

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
8 DECEMBER 2020

Minutes of the remote meeting of the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Tuesday, 8 December 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Rosetta Dolphin (Chair)

Councillors: Sean Bibby, David Evans, George Hardcastle, Patrick Heesom, Cindy Hinds, Dennis Hutchinson, Joe Johnson, Vicky Perfect, Paul Shotton and Owen Thomas

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Christopher Dolphin for Councillor Kevin Hughes

APOLOGIES: Councillor Kevin Hughes

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Haydn Bateman

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Carolyn Thomas, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Countryside; Councillor Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Planning & Public Protection; Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy); Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), Transport Manager, and Service Delivery Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, and Democratic Services Officer

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

21. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020 were submitted.

The minutes were moved for approval by Councillor Paul Shotton and seconded by Councillor Owen Thomas.

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

Councillor Owen Thomas thanked the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) for his update on progress concerning the Rhydymwyn – Mold cycleway.

The minutes were moved for approval by Councillor Owen Thomas and seconded by Councillor Joe Johnson

RESOLVED:

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

22. EMERGENCY SITUATION BRIEFING (VERBAL)

The Chief Executive gave an update on the current situation and referred to the regional vaccination programme. He explained that the outcome was awaited on the review of the current restrictions on hospitality by the First Minister of Wales on 17 December. He commented that the rise in new cases of Covid across Wales (specifically South Wales) was a cause of concern and could result in further restrictions being put in place during Christmas and New Year. Referring to data analysis he explained that Flintshire had seen a gradual increase in the number of cases of infection during the last few days but it was not a significant rise and said the vast majority of positive tests had come from community settings.

The NHS capacity in North Wales was stable and the number of Covid admissions were stable on a weekly basis. He gave an update on the current situation and capacity at the Rainbow Hospital, Deeside, and said it was anticipated it would be used as a centre for the forthcoming mass-vaccination programme and would be supported by a number of local vaccination centres across North Wales. The Chief Executive gave a brief update on the latest information and arrangements around the mass-vaccination programme in Wales which was currently expected to take 6-8 months to complete

In response to questions from Councillor George Hardcastle the Chief Executive gave an update on the position at the Rainbow Hospital, Deeside, and referred to the positive comments which had been received from staff and patients. He said all patients currently staying at the Rainbow Hospital had been discharged from hospital and were in convalescence.

RESOLVED:

Noted.

23. VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair advised that item 10 on the agenda: Feedback on Welsh Government Proposals to Introduce Corporate Joint Committees would be brought forward. This was moved by Councillor George Hardcastle and seconded by Councillor Owen Thomas

24. FEEDBACK ON WELSH GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS TO INTRODUCE CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEES

The Chief Executive introduced a report to seek comments on the Welsh Government's (WG) proposals to include the review of the Regional Transport Plan and the proposals to introduce Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs). He provided background information and referring to section 1.12 in the report said the Authority did not have an objection in principle to the proposal of a CJC as a better alternative to the reorganisation of local government in Wales and the consequential cost and disruption involved. However, there were concerns around the scope and function which would be initially assigned to CJCs, any future powers, and the impact on local capacity to undertake and manage local functions and schemes. The Chief Executive referred to the Council's further responses to the consultation paper on the proposals as detailed in the report.

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) reported that the closing date for comments on the WG consultation on the proposals was 4 January 2021. He advised that the CJCs would be comprised of the six local authorities in North Wales and Snowdonia National Park. He explained that the CJCs would have the following three related functions: the improvement of Economic Development and Well Being; Strategic Planning, and Regional Transport Planning. He gave an overview of the first two functions and advised that, in principle, the Council supported the proposals, but had concerns around timescales, finance, and other matters.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) provided background information and reported on the Council's position in response to the proposals from a transport planning perspective which was supportive in principle of a regional model but with some concerns as detailed in the report.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas advised that the New Transport Strategy had been published on the WG website. She commented that she had regularly raised concerns around funding and resources being kept locally but supported a regional approach for rail and bus transport strategic routes. She also expressed concerns around the implications on the appointment of officers for CJCs FROM the local authorities for each region and the WG expectation that the roles would require a commitment of 1-5 days a week. She emphasised the value and need for the local knowledge of officers to be retained.

Councillor Chris Bithell expressed concerns around the proposed timescales and potential difficulties involved to develop a regional Strategic Development Plan.

Councillor Patrick Heesom spoke of the need for a transport infrastructure to meet the economic and social requirements of Flintshire.

