

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
23 JANUARY 2024

Minutes of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Tuesday, 23 January 2024.

PRESENT: Councillor Gladys Healey (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Bernie Attridge, Marion Bateman, Sean Bibby, Gillian Brockley, Helen Brown, Mel Buckley, Teresa Carberry, Tina Claydon, David Coggins Cogan, Geoff Collett, Steve Copple, Bill Crease, Rob Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, Carol Ellis, David Evans, Chrissy Gee, David Healey, Ian Hodge, Andy Hughes, Dave Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Alasdair Ibbotson, Paul Johnson, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Simon Jones, Richard Lloyd, Dave Mackie, Gina Maddison, Roz Mansell, Allan Marshall, Hilary McGuill, Ryan McKeown, Debbie Owen, Ted Palmer, Andrew Parkhurst, Mike Peers, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect, Carolyn Preece, David Richardson, Dan Rose, Kevin Rush, Dale Selvester, Jason Shallcross, Sam Swash, Linda Thew, Linda Thomas, Roy Wakelam, Arnold Woolley and Antony Wren

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Glyn Banks, Pam Banks, Chris Bithell, Paul Cunningham, Ray Hughes, Billy Mullin, Ian Roberts, and Ant Turton

ALSO PRESENT: Julia Hughes, Independent Member – Chair of Standards Committee (as an observer)

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Community and Housing), Corporate Finance Manager, Strategic Finance Managers, Service Manager – Housing Assets, Regulatory Services Manager, Head of Democratic Services, Revenue and Procurement Manager, Democratic Services Team Leader – Electoral Services, Democratic Services Officers and Fr. P. Wheeler for prayers

Prior to the start of the meeting the Chair welcomed and introduced Julia Hughes, Chair and Independent Member of the Standards Committee, to the meeting as an observer.

63. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ted Palmer declared a personal interest on agenda item 6: Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 Year Financial Business Plan

64. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2023 were received.

Matters arising

Page 10 - Notice of Motion, in response to a question from Councillor Andrew Parkhurst, the Democratic Services Manager confirmed that correspondence had been sent to the UK and Welsh Governments, in accordance with the resolution to the Motion, and copies would be sent to Members for information.

Councillor Parkhurst also referred to his Question on page 13 - Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in respect of Mold Memorial Gardens, and asked about the timescales for responses to the questions raised and the cost of legal fees arising in connection with the matter. The Chief Officer (Governance) advised that a response to the questions would be sent this week and information on the legal fees would follow.

Councillor Bernie Attridge moved the minutes and this was duly seconded.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2023 be approved as a correct Record.

65. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair referred to her communication which had been circulated prior to the meeting and listed the events attended from 7 December 2023 to 23 January 2024.

The Chair thanked the Vice-Chair and his consort for fulfilling the duties of her role during her absence due to the recent sad bereavement of her daughter. She also took the opportunity to extend her sincere thanks to Members, Officers, and staff, for their support to herself and her husband, Councillor David Healey, on their loss.

66. PETITIONS

The Chief Officer (Governance) advised that the following petition had been received and gave a brief outline of the Council's process for administering petitions:

Councillor David Coggins-Cogan presented a petition on behalf of the residents in his Ward requesting the adoption of an unadopted road.

67. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) 30 YEAR FINANCIAL BUSINESS PLAN

The Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) introduced a report to present, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2024/25, the HRA Business Plan and the summary 30 year Financial Business Plan.

A joint presentation was given by the Chief Officer, Service Manager – Housing Assets, and Strategic Finance Manager which covered the following main points:

- Welsh Government net zero carbon target for social housing
 - FCC pilot to achieve net zero carbon for social housing
 - Net zero carbon social housing – business case estimate
 - other Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) 2023 Pressures
 - WHQS 2023 Investment
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- HRA Business Plan – Revenue Pressures and Efficiencies
 - Rents 2024/25
 - Rents – impact of setting rents lower than the Welsh Government rent cap
 - affordability
 - consultation
 - service charges
 - operational cost benchmarking
 - prudential borrowing
 - reserves

Councillor Sean Bibby thanked Officers for their presentation and spoke in support of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 Year Financial Business Plan and the proposals. He moved the recommendations in the report which were seconded by Councillor Helen Brown.

Councillor Bernie Attridge also spoke in support of the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Richard Lloyd referred to Garage rents and service Charges (section 1.07 of the report) and commented on the proposal to increase the charge for garage plots by £0.05 per week which he felt was inadequate to cover the maintenance costs. The Service Manager – Housing Assets, provided clarification around the charges and proposals for maintenance of garage sites and explained that a review of the charges and stock condition was regularly undertaken. He agreed to speak to Councillor Lloyd on any specific concerns following the meeting.

