a housing officer had dealt with an emergency response from Carelink and asked that his thanks be passed on to the officer for their hard work.

Councillor Paul Shotton asked that a report on smart meters be included in the Forward Work Programme for consideration at a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be amended; and
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

26. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.28 pm)

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Chairman