

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
22 OCTOBER 2019

Minutes of the meeting of Flintshire County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 22 October 2019

PRESENT: Councillor Marion Bateman (Chair)

Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Mike Allport, Janet Axworthy, Glyn Banks, Haydn Bateman, Sean Bibby, Chris Bithell, Helen Brown, Derek Butler, Clive Carver, Geoff Collett, David Cox, Paul Cunningham, Jean Davies, Rob Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Carol Ellis, Veronica Gay, George Hardcastle, Patrick Heesom, Dave Hughes, Kevin Hughes, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Joe Johnson, Paul Johnson, Rita Johnson, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Tudor Jones, Colin Legg, Brian Lloyd, Richard Lloyd, Dave Mackie, Billy Mullin, Hilary McGuill, Ted Palmer, Mike Peers, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect, Neville Phillips, Ian Roberts, Aaron Shotton, Paul Shotton, Ralph Small, Ian Smith, Carolyn Thomas, Owen Thomas, Martin White, Andy Williams, David Wisinger and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Sian Braun, Bob Connah, Mared Eastwood, David Evans, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Cindy Hinds, Andrew Holgate, Mike Lowe, Tony Sharps, Ralph Small and David Williams

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive; Chief Officer (Governance); Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy); Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation); Chief Officer (Housing & Assets); Chief Officer (Social Services); Chief Officer (Education & Youth); Corporate Finance Manager; Internal Audit Manager; Corporate Business & Communications Executive Officer; Principal Accountant (People & Resources); Democratic Services Manager; Democratic Services Team Leader; and Democratic Services Officer

46. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 11 September 2019 were received.

As requested by Councillor Peers, two amendments were agreed on Minute number 39: Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales Local Review. On the third paragraph, the Chief Executive's comments that the 'Commission had limited flexibility' should reflect that this was to adhere to the laws and Terms of Reference. The penultimate paragraph to clarify that the county average ratio of 1,836 electors per member applied to 2018 and that the average ratio for 2023 was recorded as 1,915 in the latest draft document.

The minutes would also record that Councillors Richard Lloyd and Joe Johnson were present at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the amendments, the minutes be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

48. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

In presenting her Communications, which had been circulated prior to the meeting, the Chair highlighted a number of school visits, recognition of entrepreneurs at the Flintshire in Business Awards and a visit to Coleg Cambria. She thanked the Vice-Chair for his support and various Members who had arranged events, including Councillor Tony Sharps who was not present. Tribute was also paid to the contributions of Councillor Andrew Holgate who was due to resign at the end of the month.

Councillor Ian Roberts expressed his gratitude to all those involved in assisting residents at Bolingbroke Heights in Flint following the recent flooding incident. He paid particular tribute to the Fire Service for their prompt response, and officers from across the Council who had maintained a presence on site to ensure that all residents were safe and supported. He also thanked the Chief Officers for Housing & Assets and Social Services and local Members for their assistance at the scene.

The Chair expressed her own appreciation for the remarkable efforts of the Fire Service and Council officers, as did Councillor Jean Davies.

Councillor Richard Jones' suggestion that the Council formally write to thank the Fire Service was supported by the Chair. The Chief Executive responded to a query on the financial implications and conveyed his own thanks to those who had assisted. To give reassurances on the response and findings from the incident, he suggested that a report be scheduled for a future Overview & Scrutiny meeting.

49. PETITIONS

None were received.

50. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19

The Chief Executive introduced the report to endorse the 2018/19 Annual Performance Report to achieve publication by the deadline. This was a statutory report providing a retrospective overview of performance against priorities in the 2018/19 Council Plan and assessment of the Council's objectives in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Corporate Business & Communications Executive Officer gave a presentation covering the following:

- Format and content
- Performance Overview 2018/19
- Progress Overview
- Highlights
- Areas for Improvement
- Well-being of Future Generations
- Performance Overview
- Summary Overview
- Next Steps

Amongst the range of achievements under each theme were the Council house building programme, national recognition of the Progress for Providers project, high waste recycling rates and achievement of planned efficiencies. Areas identified for improvement were being incorporated into the Council Plan for 2019/20 including reducing the number of days to complete Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) on which progress was already being made.

The Chief Executive said that the slight dip in performance against national rankings would continue to be monitored and that strong endorsement by the three statutory regulatory bodies since the timing of the report should provide assurance. He spoke about future legislative changes which provided for more flexibility in performance reporting and reminded Members that recurring issues of specific interest in the Council Plan should be submitted on to Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes.

