

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
12 SEPTEMBER 2018

Minutes of the meeting of Flintshire County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 12 September 2018

PRESENT: Councillor Paul Cunningham (Chairman)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Janet Axworthy, Haydn Bateman, Marion Bateman, Chris Bithell, Sian Braun, Helen Brown, Clive Carver, Geoff Collett, Bob Connah, David Cox, Jean Davies, Rob Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Chris Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Mared Eastwood, Carol Ellis, David Evans, Veronica Gay, Patrick Heesom, Andrew Holgate, Dave Hughes, Kevin Hughes, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Joe Johnson, Paul Johnson, Rita Johnson, Tudor Jones, Colin Legg, Brian Lloyd, Richard Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Billy Mullin, Ted Palmer, Mike Peers, Vicky Perfect, Neville Phillips, Ian Roberts, Tony Sharps, Aaron Shotton, Paul Shotton, Ralph Small, Ian Smith, Carolyn Thomas, Martin White, David Wisinger and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Sean Bibby, Derek Butler, Rosetta Dolphin, Andy Dunbobbin, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Christine Jones, Hilary McGuill, Mike Reece, Michelle Perfect, Owen Thomas, Andy Williams and David Williams

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive; Chief Officer (Governance); Chief Officer (Education & Youth); Corporate Finance Manager; Interim Finance Manager (Technical Accountancy) and Technical Accountant Democratic Services Manager; Democratic Services Officer; and Reverend David Poulton for prayers. (For minute no. 38) Richard Harries and Mike Whiteley of Wales Audit Office.

29. PRESENTATION

Connah's Quay Nomads

The Chairman welcomed John and Roma Gray, Ray Brown, and Jay Catton, in recognition of Connah's Quay Nomads third successive qualification for the Europa League and Welsh Cup winners 2018.

The Chief Executive provided background information and referred to the value and appreciation of the work undertaken by Connah's Quay Nomads Club regarding its community outreach and participation work, football development, and its partnership work with the Authority, Football Association Wales, Flintshire schools, and Coleg Cambria. He congratulated Connah's Quay Nomads Club on its success and invited Members to express their thanks to the Club's representatives.

The Chairman commented on his enjoyment of watching Connah's Quay Nomads recently play their first home game and also congratulated the Team on their recent win against Falkirk in the Irn Bru Cup.

Councillor Aaron Shotton commented on the fantastic achievement of Connah's Quay Nomads Club in the Welsh Cup final. He referred to the impressive work that the owners, Board members, and coaching team had undertaken to develop the Club in recent years. Councillor Shotton also referred to the development and success of the Quay 3G which had contributed to the development of Connah's Quay Nomads and other youth teams across the County and to the Youth Academy programme. He congratulated the Club on its success and wished it well for the future.

Councillor Paul Shotton expressed his congratulations to the Club on its success and also congratulated Andy Morrison who was named Manager of the Month by the Welsh Premier League.

Councillor Ian Dunbar paid tribute to the success of Connah's Quay Nomads and said the Club was a tremendous asset to Connah's Quay.

Councillor Martin White reiterated the comments made by Members and said he had been proud to attend the Welsh Cup final with his family to support the Club. He thanked the Club for allowing local supporters to take the Trophy on a tour of local venues in Connah's Quay and Shotton and said this had been well received by the local community. He wished the Club well for the future.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson referred to his long standing association with Connah's Quay Nomads Club which he greatly valued and expressed his congratulations to the Club on its success.

On behalf of Connah's Quay Nomad's Club, Mr John Grey thanked Members for their words of recognition and support for all involved.

30. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 19 June 2018 were received.

Accuracy

Page 4, item 16, the Chief Officer (Governance) advised that Councillor David Mackie had declared a personal interest on Agenda item 14 - the Approval of Clwyd Pension Fund Statement of Accounts, as a member of the Clwyd Pension Fund, but this had not been recorded in the minutes.

RESOLVED:

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

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chief Officer advised that a personal interest would be recorded on behalf of the following Members in respect of Agenda Item 12 'North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority:2019-20 Financial Update and Consultation', as members of the Fire Authority:

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Ian Dunbar, Veronica Gay, Paul Shotton, Owen Thomas and David Wisinger.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 6, Petitions - withdrawal of the Buckley Shopper bus service.

32. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

A copy of the Chairman's Communications had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Chairman gave particular mention to the Chernobyl Children's visit, the Chernobyl Church Service and the Chernobyl Children's Farewell Party. He expressed his appreciation to the residents of Flintshire and Cheshire who had welcomed and provided accommodation for the children in their own homes during their visit.

33. PETITIONS

Councillor Jean Davies submitted a petition for a relief road for heavy quarry traffic from Pentre Halkyn.

Councillors Carol Ellis and Mike Peers submitted petitions from the residents of Buckley to object to the loss of the Buckley Shopper bus service and outlined the impact it would have on the residents of Buckley and the viability of the Town Centre.

34. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None were received.

35. QUESTIONS

None were received.

36. NOTICE OF MOTION

The following Notice of Motion had been received from Councillor Tony Sharps:

The Council calls on the Chief Executive to ensure that the Chief and Senior Officers respond to Councillors' requests with courtesy and good manners without any undue delay.

Speaking in support of his Motion, Councillor Sharps referred to the concerns he had raised at a meeting of the County Council on 18 May 2017, on the response times taken by some departments to the matters and concerns raised by Members and said that the Chief Executive had agreed that a set of standards would be created to address the issues raised. Councillor Sharps conceded that there had been some improvement, however, he identified a number of specific issues which had arisen in his Ward where the services provided by the Authority had been below the standard required by the residents of Flintshire. In conclusion Councillor Sharps emphasised the need for improved consultation and communication with Members concerning service delivery.

Councillor Mike Peers spoke in support of the Motion and said it was difficult to meet the needs and expectations of local residents when the advice or response requested from departments to matters raised by Members was either not forthcoming or not provided within an acceptable timeframe.

Councillor Clive Carver said the issue of response times was an historical problem and agreed with the views expressed by Councillor Sharps that urgent action was required to address the matter. He suggested that the issue be submitted to an Overview & Scrutiny Committee for determination.

Councillor Carol Ellis supported the Motion and outlined her personal experiences of delay in receiving a response to matters she had raised on behalf of her local residents. She spoke of the negative impact and frustration when residents were unable to receive answers to their concerns and questions and alluded to the time wasted when Members had to chase a response to contacts and communications.

Councillor Helen Brown also spoke of the need for timely, accurate responses to the matters raised by Members and said these were frequently on behalf of local residents in urgent need of advice and support.

Councillor Aaron Shotton said he supported the Motion by Councillor Sharps, however, he said there was a need to recognise the good working practices and positive engagement and responses provided by the Authority in many areas of service which outweighed the instances where this had fell short of the standard that the Authority wished to provide. He acknowledged the genuine concerns that some Members had raised on issues that had arisen in their Wards and said that the current protocol needed to be reviewed and updated.

The Chief Executive advised that in his response to the Motion put forward by Councillor Tony Sharps he had set out a number of actions to renew the standards and improve performance around them. The Chief Executive said he had discussed the general concerns raised by Councillor Sharps with Chief Officers collectively and the specific issues raised would be addressed in the service areas concerned. Referring to the Standards, the Chief Executive said there were specific timescales in place and that Members and the general public should receive an acknowledgement to an enquiry within 5 working days and a response within 10 working days for general enquiries. If an enquiry was more complex in nature it may take longer than 10 working days to provide a satisfactory response and the person who was making the enquiry should be informed that the response time would be longer due to the information required.

The Chief Executive advised that if Members had an important or complex complaint they could contact him or a Chief Officer to bring the matter to their attention. He also asked Members to share any concerns they had with either himself, the appropriate Chief Officer, or Senior Manager, regarding repeat problems in gaining contact or response from a particular service area, team, or individual, so that the matter could be followed through. In response to a suggestion from Councillor Clive Carver the Chief Executive said a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee to provide an update on work

undertaken on the Standards. The Chief Executive also agreed to reissue a copy of the Standards to Members and the actions to be taken to update them.

