

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
27 FEBRUARY 2020

Minutes of the meeting of Flintshire County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 27 February 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Marion Bateman (Chair)

Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Mike Allport, Glyn Banks, Haydn Bateman, Sean Bibby, Chris Bithell, Sian Braun, Helen Brown, Derek Butler, Clive Carver, Geoff Collett, Bob Connah, David Cox, Jean Davies, Rob Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Andy Dunbobbin, Mared Eastwood, Carol Ellis, Veronica Gay, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Patrick Heesom, Cindy Hinds, Dave Hughes, Kevin Hughes, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Rita Johnson, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Tudor Jones, Brian Lloyd, Richard Lloyd, Dave Mackie, Hilary McGuill, Ted Palmer, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect, Neville Phillips, Ian Roberts, Kevin Rush, Paul Shotton, Ralph Small, Ian Smith, Carolyn Thomas, Andy Williams, David Williams, David Wisinger and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Janet Axworthy, Paul Cunningham, Ian Dunbar, David Evans, George Hardcastle, Joe Johnson, Paul Johnson, Colin Legg, Mike Lowe, Billy Mullin, Mike Peers, Tim Roberts, Tony Sharps, Owen Thomas and Martin White

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officers

For minute number 123

Homeless and Advice Team Manager, Team Leader (Housing Solutions) and Supporting People Contracts and Reviewing Officer

117. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2020 were submitted and approved as a correct record, as moved and seconded by Councillors Bithell and Thomas.

On minute number 93, responses to Councillor Richard Jones' question about the removal of mobile classrooms and Councillor Carver's query on former landfill sites in Buckley would be circulated to all Members.

RESOLVED:

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

118. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

119. PETITIONS

None were received.

120. COMMITTEE REVIEW

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented a report on the review of the committee structure which covered a reduction in the number of Overview & Scrutiny committees and their memberships, the number of Members on the Planning Committee and a new political balance solution. He thanked the Democratic Services Manager for his work on this and detailed the consultation process resulting in changes recommended by the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee to take effect from the Annual Meeting.

In thanking officers and the Leader, Councillor Heesom asked for clarification on whether non-committee Members would be afforded the right to speak (but not vote) when attending as observers. The Chief Executive said that whilst Chairs had always been encouraged to permit non-committee Members to speak, Chairs would now be formally invited to honour this practice. The Democratic Services Manager and his team would assist in ensuring this practice was followed where possible.

As Chairman of the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee, Councillor Palmer moved the recommendations and thanked officers for their work.

In seconding the proposal, Councillor Roberts responded to a question from Councillor Heesom and reaffirmed the commitment given to Group Leaders to reduce the number of Cabinet Members serving on the Planning Committee to three with effect from the Annual Meeting. He went on to thank Group Leaders for their contributions to the consultation process.

In response to a questions on smaller political groups, the Chief Officer provided explanation on the proposed political balance arrangements which aimed to achieve a fairer allocation of committee seats across parties. Following comments by Councillor Mackie, the Chief Officer said that any preferences on the seat allocation of minority groups would be given consideration and accommodated where possible. The Chief Executive said that discussion on this matter would be scheduled with Group Leaders when they met in late March.

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

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the following be approved to take effect from the 2020 Annual Meeting:
- the number of Overview & Scrutiny committees be reduced from six to five and,
 - the new Overview & Scrutiny committee structure, as detailed in the report, be implemented.

- (b) That the reduction in Members take effect from the Annual Meeting on the following committees:
 - the five Overview & Scrutiny committees from 15 to 12
 - the Planning Committee from 21 to 17
 - the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee from 21 to 16
- (c) That the revised political balance calculation at Appendix B be noted;
- (d) That all of those Members and officers who have been involved in the successful completion of the work of the Organisational Change Overview & Scrutiny Committee be formally thanked.

121. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

The Chief Executive introduced a report on the outcome of the review of polling districts and polling places which was a statutory requirement every five years.

The Democratic Services Manager provided an overview of the final proposals, as detailed in the report, which took account of issues raised during the consultation process.

The recommendations in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Thomas and Bithell. On being put the vote, these were carried.

RESOLVED:

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

122. PETITIONS RECEIVED AT COUNCIL

The Democratic Services Manager presented the annual report on outcomes and actions arising from petitions submitted to Council during the year. The report included the portfolio response to the only petition received during 2019/20 - one which challenged speed limits along Abbey Drive in Gronant.

Members were advised that the organiser of the petition had been satisfied with the Council's response and had also welcomed future plans by Welsh Government (WG) to introduce default 20mph speed limits for residential areas across Wales.

In response to Members' questions on enforcement of the 20mph speed limit, the Chief Executive said that more clarity was awaited from WG once the legislation had been passed.

As Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside, Councillor Thomas said that some 20mph speed restrictions were advisory only and that more information on

statutory speed limits would accompany the legislation. She said that the Council officer who was appointed to the WG working party had produced a committee report.

On being put the vote, the recommendation in the report was carried.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

123. NOTICE OF MOTION

Members considered a Notice of Motion in the following terms proposed by Councillor Attridge and seconded by Councillor Brown.

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) - Councillors Bernie Attridge, Helen Brown, Carol Ellis and George Hardcastle

“We call upon Flintshire to urgently review the SWEP PROTOCOL.

Following on from severe weather conditions including a storm that placed us in high alert, Flintshire did not activate SWEP unlike all the neighbouring authorities as it was not deemed cold enough according to the protocol.