On achievements in Holywell, Councillor Palmer spoke about positive joint working with businesses on the re-opening of the High Street and the success of Holywell Leisure Centre on which he thanked Councillor Tudor Jones.

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) agreed to provide a separate response to Councillor Carver's question on the number of landlords/letting agents not complying with Rent Smart Wales regulations. He agreed to speak with him outside the meeting regarding concerns about a House of Multiple Occupation and said that the main priority of the Environmental Health team was enforcing housing and planning conditions legislation to ensure adequate living conditions.

In response to a question from Councillor Ellis, it was explained that the areas for improvement related to performance and that high-risk areas would continue to be monitored. Some risk may remain on residential care provision after completion of work on Marleyfield House, depending on demand levels. Delayed transfer of care was a continued risk and was unlikely to improve to Green.

Councillor Richard Jones asked whether the risk status on debt levels due to Universal Credit should be lowered in view of the commentary. The Chief Officer (Housing & Assets) advised that this should remain a Red risk to allow time for mitigation measures to take effect and that it be kept under review. On infrastructure investment, the Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) explained that the initial scope of the Deeside Plan had been widened to become the Flintshire Integrated

Transport Strategy linking all modes of transport across the County. A report would be submitted to the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee in December.

In praising the report, Councillor Tudor Jones paid tribute to the Council's approach in tackling homelessness and asked about involvement by local Members. The Chief Officer (Housing & Assets) spoke about the work of the dedicated Outreach Worker who was engaging with homeless people across Flintshire. He said it should be acknowledged that it was the choice of individuals whether to accept that support and that efforts to engage would continue. Members were encouraged to download the 'Streetlink' app to their mobile phones to help identify individuals who were sleeping rough and assist in targeting resources accordingly. The Chair asked that details of the app be shared with Town and Community Councils.

Councillor Paul Johnson said that areas for improvement were inevitable and he paid tribute to the quality of the workforce for their contributions on performance.

In welcoming the report, Councillor Peers said that the risk on affordable housing supply should incorporate private sector provision through the planning process. He asked that the charts showing performance against Public Accountability Measures be accompanied by the data (shown later in the report). The Chief Executive said that a hyperlink would be inserted in the published document. In response to further questions, the risk to Council Tax collection rates would remain a pressure particularly due to changes to legal powers. On the replacement street lighting programme, the Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) advised that currently the vast majority had been replaced with LED lights, achieving significant savings on energy costs and repairs. A report on the new policy would be shared with the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas commended the Council and officers for the achievements despite ongoing funding cuts and efficiencies, and she highlighted the improvements carried out on highways with funding from Welsh Government.

In moving the recommendation in the report, Councillor Ian Roberts said that some of the areas identified for improvement were challenging due to external factors. He commended the aim to further improve recycling rates on which Flintshire was already a high performer and took the opportunity to thank members of the public who had participated in the recent survey. He said that in acknowledging the need to improve performance on DFGs, the revised policy had been agreed by Cabinet earlier in the day. He thanked the officer and her team for the report and endorsed the comments made on the contributions of employees.

Councillor Mullin seconded the proposal. On being put to the vote, this was carried.

RESOLVED:

That the 2018/19 Annual Performance Report be approved, as recommended by Cabinet, with the inclusion of a hyperlink on the performance data summary.

51. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The Corporate Finance Manager presented the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2018/19 which, following consideration by the Audit Committee and Cabinet, had raised no specific issues. He drew attention to the key points of the report which confirmed that the Treasury Management function had operated within the limits detailed in the Strategy for the period. The Mid-Year Report for 2018/19 was also presented, having been recommended by Cabinet for approval.

Councillor Richard Jones asked whether the amount of income derived from investments could be considered as a third reason for investment (set out in section 2.02) which could make a difference during times of austerity.

In response, the Chief Executive said that the wording could clarify that the aim was to generate income from surplus funds provided that the two main principles were met.

The Corporate Finance Manager and Chief Officer (Governance) referred to the Welsh Government investment guidance which gave priority to security and liquidity, followed by yield.

Following comments by Councillor Peers, the Corporate Finance Manager said that the Treasury Management Strategy detailed the range of considerations behind investments, noting that pension fund investments were separate to those of the Council. In local government, the approach to borrowing meant that outstanding debt was necessary to pay for investments and assets over time. The repayment of debt over the longer term was funded through the Minimum Revenue Provision which included the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account. As a point of accuracy, it was clarified that the two loans detailed in section 3.03 of the Annual Report were taken out on 6 December 2018.

In response to other questions, the Principal Accountant explained that the loan for NEW Homes, the Council's wholly owned subsidiary, was taken out over a 45 year period with a small margin added to the repayment rate over and above the amount borrowed.