Whilst acknowledging the concerns raised by Councillor Tony Sharps the Chief Executive commented that there had been evidence on occasions when Members had shown disrespect and discourtesy towards officers and emphasised the need for both Members and officers to adhere to the standards of behaviour expected. He also commented on the understanding that whilst Members may receive a response it would not necessarily be the resolution sought and said there were complex and lengthy legal matters to be resolved in some cases. In conclusion the Chief Executive said he had been given a commitment by Chief Officers that staff would be held to account where there was evidence of a justifiable complaint and emphasised that it was the responsibility of everyone to uphold the Standards. He reiterated the actions to be taken around the Standards and the need for Members to share information with himself or Chief Officers regarding matters of underperformance so they could be addressed.

The Chief Officer (Governance) clarified that Members were asked to endorse the Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Sharps. The Chairman read out the Notice of Motion and on being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion from Councillor Tony Sharps be supported.

37. RECOGNITION OF IAN BANCROFT

The Chairman led the tributes to recognise the contribution made to the Council by Ian Bancroft, Chief Officer (Strategic Programmes), who left the Authority in August 2018 to join Wrexham County Borough Council.

The Chief Executive commented on Ian's personal qualities, his enthusiasm and energy, which he said would be genuinely missed as well as his professional abilities. He reflected on the 4 years that Ian had served with the Authority and commented on the positive impact of his achievements in delivering organisational change and his expertise and skill in seeing projects through from strategy to task and finish. He looked forward to continuing to work with Ian in the future as Chief Executive of Wrexham County Borough Council.

The Chairman referred to the regeneration of the Foreshaw area in Flint and said that Ian's work and enthusiasm to see the project through had been greatly appreciated by the Regeneration Committee of Flint Town Council.

Councillor Aaron Shotton paid tribute to Ian for his vision and work during his service with the Authority which had enabled services to be maintained and local communities to become more resilient under continuing austerity. He referred to Ian's professional experience, his skill, style, and innovative approach, and cited the work he had undertaken on the transfer of Connah's Quay Swimming Pool from the Authority's operation to Cambrian Aquatics, and the transfer of the Authority's leisure and library services to Aura Leisure and Libraries Limited, as examples of the success

Ian had achieved in working with local communities to develop alternative models for providing service delivery. Councillor Shotton said he looked forward to working with Ian and Wrexham County Borough Council in the future on a regional level and on the Growth Deal.

Councillor Paul Shotton spoke as a member of the Organisational Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee and also expressed thanks to Ian for his professional experience and expertise. He referred to Ian's confidence and reassurance to the Committee that providing service delivery through alternative delivery models and community asset transfers was the best way to safeguard services for the future. He wished Ian every success in his new role in Wrexham County Borough Council.

Councillor Mike Peers commented on the help and advice which Ian had readily provided on matters concerning organisational change and community asset transfers. He congratulated Ian on his appointment and wished him well for the future.

Councillor Tudor Jones referred to the successful community asset transfer of Holywell Leisure Centre. He commented on the impact of the process of community asset transfers as a whole which in Holywell had provided a new library, a reinvigorated leisure centre, a fitness and martial centre in the old library building, and a community agreement between the Leisure Centre and Ysgol Trefynnon for the control of the facility in out of hours. Councillor Jones continued that in conjunction with the Town Council, Holywell had the capacity to continue the provision of all these benefits and had a new force of collaboration and recognition that the process was greater than the individual transfers managed. He said that Flintshire and Holywell had undertaken a major development which was skilfully guided by Ian and his team for over a year. Councillor Jones said that communities would become more resilient as a result of the work which had been done and thanked Ian and his team for their work and the successful legacy which remained. He wished Ian well in his future career.

Councillor Chris Bithell expressed his thanks and appreciation for all Ian's work in Flintshire. He said that despite austerity valuable services had been maintained through the provision of alternative delivery models, community asset transfers, and engagement of voluntary organisations. As a result service delivery to Flintshire communities was ongoing in a new form and the Authority was pleased with what had been achieved. Councillor Bithell paid tribute to the personal skill and qualities of Ian which had achieved success regardless of the challenges or problems to be confronted with groups or individuals. He congratulated Ian on his appointment and said he looked forward to working with Ian through collaboration with Wrexham County Borough Council in the future.