We ask that Flintshire uses its discretion in bad weather and not only when temperatures drop below zero. We must ensure that all avenues of communication are open and ensure that we reach out as much as possible.

We need to be caring and compassionate with those who are much less fortunate in our county.”

Speaking in support of the Motion, Councillor Attridge highlighted the importance of tackling homelessness through a multi-agency approach. Whilst he was aware that SWEP had been activated a number of times, he was concerned that the criteria did not take account of the wind chill factor during recent bad weather. He recognised the challenges arising from the service provider withdrawing the night shelter provision in Holywell and welcomed the Council’s response to secure the new facility in Deeside. He called for an urgent review of SWEP to safeguard against a repeat of this situation and for discretion to activate the protocol not just when temperatures fell below the stipulated level. He went on to thank the Cabinet Member for Housing, Chief Officer (Housing and Assets), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy), the Homeless and Advice Team Manager and her team.

As Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Dave Hughes highlighted the Council’s priority to tackle homelessness and invited the team of officers to share an overview of their work supporting homeless people and establishing the new night shelter.

The Chief Executive said that the Notice of Motion provided an opportunity to share actions being taken to implement the new service in Deeside, as set out in the

briefing note which was circulated. Whilst the withdrawal of services by any partner organisation was a potential risk, this new service based at a Council-owned building would offer greater resilience. In response to the concerns raised, the Chief Executive spoke about the difficult circumstances in making the new premises operational and putting in place the necessary safeguards to use the facility as an emergency centre once SWEPP was activated.

Members were introduced to the Homeless and Advice Team Manager (Jenni Griffiths), Team Leader, Housing Solutions (Deborah Kenyon) and Supporting People Contracts and Reviewing Officer (Lisa Pearson) who gave a detailed presentation on their work and the impact of losing the former night shelter. Due to the work required to prepare the new facility and procure a new service provider - and with weather conditions worsening - the Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) and the team had shared a commitment to bring the facility into use as quickly as possible in the most appropriate way. There were many activities involved in implementing the SWEPP which was intended to be an interim measure during the period, using discretion on its use in the absence of a statutory definition of cold weather. During the two consecutive weekends of bad weather, the team proactively identified those in need of support to provide them with alternative accommodation until the facility was ready to be used as an emergency centre.

Since the opening of the facility, many officers had spent hours working at the night shelter carrying out duties, engaging with the client group and working closely with the new service provider (Wallich) through transitional arrangements to ensure a smooth formal handover on 2 March. Funding of the facility was through the Housing Support Grant, with a contribution from the Health Board towards the refurbishment of the building.

The Team Manager took the opportunity to thank all those involved in the project during this challenging period, including colleagues in Capital Works, contractors and North Wales Police. Service users were also praised for their patience whilst building work was taking place.

The Chief Executive said that the opening of the new night shelter should mean that the SWEPP was no longer required as a safeguard. If this was not the case, the level of discretion on its implementation would be a key consideration whilst maintaining the existing facility. As explained in the briefing note, a period of time was required after formal handover to allow the centre to settle before arrangements for volunteering and donations could be formalised. A future site visit for elected Members would be organised at an appropriate stage and consideration would also be given to exploring "wraparound" services which could be accommodated at the new centre.

Councillor Brown paid tribute to the teams of volunteers who had helped to provide support to homeless people over recent years and suggested that they be invited to visit the new centre. She also thanked members of the public who had helped during the recent bad weather. She said that homelessness was not just a Housing issue and welcomed the option for extended services at the new centre.

In describing homelessness as a nationwide issue, Councillor Roberts said that the circumstances in this case were particularly challenging. In welcoming the opening of the new centre, he paid tribute to the Manager and her team and in particular the Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) for his dedication in spending substantial time at the shelter engaging with service users. He asked that a vote of thanks be recorded for officers in the Housing department for all their efforts.

Councillor Thomas welcomed the transitional handover and gave assurance of joint working between Housing and Social Services on homelessness. In response to comments, the Team Manager provided details of the Council's involvement in a new collaborative service to co-ordinate specialist outreach workers on areas such as mental health and substance misuse.

During the debate, a number of Members commended the Chief Officer and team for their commitment to tackling homelessness in Flintshire and their work on the new centre. In response to questions, officers provided clarification on the approach for assessment individuals accessing the night shelter.

In support of joint working between Housing and Social Services, Councillor Rosetta Dolphin said that the topic could be explored further at the joint Overview & Scrutiny meeting in June.

Councillor Bibby expressed his sadness at the rise in homelessness of which there were many contributing factors. In addition to officers in Housing, he thanked those in Streetscene as well as North Wales Police, Police Community Support Officers and volunteers.

At the end of the discussion, Councillor Attridge thanked Members for their comments and officers for their assurances that SWEP would not need to be activated following the opening of the new facility. On that basis, he withdrew his Notice of Motion. He took the opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of everyone involved including the Chief Officer and teams across the Council and he commended the work of charities such as Community Hands and Help the Homeless.

The Chair thanked Members for submitting the Notice of Motion and also thanked the team for their presentation.

The Chief Executive sought the support of Members in allowing time for the new service to settle. Information on volunteering and donations would be shared with Members in around two weeks' time and the joint committee meeting in June would include discussion on longer term wraparound services.

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion on the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol be withdrawn and the actions noted.

124. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None were received.

125. QUESTIONS

None were received.

126. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2pm and ended at 3.30pm)

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Chair