Councillor Mackie queried the difference between figures on borrowing activity and was advised that the table in the annual report included other items such as the short-term debt portfolio.

In moving the recommendations, Councillor Banks said that the report demonstrated the challenging period and market conditions. He thanked the Corporate Finance Manager and his team and paid tribute to the contributions of the Treasury Management advisors and the Audit Committee during the process.

As Chair of the Audit Committee, Councillor Chris Dolphin seconded the proposal. On being put to the vote, it was carried.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Treasury Management Report 2018/19 and Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2018/19 be approved.

52. AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Internal Audit Manager presented the Audit Committee Annual Report 2018/19 which, in accordance with best practice, demonstrated to the Council its accountability and effectiveness on its Terms of Reference. The report had been endorsed by the Audit Committee in September.

Councillor Peers asked that the section on attendance more clearly reflect that he had attended as a substitute and was not required to be present at the other meetings. He also suggested that section 5.4 note the practice for the Audit Committee to vote to allow substitutions at meetings. The Internal Audit Manager agreed to make the changes.

As Chairman of the Audit Committee, Councillor Chris Dolphin moved the recommendation and thanked the Internal Audit Manager and her team.

RESOLVED:

That the Audit Committee Annual Report 2018/19 be approved.

53. REVIEW OF THE FLINTSHIRE STANDARD

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented a report on the outcome of a review of the Flintshire Standard within the Local Resolution Protocol which set out expected standards of behaviour from Members in dealing with each other and officers. Following consultation, the changes proposed by Group Leaders and officers had been supported by the Standards Committee together with a further amendment on the timing of the complaints process.

In October 2019, the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee had endorsed all the revisions and recommended that the standards of behaviour also apply to Member when using social media in their official capacity and that the Local Resolution Procedure make provision for non-aligned (ungrouped) Members.

Councillor Richard Jones said that the standards of behaviour appeared to be over-prescriptive as mutual respect should be part of general behaviour.

During discussion, Councillors Roberts and Bithell both spoke in support of the Flintshire Standard. The Chief Officer provided explanation on the rationale behind some of the wording in the Standard which, whilst not restricting political expression, would ensure that officers were specifically excluded from the scope of political comments.

The Chief Executive thanked Group Leaders for their work on the Standard during the consultation.

The Chief Officer noted Councillor Dunbobbin's suggestion that Town and Community Councils should be encouraged to adopt the Flintshire Standard.

As Chairman of the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee, Councillor Palmer moved the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Roberts. On being put to the vote, it was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the amended Flintshire Standard be adopted.

54. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COUNCILLORS

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented a report to seek agreement to a change in the Code of Conduct for Councillors in respect of gifts and hospitality. The matter had arisen from a number of best practice recommendations published by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in considering the impact of changes made to the ethical regime in England. Whilst these were not mandatory in Wales, the Standards Committee had proposed that the Council voluntarily adopt the recommendation to require that Members declare not only gifts/hospitality above a certain individual value but also those above an aggregate value. For Flintshire, it was recommended that the current practice of registering gifts worth over £10 be extended to include gifts of £100 or more received from the same donor over a 12 month period. This change had been endorsed by the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee.

Councillor Bithell said that standards expected of local government should also apply elsewhere. The Chief Officer said that the report demonstrated the Council's approach in noting examples of good practice outside Wales.

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin questioned whether it was time for an increase in the Council's current threshold for registering individual gifts valued at £10 and over. The Chief Officer agreed to make enquiries on the limit imposed by other councils.

Councillor Palmer moved the recommendation in the report which was seconded by Councillor Peers. On being put to the vote, this was carried.

RESOLVED:

That the suggested amendment requiring gifts with a total value of £100 or more in any 12 month period to be declared is added to the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

55. NOTICE OF MOTION

Two Notices of Motion were received:

(i) Raising Awareness of Violence against Women and Domestic Abuse - Councillor Andy Dunbobbin

'Members may recall that the Welsh Government has developed an e-learning package, to raise awareness of violence against women and domestic abuse. All staff are undertaking this e-learning, which we applaud.

The package had been adapted to be available to Members. It would show our support for this worthy initiative if all Members were to do this training, which only takes about 40 minutes.

Can we all commit to giving 40 minutes to acquiring learning which may help all of us to deal more effectively with such issues which we may encounter in our wards?'

The Chair suggested that a video on domestic abuse, previously shown at an Overview & Scrutiny Committee, be shared with all Members.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor White who, as an ambassador for the White Ribbon campaign, spoke in support of highlighting this important issue. He shared a colleague's suggestion that Members could undertake the training at the same time whilst accommodating the Chair's suggestion.