Councillor Ron Davies thanked Ian for the work he had undertaken concerning Theatr Clwyd and in particular around the recruitment process of an Artistic director and an Executive director. He wished Ian every success in the future.

Councillor Carol Ellis said she had found Ian to be helpful and willing to provide advice and support above and beyond expectations.

Councillor Kevin Hughes referred to the community asset transfer of Gwernymynydd Village Centre and thanked Ian for his work on this project. He reiterated the previous comments expressed by Members and commented on the success of the transfer of Connah's Quay Swimming Baths to Cambrian Aquatics.

Councillor Billy Mullin said it had been a privilege to work with Ian and paid tribute to his personal and professional abilities.

Councillors Ted Palmer and Dave Mackie paid further tributes to Ian and said the work he had done had taken the Authority forward and had enabled service delivery to continue with new ideas. Councillor Mackie also thanked Ian for the work he had undertaken regarding Theatr Cymru and said he would welcome the opportunity for the Authority to work with Ian and Wrexham County Borough Council on regional matters in the future.

Following a presentation made by the Chairman on behalf of the Council, Ian thanked Members and Officers for their warm tributes and said he had enjoyed his time in Flintshire and his service with the Authority. He said that as the challenge of austerity was ongoing it was only by local authorities working strongly together as a 'family' group with local communities, Members, and officers, that a way forward could be found to find the right solution for residents and service users to provide and protect public services. He wished Flintshire every success in the future and said he looked forward to working with the Authority again. Ian said it was an honour and a privilege to work in public service and thanked the Authority for his experience during his time in Flintshire.

38. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2017/18 AND SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION TO STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2017/18

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced Richard Harries and Mike Whiteley of the Wales Audit Office, Paul Vaughan, Interim Technical Finance Manager and Richard Lloyd-Bithell, Corporate Finance.

The Corporate Finance Manager presented the final version of the Statement of Accounts 2017/18 for approval following consideration by the Audit Committee prior to the meeting of County Council today. He advised that the report included the Annual Governance Statement which had also been previously considered by the Audit Committee at a meeting held on 6 June 2018 and required approval by Council.

The Corporate Finance Manager reported that the annual statutory deadline for the approval of the Statement of Accounts was currently 30 September, however, the regulations under which the Statement of Accounts was prepared were changing with effect from the financial year 2018/19 which meant that the accounts had to be approved by 15 September. The Statement of Accounts for 2017/18 were successfully prepared to this earlier deadline as preparation for 2018/19.

The Corporate Finance Manager referred to the Wales Audit Office (WAO) ISA (International Standards on Auditing) 260 report. He advised that the WAO were required to communicate relevant matters relating to the audit of the financial statements to those charged with governance of the entity (Flintshire County Council

for the Statements of the County Council). He explained that this year the report took the form of a presentation as a means of improving accessibility, and a copy of the presentation was appended to the report. The Corporate Manager continued that during the audit, changes agreed with the WAO were made to the draft Statement of Accounts 2017/18 and the significant changes were shown in appendix 2 of the report. He explained that the changes related to disclosure purposes only and did not impact on the financial position of the Council.

The Corporate Finance Manager advised that the WAO reported that the Statement of Accounts had been prepared to a good standard with comprehensive working papers attached. The ongoing role of the Accounts Governance Group, which oversees the overall production of the Statement of Accounts and had been effective for the last 2 years, was also noted.

The Corporate Finance Manager reported that the Flintshire County Council Letter of Representation to the WAO was appended to the report and confirmed that the information contained in the financial statements was true and accurate and that all information had been disclosed to the auditors.

Mr Richard Harries, Financial Audit Engagement Lead for Flintshire County Council, introduced himself and his colleague Mike Whiteley from the WAO. Mr. Harries gave a brief introduction, and in a departure from usual practice, presented the ISA 260 report by way of a presentation which covered the following main points:

- overall conclusion
- Auditor General's responsibilities
- audit position and issues arising from the audit
- 2018-19 and future years

In concluding his presentation Mr. Harries summarised the main findings and commented that the audit had gone well and there were no significant issues to bring to the attention of the Council. He thanked the Corporate Finance Manager, the Interim Technical Finance Manager, and the Finance Team, for their work on the accounts and the help and support provided during the audit process.