The Chief Executive responded to Members' comments and agreed on the need to avoid duplication of administration and cost and gave an example of how this would be avoided.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas reiterated the need to feedback the Authority's concerns to the WG on the proposals around resources, funding, and the need to retain local officer knowledge and experience.

In response to the concerns raised by Councillor Patrick Heesom concerning the impact of Brexit on Holyhead Port the Chief Executive explained that significant work was being undertaken at regional level around border control capacity and temporary parking.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) explained that following approval and agreement of the national transport strategy, local transport plans and policies would need to be reviewed and would be presented to this Committee for comment before Cabinet approval.

Councillor Derek Butler commented on the arrangements that were already in place and working on a regional level and emphasised the need to present a case to the WG for finance for CJs.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Joe Johnson and seconded by Councillor Paul Shotton

RESOLVED:

That the Committee supports the response to the Welsh Government's proposals for CJs in respect of the strategic transport function, the economic development function, and the proposals for the production of a Strategic Development Plan as set out in the report to and response of the Planning Strategy Group.

25. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme. She referred to the Ditches and Watercourses Workshops to be held on 16 December, and reported that the Digital Programme Workshops from the Economic Ambitions Board would be held on 12 January 2021. She drew attention to the items listed for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 12 January 2021 and advised that an additional item on the Welsh Government Transport Strategy would be included on the agenda for the meeting.

The Facilitator advised that a request had been made to add an item to the Programme on electric car charging points in the County for future consideration.

Reporting on progress against actions from previous meetings the Facilitator advised that there were currently three actions outstanding and progress was ongoing.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Chris Dolphin and seconded by Councillor Paul Shotton.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved;
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and
- (c) That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

26. UPDATE ON THE MOLD TO BROUGHTON CYCLEWAY SCHEME AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTY CORE CYCLEWAY NETWORK

The Transport Manager explained that the initial purpose of the report was to provide the Committee with an update on the Mold to Broughton Cycleway Scheme, however, due to the interest raised during recent Scrutiny on the Council's wider strategic Active Travel aspirations the report was expanded to include an update on progress made in developing the County 'core' Cycleway Network. He also referred to the opportunity to extend the scope of the Mold to Broughton Cycleway Scheme to include Chester as the end destination and to seek the Committee's support for the submission to rebrand the scheme to the 'Mold to Chester Strategic Cycleway Scheme' as the Council's Strategic Active Travel application to Welsh Government in the forthcoming financial year.

The Transport Manager provided background information and gave a brief overview of the national cycle network and an update on the Mold cycle scheme. He explained that the development of a strategic cycle network as outlined made active travel a plausible option which enabled people to access work, leisure, and tourism, not only within County but also into England. The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) endorsed the comments expressed by the Transport Manager concerning the opportunities to be gained through the development of a national cycle network and said it was hoped that it would become as well known and well used as the road map in Flintshire.

Councillor George Hardcastle raised concerns around the removal of trees on the Aston Hill area. He also raised concerns that there were no barriers to provide protection for users on cycle-ways on Aston Hill. The Chief Officer acknowledged the concerns raised and gave an assurance that he would be speaking directly to the Trunk Agency to ensure the same consultation process was followed as that undertaken by the Authority.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas thanked officers for their work on the transport strategy. She concurred with the views expressed by Councillor Hardcastle on the need for the Trunk Agency to engage in full consultation.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson also expressed thanks to officers for their hard work on the County Core Cycleway Network, and also commented on the support and co-operation provided by Alistair Stubbs, Headteacher, Elfed High School, on the local proposals for development. Councillor Hutchinson raised concerns regarding a local highway in his Ward. The Chief Officer responded to the points made and said he would provide a more detailed response to Councillor Hutchinson following the meeting on the proposals for a link from Buckley to a dedicated cycleway on the road.

Councillor David Evans referred to the Mold to Deeside Industrial Park (DIP) Strategic Cycleway Link and sought clarification on how access would be gained across the Flintshire Bridge if this was the intended route. He spoke in support of the further local proposals which were welcomed. The Chief Officer provided an update on consultation taking place around proposals for the Sandycroft to Broughton link, and a link from Mold to Flint and Deeside Industrial Park.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Christopher Dolphin and seconded by Councillor Dennis Hutchinson

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the progress made to date on the progression of the Mold to Broughton Strategic Cycleway Scheme, including the development of the County's Strategic Active Travel schemes on the County's Core Cycleway Network be noted; and
- (b) That the opportunity to extend the scope of the Mold to Broughton Cycleway Scheme to include Chester as the end destination be noted and the submission of the rebranded 'Mold to Chester Strategic Cycleway Scheme' as the Council's Strategic Active Travel application to WG in the forthcoming financial year be supported.