As Vice-Chair of the Domestic Abuse Safety Unit for Deeside, Councillor Bithell commended the Council's work in supporting the White Ribbon campaign. He said that Members would be given instructions on accessing the e-learning package and he spoke in favour of the suggestion made by Councillor White.

In welcoming this, Councillor Brown suggested that the training session link to the Domestic Abuse Safety Unit (DACU) Freedom Programme.

The Chief Executive said that all the suggestions would be incorporated to provide Member training sessions.

Following a comment by Councillor Butler, it was noted that the training would be relevant to male as well as female victims of violence and domestic abuse.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried.

(ii) First Aid Training in Schools - Councillor Kevin Hughes

'This Council calls upon Welsh Government (WG) to make First Aid, including CPR and defibrillator training, compulsory as part of the new curriculum. Further, schools are provided with the required funding to ensure the training can be delivered.'

In providing background information, Councillor Hughes explained that First Aid training was to become compulsory in all schools in England from September 2020 following Lord Kerslake's inquiry into the Manchester Arena bombing. Whilst primary schools in England would provide basic training, secondary learners would

receive life-saving skills including the use of a defibrillator. In Scotland, a similar commitment had been made to teach life-saving skills in schools. This aligned to the aim of the Red Cross and other charities which had been campaigning for First Aid training to be included in the curriculum across all schools.

Speaking in support of his Motion, Councillor Hughes paid tribute to the performance of Education Services in Flintshire despite the significant pressures. Whilst First Aid training was already provided in some schools, it was not compulsory in all schools and would only require a half or full day each year. Providing pupils with these important skills would not only benefit those individuals but also increase the number of people able to use the defibrillators installed across the County.

Councillor Peers supported the intention of the Motion but said it was important to allow pupils the choice of whether they wished to participate in the training. This view was shared by Councillor Ellis.

Councillor Richard Jones proposed an amendment that the Motion refer to promoting life skills such as coping with stress and financial issues, in alignment with the aim of the Welsh Youth Parliament.

Councillor Brown spoke about the work of the Oliver King Foundation on defibrillator installation and training in schools across Merseyside and in Penarlag.

As Leader and Cabinet Member for Education & Youth, Councillor Roberts thanked Councillor Hughes for his Notice of Motion and said that curriculum design for the 'Health and Well-being area of learning and experience' in the Curriculum for Wales 2022 should be flexible to respond to a diverse range of changing needs by placing the voice of the learner at the centre of planning. He said there was a large range of topics for schools to consider in developing such a curriculum including First Aid and life-saving skills.

Councillor Roberts said that the Council was working to encourage schools to register their defibrillators with the Ambulance Service and to participate in a range of initiatives including the St John's Ambulance online First Aid resources and lesson plans. In acknowledging the positive work being undertaken, he urged Members to support the Motion to agree that WG be requested to make First Aid, including CPR and defibrillator training, compulsory as part of the new curriculum. He spoke about the positive impact on learners themselves and suggested that the Red Cross and St John's Ambulance could be involved. In response to the point raised by Councillor Jones, he said that some schools in Flintshire were already teaching life issues such as financial planning.

A number of Members spoke in support of the Motion including Councillor Cunningham who highlighted the work of St John's Ambulance and Councillor McGuill who seconded the Motion.

In response to the points raised by Councillors Peers and Ellis, Councillor Hughes clarified that the Motion called for the training to be made 'compulsory as part of the new curriculum' rather than compulsory for every pupil. On Councillor

Jones' proposal, he referred to the Leader's comments acknowledging that training on life skills had already been introduced in some schools.

Councillor Tudor Jones commended Councillor Hughes for his Motion which would enable flexibility for those pupils for whom the training may not be appropriate. He made the point that if implementing the changes, WG should properly fund it in recognition of the benefits to the Health Service. He went on to thank volunteers who had undertaken First Responder training.

Following his earlier comments, Councillor Peers thanked Councillor Hughes for the clarification on the wording of his Motion which he supported on that basis.

Having been moved and seconded, the Motion was put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Notice of Motion from Councillor Dunbobbin on the e-learning package to raise awareness of domestic abuse be supported, together with the proposal for Member training sessions to incorporate the points raised; and
- (b) That the Notice of Motion from Councillor Hughes on First Aid in schools be supported.

56. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None were received.

57. QUESTIONS

None were received.

58. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS ON COMMITTEE MINUTES

None were received.

59. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2pm and ended at 4.25pm)

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Chair