The Chief Executive thanked Mr. Harries for his presentation and the high level of assurance given to Council that it had been a positive year in accounting terms and there had been no further questions raised at the meeting of the Audit Committee which had been held prior to County Council. The Chief Executive referred to the Clwyd Pension Fund Statement of Accounts, for which approval had been delegated to the Clwyd Pension Fund Committee, and advised that these had been formally approved by the Committee at the meeting held on 5 September 2018.

The Chief Executive spoke in positive terms about corporate ownership of the accounts and the good working professional relationship that existed between the Council and its external auditors which bode well for future work. The Chief Executive thanked the WAO team, the Corporate Finance Manager, Interim Finance Manager, and the Finance team for their work on the accounts.

Councillor Helen Brown reported that the Audit Committee had considered the Statement of Accounts 2017/18 at a meeting held prior to the meeting of County Council today. Officers from the WAO had been in attendance and had presented and explained their findings. The Authority's Finance officers had provided an update on the draft accounts which had been considered at the previous meeting of the Audit Committee. The role and importance of the officer Accounts Governance Groups and the change to the accounting policy on accruals of income and expenditure were explained, and reference was made to the amendments to the Councils' accounts since the draft was published. Councillor Brown stated that following consideration of the WAO presentation on the Statement of Accounts the Audit Committee had no issues or questions to raise to Council.

Councillor Brown expressed her thanks to the Corporate Finance Manager and his team, the WAO, and all involved in the successful completion of the work on the Statement of Accounts 2017/18 prior to the annual statutory deadline. Councillor Brown moved the recommendations in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Billy Mullin.

Councillor Mike Peers raised a number of queries on the Statement of Accounts 2017/18. He sought further information around the additional Council Tax Income of £526k and asked if this could be put into the Revenue Account instead of the Reserve Account. He expressed concern around the £2.7m Council Tax debt and suggested that this be reviewed by the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Peers referred to page 65 of the report and said there was no figure quoted for the proceeds from long and short term investments. He referred to the school remuneration bands and asked officers to provide more information on the salary which was paid to one member of staff. On page 69 of the report Councillor Peers referred to the Declarations of Interest Register for Officers and asked if a public register existed, as it did for Members, to show any declarations made by officers. The final question raised by Councillor Peers was on rent arrears which he said had increased to £1.5m and suggested that this be brought to the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee for further review. The Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Corporate Finance Manager and Interim Finance Manager, responded in detail to the questions and concerns which had been raised by Councillor Peers.

The Chairman asked Members to vote on the recommendations in the report and on being put to the vote, the recommendations were carried.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the final version of the Statement of Accounts 2017/18 be approved;
- (b) That the Letter of Representation – Flintshire County Council; be approved;
and
- (c) That the Supplementary Financial Information to the Statement of Accounts 2017/18 be noted.

39. NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY: 2019-20 FINANCIAL UPDATE AND CONSULTATION

The Chairman welcomed Mr Simon Smith, Chief Officer, Helen McArthur, Assistant Chief Officer, and Sian Morris, Assistant Chief Officer, North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority. The Chairman expressed his appreciation for the work undertaken by the North Wales Fire & Rescue Service during the exceptional prolonged hot weather experienced during the Summer this year.

Councillor Tony Sharps took the opportunity to express his personal thanks to the Fire & Rescue Service who had attended a fire at his property and paid tribute to the speed of the response by the crew based at the Queensferry Fire Station and the excellent work they did to control the situation and make safe his property.

Mr. Smith welcomed the opportunity to return to the Council and said it was with regret Meirick Lloyd Davies, Chair of the Authority, and Peter Lewis, Deputy Chair of the Authority, were unable to attend the meeting and offered their apologies and best wishes to Members and the Authority. Mr. Smith introduced Helen McArthur, Assistant Chief Officer (with responsibility for Corporate Resources) and Sian Morris, Assistant Chief Officer, (with responsibility for Corporate Planning and other areas).