Councillor Richard Jones referred to the last sentence on page 18 of the report and suggested that the wording be amended to read: “that the majority of the HRA funding is devised from HRA income”.

Councillor David Coggins-Cogan referred to section 1.06 of the report and raised questions on Housing Benefit. He also referred to section 1.07 and asked about the rate on lettings on garages. In conclusion Councillor Coggins-Cogan queried the statistical data provided in the report and sought clarification on the number of contract holders.

The Chair raised a question concerning lighting within communities.

The Cabinet Member and Officers responded to the points raised.

Having been moved and seconded, the following recommendations were put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the HRA 30-year Financial Business Plan and budget for 2024/25 as set out in the report and attached appendices be approved; and
- (b) That consideration be given, in year, to utilise available reserves to top up the tenant hardship fund to a cap of £0.350m if required.

68. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2023/24

The Corporate Finance Manager presented the draft Treasury Management Mid-Year Review for 2023/24 which was appended to the report. He advised that, as required by the Council's Financial Procedure Rules, the Mid-Year Report was reviewed by the Governance and Audit Committee on 22 November and Cabinet on 19 December 2023 and no significant issues had been raised. The Corporate Finance Manager referred to the key points as summarised in the covering report.

Councillor Mike Peers referred to the reference to Lender Option Borrower Option (LOBO) as detailed on page 37, and cross-referenced to the information on page 47 (paragraphs 4.04 and 4.06) and sought clarification on whether the interest was fixed or variable and the arrangements around repayment or borrowing. The Corporate Finance Manager and Strategic Finance Manager responded to the questions and supplementary questions raised by Councillor Peers.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Bernie Attridge and seconded by Councillor Paul Johnson.

RESOLVED:

That the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2023/24 be approved.

69. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

The Chief Executive presented the report to seek approval of the recommendations on the review of polling districts, polling places, and polling stations. He provided background information and advised that the report sets out the final proposals following the review.

Councillor David Healey moved the recommendation in the report. In response to a question from Councillor David Healey concerning arrangements for a polling station in the Caergwrle Ward, the Team Leader, Democratic Services, drew attention to appendix 2 (paragraph 1.03) of the report and confirmed that the Polling Place for Caergwrle would be The Boy's Brigade Hall, Castle Street, Caergwrle.

Councillor Bernie Attridge proposed a further recommendation be added to the report to ensure that full consultation was taken with the Local Member(s) when a determination was to be made to identify a polling station in their Ward. The Team Leader, Electoral Services, responded to the comments and confirmed that the consultation process was open to all Members and individual Local Members were consulted on the designation of a polling station in their Ward.

Councillor Simon Jones asked if free parking would be made available on Council owned car parks nearest to polling stations. The Chief Officer (Governance) agreed to raise the matter with the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation).

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the outcome of the review and the consultation undertaken be noted; and
- (b) That the final proposals detailed in Appendix 2 regarding polling districts, polling places, and polling stations be approved.

70. RECRUITMENT OF A TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Chief Officer (Governance) introduced the report to endorse the process for appointing a replacement Town and Community Representative to the Standards Committee. He provided background information and advised that it was proposed to follow the same process as last time for appointment. All Town and Community Councils would be asked for nominees and each Council would be given a 1st and 2nd preference vote in order to conclude the process in a single round of voting.

Councillor Bernie Attridge moved the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Teresa Carberry. Councillor Carberry and Councillor Attridge expressed their thanks to Councillor Ian Papworth for his work and commitment on the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed appointment process be endorsed and
- (b) That Councillor Ian Papworth be thanked for his work on the Standards Committee.

71. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chief Officer (Governance) advised that none had been received by the deadline.

72. QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that the following question had been received from Councillor Sam Swash which had been included on the agenda for the meeting:

“When a Flintshire resident is required to use a certain type of vehicle, because of health issues or a disability, and that vehicle is prohibited from using Household Recycling Centres, what reasonable adjustment does the Council make for residents in such a position, and if no reasonable adjustment is being made, is the Council confident that it is not in breach of the Equality Act 2010”.

Councillor Dave Hughes, Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy, provided a written response to the question which was read out and circulated to Members during the meeting.

Councillor Sam Swash asked the following supplementary question : “will the Council provide a reasonable adjustment to enable a resident, as referred to in the question above, to access the Household Recycling Centre Service in compliance with the obligations of the Equality Act 2010”.

The Cabinet Member responded that he would arrange a meeting with the Regulatory Services Manager to discuss the issue raised.

RESOLVED:

That the questions and written and verbal responses be received and noted.

73. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS ON COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Chief Officer (Governance) advised that none had been received by the deadline.

74. NOTICE OF MOTION

The Chief Officer (Governance) advised that none had been received by the deadline.

75. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 1.00 pm and ended at 2.30 pm)

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Chair