

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
13 JULY 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held remotely on Monday, 13 July 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Patrick Heesom (Chairman)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Sean Bibby, Chris Dolphin, Andy Dunbobbin, David Evans, Veronica Gay, George Hardcastle, Cindy Hinds, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Joe Johnson, Vicky Perfect, Paul Shotton and Owen Thomas

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Carolyn Thomas, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Countryside; Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy); Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation); Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development; Councillor Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Planning & Public Protection; Regulatory Service Manager; Trading Standards Team Leader and Chief Inspector for Flintshire.

IN ATTENDANCE: Overview & Scrutiny Facilitators and Democratic Services Officer.

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

None were received.

76. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2020 were submitted.

Councillor Paul Shotton moved that the minute be approved as a correct record and this was seconded by Councillor Andy Dunbobbin.

RESOLVED:

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

77. RENEWAL OF PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDERS

Brief overviews were given by the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) and Chief Officer (Planning, Economy and Environment) on the Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's) on Dog Control and Alcohol Control stressing that if the Orders were not put in place would it mean that no enforcement could be carried out. Presentations on the report were then given by the Trading Standards Team Manager and the Regulatory Service Manager.

The Trading Standards Team Manager explained that the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 introduced PSPO's which were designed to stop individuals or groups committing anti-social behaviour in public places. They were first introduced in Flintshire in October 2017 and required renewal after 3 years through the same consultation process.

The current Dog Control PSPO is for dog owners to:

1. Remove their dogs' waste from all public places within Flintshire
2. Have a means on their person to pick up dog waste
3. Place their dog on a lead when asked by an authorised officer if the dog was causing a nuisance
4. Prohibit dogs from entering the playing areas of public marked sports pitches, former recreation areas including but not exclusively bowling greens and tennis courts, fenced equipped children's play areas and all areas within school grounds.
5. Keep their dog on a lead in cemeteries

In 2009 Flintshire County Council introduced a Designated Public Place Order for Alcohol Control which in 2017 automatically transitioned over to the Alcohol Control PSPO which is why it is needed to be renewed. The current PSPO on Alcohol Control was not a total ban on drinking Alcohol but an offence was caused when not complying to a request by North Wales Police to cease drinking or surrender alcohol in a public place. It does not apply to licenced premises areas e.g. beer gardens etc.

The Regulatory Services Manager then explained the enforcement behind the PSPO's since the engagement with Kingdom ended nearly 2 years ago

- In-house enforcement team
- Emphasis on engagement with residents
- Patrols are intelligence lead

The Trading Standards Team Manager gave an overview of the Consultation which was due to run for a slightly longer period due to the current crisis and the holiday period taking place from beginning of August to the end of the first week in September.

- Legal requirements with statutory partners
- Residents online Survey
- Proposed to report the outcomes from the consultation process back to Environment, Overview and Scrutiny in September 2020 to agree a recommendation to Cabinet for approval.

Along with other Members Councillor Shotton endorsed extending the two current PSPO's within Flintshire and was glad that Officers were now back out patrolling after doing other duties due to Covid. He thanked backyard volunteers for the patrolling work they had done in parks in Connah's Quay and asked if Rosie Fishing Park in Wepre Park could also be included in the Dog Control PSPO list as dogs not on leads had wrecked fishing equipment and also killed ducks. Councillor Dunbobbin also asked if Armed Forces could be consulted as part of the consultation having the highest number of veterans in North Wales.

Councillor Dunbobbin wanted to encourage members of the public to share experiences which would increase intelligence and highlight hotspots.

Councillor Hutchinson referred to an incident in his area where the person was too scared to report it in fear of the possible consequences. He commented on people abusing rules giving the example of some, not all, people fishing well into and sometimes overnight on Buckley common breaking the 8.00 pm deadline rule. Evidence of drinking and drug taking had also been found in bushes. Councillor Hutchinson urged the Committee to back the consultation.

Councillor Owen Thomas made the point that areas on playing fields were not always marked which allowed people to walk their dogs anywhere. He suggested that no dog should be allowed on the playing fields unless they were on a lead as they would be easier to control. Councillor Hughes added that metal signs should be put on posts and not on fences as these go missing. In response the Regulatory Service Manager advised that 3 years ago when the initial consultation was undertaken the RSPCA and Dogs Trust advised that open spaces had to be provided for dogs to take exercise especially larger dogs that need to run. She explained that at every entrance to parks there should be a map showing the different zones. Ponds were not within exclusion zones but Authorised Officers had the power to instruct owners to put their dog on a lead if they are causing a nuisance. Residents need to be educated to pick up waste after their dog.

Chief Inspector for Flintshire thanked Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) and Trading Standards Team Leader for inviting her to this meeting and stressed that North Wales Police were fully supportive of the Alcohol Control PSPO and said that it was unfortunate that it had to be reviewed every 3 years under legislation. This is something that needed to be taken into consideration as it has shown a reduction in alcohol related crime, mainly assaults and public order offences and the policing of it was fully supported by Police Staff.

Councillor Dolphin questioned as to why the PSPO's only lasted for a maximum of 3 years when the Council term of Office was 5 years. He asked how it could be extended to 5 years. In response Chief Inspector for Flintshire said that it was a decision by the House of Lords and not at a local level. The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) suggested that he would discuss at next Cabinet meeting and report to Government which the Committee were in agreement with.

In response to a question from Councillor Hardcastle the Regulatory Services Manager confirmed that the Enforcement Team was made up of 7 Officers and 1 Supervisor and as of 2 weeks ago the team were back out on foot patrol. She agreed to provide Members with the number of complaints that had been received since the virus had begun.

Councillor Hinds questioned why the Alcohol Control PSPO didn't include the word drug as over lockdown she had been contacted by the Police concerning the use of drugs on numerous occasions in her area. She emphasised the importance for this to be taken to next Cabinet meeting. Chief Inspector For Flintshire responded by saying that even though it does not include the word drug Trading Standards Team Leader was doing a lot of work with Paul Firth and his team to support any issues in Local Communities.

Police Inspector for Flintshire responded to a comment made by Councillor Hutchinson about out of town gangs targeting the youth. She explained that this was a priority that came under County Lines and that they were working with Merseyside Police on this. Meetings were due to take place over the coming weeks with various organisations one being the Area Planning Board to see what support can be put into problem areas. She agreed that this could not be solved overnight but assured the Committee that this was something that they took seriously, were constantly working on and was not being ignored.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas listed the items that she and Councillor Bithell would report to the next Cabinet meeting which were supported by the Committee.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Paul Shotton and seconded by Councillor Veronica Gay.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes the need to consult with the required consultees and members of the public with the purpose of gaining views to extend the two current PSPO's in Flintshire for a period of three years;
- (b) That the Committee recommends Cabinet approves the consultation methods proposed in the report to gain views on extending the two current PSPO's in Flintshire for a period of three years; and
- (c) That the Committee recommends to Cabinet that representations are made to Government regarding extending the renewal interval for PSPO's to 5 years.

78. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.15 am)

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Chairman