Mr. Smith referred to the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority annual consultation which had been launched 11 September. He said that the consultation concentrated on the resources available to the Fire & Rescue Authority, the budget, and the impact of the ongoing financial restraints which were also on local authorities in North Wales. He said it was important that the Fire & Rescue Authority and local authorities worked together and had a mutual understanding of the ongoing challenges to be addressed. Within this background and context Mr. Smith said it was important that the Fire Authority explained the current position in terms of the Fire & Rescue Authority's budget and its ability to deliver services. Mr. Smith continued that it was intended, following the presentation, to seek informal feedback from the Council on the consultation which would be followed with formal feedback from the County Council by the 2 November 2018 deadline.

Mr. Smith invited Ms Sian Morris to give a presentation on the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority's Planning for 2019/20. The main points of the presentation were as follows:

- North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority
- what the Authority provides
- current spending
- funding fire and rescue services
- moving into 2019/20

Ms Morris reported on the key duties of the Fire & Rescue Authority which were to make sure there were adequate resources to meet the normal requirements of operating and delivering fire and rescue services, to ensure fire fighters were properly trained and equipped, and that when people called 999 they got a response and resources were mobilised. Ms Morris said that the Authority also had to comply with

legislation and regulations and cited General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Welsh language standards, Health & Safety legislation, financial regulations, and equality legislation as some examples.

Ms Morris referred to the work of maintaining cover in fire stations and explained that there were 44 fire stations located throughout North Wales. She said that the majority of stations had one fire engine and one fire crew and that in the main fire fighting staff were retained fire fighters. She reported that the fire stations in Deeside, Wrexham, and Rhyl, were staffed around the clock and said there were a further 5 stations which were staffed throughout the day and operated as retained stations overnight. The remaining 36 stations were wholly retained fire stations.

Ms Morris gave an overview of the emergency incidents attended in North Wales. She said that through its fire prevention work the Fire & Rescue Authority had been successful in reducing the number of fires occurring in North Wales. She continued that through policy and procedural changes the Fire Authority had also reduced the number of times that fire crews had been sent to attend to a false alarm. However, Ms Morris explained that the number of non-fire emergencies attended had increased to reflect the greater diversification of the fire service and cited collaborative work with the ambulance service as an example.

Following a short video on the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority Service Ms Morris concluded her presentation by advising that the Fire & Rescue Authority had recently reviewed its operations and had decided not to consult this year on removal of any of the fire appliances or reduction of fire crews.

Ms Helen MacArthur, Assistant Chief Officer, was invited to give a further presentation on finance and budget implications. Ms MacArthur said she would report on the Fire Authority's expenditure and cost base including some comparisons to other Fire & Rescue Authority's and other North Wales public sector bodies. She said she would also take the opportunity to outline the Fire & Rescue Authority's funding processes, use of reserves, and highlight the challenges for 2019/20. In acknowledging the financial challenges which were also to be addressed by local authorities in North Wales, Ms MacArthur gave an assurance that the Fire & Rescue Authority took its financial responsibilities seriously, managed its expenditure with appropriate due care and diligence, and was as efficient as possible.

Ms MacArthur reported that the Fire & Rescue Authority's expenditure for 2017/18 was £33.3m. She gave a broad breakdown of expenditure and referred to the main areas of employee costs (front line operational work, fire and rescue, prevention, and specialist support), capital financing, and suppliers (ICT and communication costs). Ms MacArthur commented on the significant cost pressures to be addressed by the Fire & Rescue Authority and cited pay awards, an ageing workforce, pension costs, general inflation in the area of capital financing, and ICT, as examples. Ms MacArthur went on to present an historical review of expenditure between 2010/11 and 2018/19 and said expenditure had risen by 8%. She reported on the actions taken to address increased costs and referred to the savings achieved from staff budgets and non-pay budgets, the efficiencies achieved through changes of policy and continued emphasis on reducing demand (prevention), the occasional windfall gains, and the use of reserves.