27. RECOVERY STRATEGY (PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY PORTFOLIO)

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) introduced a report to give an oversight on the recovery planning for the Committee's respective portfolio areas. The Chief Officer provided background information and explained that updated versions of the risk register and risk mitigation actions for the Planning, Environment and Economy portfolio were attached to the report.

The Chief Officer advised that an update was also provided in the report on progress against each of the portfolio's 14 recovery objectives. He referred to

progress on compliance with the new Local Development Plan, support for local town centres, community and business protection statutory and enforcement duties in relation to Covid-19, Ash die-back, and restoration of the development Management function.

The Chief Officer reported on the changes in the updated risk register as appended to the report and referred to the following risks: PE02, PE13, PE14, and PE16.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Dennis Hutchinson and seconded by Councillor George Hardcastle.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes the progress made with respect to recovery planning for the Planning, Environment and Economy portfolio; and
- (b) That the content of the updated portfolio risk register and mitigation actions be noted.

28. RECOVERY STRATEGY (STREETSCENE AND TRANSPORTATION PORTFOLIO)

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced a report to give an oversight on the recovery planning for the Committee's respective portfolio area. He provided background information and explained that the latest version of the risk register and set of risk mitigation actions for the Streetscene and Transportation portfolio were attached to the report.

The Chief Officer advised that In addition an update was detailed in the report on progress against each of the portfolio's 9 recovery objectives. He referred to progress on recycling performance, the development of waste infrastructure to support increased recycling potential, and maintenance of the highway network during the winter period.

The Chief Officer reported on the changes in the updated risk register which would be circulated to the Committee following the meeting and referred to funding from the Welsh Government for loss of income from car-parks due to Covid-19 restrictions; well-being of employees, compliance matters around recycling of waste material, and preparations to respond to emergency situations.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas expressed thanks to all staff in Streetscene and Transportation for their hard work throughout the pandemic. The Chair added her thanks to the Chief Officer and his staff for their work during very difficult circumstances.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson asked for an update on Standard Waste Transfer Station, the Chief Officer advised that the land would be vacated before Christmas with the hope of having a new building in June/July and operational before end of Summer 2021. The new facility would include an education centre which Members of the Committee would be invited to attend when completed.

In response to the further concerns raised by Councillor Hutchinson around road markings the Chief Officer explained that any defects would be identified by local street co-ordinators during highway inspections and a specialised contractor would be brought in to undertake a programme of work. He suggested that Councillor Hutchinson raise the specific defects he was aware of with his local Streetscene co-ordinator for action.

In response to questions from Councillor George Hardcastle the Chief Officer gave an update on winter maintenance arrangements, and confirmed there was a residual stock of rock salt to cover winter period. Councillor Hardcastle thanked the Chief Officer and his team for their hard work during the winter months.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Christopher Dolphin and seconded by Councillor Joe Johnson.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the progress made to support the Recovery Strategy by the Streetscene and Transportation portfolio.

29. UPDATE ON ALLTAMI DEPOT STORES

The Service Delivery Manager introduced a report to provide an update on progress following a previous report presented to the Committee in February 2020 in line with the Committee's recommendations. She provided background information and referred to the development of a new electronic stock control system which was intended to simplify stock management issues and provide greater accountability and reporting functions. It was anticipated that the new system would be in operation by end of March 2021 and in the meantime stock control would continue to be managed through a paper based system to ensure all stock items were issued and recorded on the Tranman system.

The Service Delivery Manager also reported on work undertaken to identify the location of all items of plant and equipment, including equipment held at remote sites, and advised that the central plant inventory was updated daily and all items registered and use authorised by Supervisors. She explained that as part of this work the service had employed the use of a group of hardware and software components which allowed for the collection, organisation, and analysis of HAV (Hand Arm Vibration) risk exposure data relating to the use of vibrating equipment. The software ensured that the Council adheres to legal requirements applicable to workplace health and safety and to determine vibration magnitudes

that are representative of the actual vibration emissions applicable during tool use.

The Service Delivery Manager advised than an action plan (appended to the report) had been introduced to ensure that working arrangements and processes continued to be adhered to within the Service and referred to the key actions as detailed in the report.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Christopher Dolphin and seconded by Councillor Paul Shotton.

RESOLVED:

That the ongoing working arrangements within the Streetscene and Transportation depot stores be noted and the actions undertaken to control material, plant, and equipment held within the stores be supported.

30. 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 11.59 am)

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Chairman