Ms MacArthur reported on the comparison data presented on the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority in the context of local authority revenue budgets and public sector budgets and on the benchmarking information provided in comparison with other Fire & Rescue Authorities in Mid and West Wales and South Wales.

Ms MacArthur went on to present analysis on County Council contributions and net expenditure and said that for the last 3 financial years the Fire & Rescue Authority's running costs had exceeded the amounts levied on individual councils. For 2019/20 the Fire Authority had reached the point where its reserves could not be depleted further and the running costs would have to be matched by the contributions received from local authorities. The increase in contributions would be £1.9m across all local authorities for this year (according to current planning assessment) and the direct cost to Flintshire would be £420k. Ms MacArthur commented that it was anticipated that due to the financial restraints on the Council it would not be possible to meet the increase in contribution to the Fire Authority from internal reserves and the cost would need to be met from an increase in council tax. The effect of the increase on an average Band D dwelling would equate to an additional £6.53 in 2019/20.

The Chief Executive thanked Mr Simon Smith, Ms Sian Morris and Ms Helen MacArthur for their collective presentation. Members were invited to raise questions.

Councillor Rita Johnson asked the Fire & Rescue Authority's officers to provide further information on its revised policy around attending calls to rescue large animals. Mr. Simon Smith provided background information and explained that the rescue of large animals was a non statutory duty and due to the financial restraints on the Fire & Rescue Authority it had been decided to cease that service. He commented that there had been no real impact on the North Wales community as a result. In response to a further question from Councillor Clive Carver around animal rescue, Mr Simon Smith explained that the Fire & Rescue Service would attend a call when an animal was involved in a significant road traffic accident and cited the transporting of live cattle and horses, as an example.

Councillor Ian Roberts paid tribute to the work of the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority and thanked Mr. Smith for the reassurance and support which had been given to the residents of Flint who lived in high rise buildings following the Grenfell Tower disaster in London last year. Mr. Smith thanked Councillor Roberts for his positive feedback and said the Council was also to be commended for its work on the initial construction of the buildings and the on-going monitoring and use of the high-rise buildings in Flint. He emphasised that preventative work was the key to keeping people safe.

Councillor Mike Peers commented on the positive work undertaken by the Phoenix programme for young offenders and asked if this was ongoing and if it had contributed to the reduction in the number of fires caused in North Wales. Councillor Peers also referred to the comparison data which had been provided on Mid and West Wales and South Wales, and asked if it would also be possible to provide comparison data on Chester/Cheshire West and the cost per head per day. Mr. Smith agreed to provide this information to the Chief Executive following the meeting.

Mr. Smith thanked Councillor Peers for his positive comments on the Phoenix programme and said it was well supported by Members of Flintshire County Council and the Fire & Rescue Authority members. He gave a brief outline of the Phoenix programme and explained it was grant funded by the Welsh Government (WG). Mr. Smith commented that the WG had been supportive of the Programme in the past and continued to share the view that it was a good programme with long lasting effect and would wish to see it continue although its future could not be guaranteed.

Councillors Ian Dunbar and Paul Shotton spoke in support of the Phoenix Programme and its success and also the Community Assistance project. Councillor Shotton referred to the work of the Community Assistance team and expressed his disappointment that funding from the WG had been withdrawn for the valuable work undertaken and said the situation should be reviewed.

In his closing comments the Chief Executive reminded Members that the Fire & Rescue Authority made the final decision on the budget set and Flintshire would be required to pay its levy contribution required of local authorities. He referred to the budget workshops to be held next week and the complexity around how the Council would fund the additional £420k contribution which he said may be funded in whole or part by additional Council Tax above the Council's own requirement.

The Chief Executive referred to the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority's consultation on the draft budget for 2019/20 before it was set in December 2018, and encouraged Members to make individual contributions to the consultation as residents. He said that staff, local residents, and partners would also be encouraged to comment on the consultation to achieve a good overall response in the Flintshire area. The Chief Executive advised that a corporate response would also be made to the consultation.

RESOLVED:

That a corporate response to the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority's consultation on the draft budget be submitted by 2 November 2018.

40. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2pm and ended at 4.50pm)

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Chairman