

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
TUESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2020

Minutes of the remote meeting of Flintshire County Council held Tuesday, 17 November, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Marion Bateman (Chair)

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

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Sian Braun, David Cox, Tudor Jones, Brian Mullin, Ted Palmer, and Martin White.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive; Chief Officer (Governance); Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy), Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Chief Officer (Social Services), Corporate Finance Manager, Head of Democratic Services , Democratic Services Officers; and Councillor Reverend Daniel Stroud for prayers

Prior to the start of the meeting the Chair advised that she had attended the Social Care Wales Accolade Awards virtual ceremony on 10 November 2020. The Chair said she was pleased to announce that Flintshire Social Services had great successes in the 'Improving care and support at home together' category. The North East Wales Carers Information Service (NEWCIS) had won the category for its Bridging The Gap project which allows unpaid carers to access reliable and flexible respite solutions. Flintshire County Council Social Services was highly commended in second place for its project providing daytime activities for 250 people with learning difficulties. The Chair said she had sent a letter of congratulations to the recipients and advised that to enable Members to pay tribute to the achievements representatives of the successful services had been invited to attend the next meeting of the County Council on 8 December.

28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

29. NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD – FINAL GROWTH DEAL

The Chief Executive introduced a report on the key documents required for approval to reach the Final Deal Agreement for the North Wales Growth Deal with the UK Government and Welsh Government. He advised that the report presented the recommendations of Cabinet for the Council to support the region entering into a Final Deal Agreement for the North Wales Growth Deal. The Council would be a partner in and a co-signatory to the Agreement. The Chief Executive reported that Cabinet, at a meeting held prior to County Council today and following the advice of both the Environment & Economy and Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committees, had fully approved the report and recommendations.

The Chief Executive stated that entering into a Final Deal Agreement for the North Wales Growth Deal was a significant point in history for the region. The Agreement was a partnership between six Local Authorities, Bangor and Glyndwr Universities, and Llandrillo and Coleg Cambria. He explained that all 10 partners had received and agreed the relevant documentation within a short period with the aim that by mid-December the Secretary of State for Wales and the Minister for Economy for Wales would formally sign the Growth Deal which sealed commitment and funding for the region for the next 15 years. He said that the Growth Deal would mean that the region would be recognised as a coherent competitive region for future UK and Welsh Government funding for economic growth, particularly post BREXIT. The Growth Deal was worth £1.1 billion to the North Wales economy and was expected to create up to 4,200 new jobs in North Wales by 2036. Once signed by the UK and Welsh Governments the decisions on when individual programmes/projects could be started would be made on a regional basis. The Chief Executive advised that there would be ample opportunity for the detail of all the projects to be scrutinised in prior to their launch.

The Chief Executive and Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) gave a joint presentation on the North Wales Growth Deal which covered the following key points:

- partnership – North Wales Economic Ambition Board
- North Wales Growth Vision
- governance structure
- timeline
- Final Deal Agreement
- Final Deal Requirements – Business Cases
- overarching business plan
- the growth deal portfolio
- programmes
- income and expenditure
- financial implications
- Governance Agreement 2
- draft Final Deal Agreement
- key dates

The Corporate Finance Manager reported on the financial implications. He referred to the data in the report which showed the total (15 years) partner contributions to cover the cost of 'borrowing' notionally required to facilitate the negative cash flow. He advised that the level of borrowing required to meet the negative cash flow was prudent and provided good value for money in the context of the timely delivery of such a major project. The Council's additional annual partner contribution would be built into the budget for 2021/22 as part of the current ongoing work on the budget process and was deemed affordable.

The Chief Officer (Governance) reported on the governance arrangements for the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) He explained that Governance Agreement 2 sets out all the governance arrangements for the Board, and cited the terms of reference, membership, and voting arrangements. It also set out the arrangements between Flintshire County Council and Gwynedd County Council; the commitment by Flintshire County Council to pay its share of the costs incurred as a Partner in the Final Deal Agreement, and the withdrawal conditions if any partner decided not to proceed. The Chief Officer explained that local scrutiny arrangements would apply to any decision to commit local resources to the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. The Chief Officer reported on the key differences between Governance Agreement 1 and Governance Agreement 2.

The Chief Officer reported that the following recommendations had been made by Cabinet at the meeting held prior to County Council:

- (a) That Cabinet and Council approve the Overarching Business Plan as the document that sets out the arrangements to deliver the North Wales Growth Deal as the basis for entering into the Final Deal Agreement and acceptance of the Grant Funding Letter with the UK and Welsh Governments;
- (b) That Cabinet approves the provisions in Governance Agreement 2 relating to executive functions, recommends that Council approves the provisions relating to non-executive functions, and that Cabinet specifically adopts the delegations and Terms of Reference in "Governance Agreement 2: Appendix 1" thereof as the basis for completing the Final Deal Agreement and acceptance of the Grant Funding Letter with the UK and Welsh Governments;
- (c) That the Cabinet formally endorse and recommend that the Council authorise the accountable body, Gwynedd Council, to sign the Grant Funding Offer letter on behalf of the Partners;
- (d) That the Cabinet formally endorses and recommends that Council approves the method used to calculate the cost of borrowing notionally required to facilitate the negative cash flow for the Growth Deal, and to include a provision within the Council's budget to pay this contribution and the established core and supplementary contributions as set out in GA2 ; and
- (e) That the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, Monitoring Officer, and Section 151 Officer, be granted delegated authority to agree minor changes to the documents with the Partners as necessary to complete the agreement.

The Chief Officer reported on the Executive and Non-Executive functions of the Council. He advised that the Executive functions could only be exercised by Cabinet and Non-executive functions must be exercised by Council or a Committee. The proposed governance arrangements span both. He explained that Council were asked to consider and approve the non-executive arrangements i.e. scrutiny, overall budget, borrowing, and prudential indicators. In addition Council was asked to approve the overall terms of the deal.

Councillor Richard Jones referred to Schedule 3, Scrutiny Protocol, paragraph 2.5, in the report and said in his view the statement did not describe the call-in process clearly enough. In acknowledging the points made by Councillor Jones the Chief Officer explained said it was intended that a common deadline would be agreed for the call-in of decisions which would be 5 days. The call-in arrangements would be as already used in each local authority. Once called-in a decision could not be called back in by the initiating local authority, however, the process did not prevent the 5 other local authorities from calling-in the same decision. Councillor Jones raised a further query on Schedule 7, and said paragraph 11 referred to paragraph 12 but in J1 the reference was to paragraph 10 not 12. The Chief Officer said he would look into this and if correct it would be included as a minor amendment to the schedule.

Councillor Ian Roberts spoke in support of the Final Growth Deal which he said would almost double the value of the North Wales economy by 2035. He paid tribute to the Chief Executive for his stoic work and commitment on the Growth Deal from beginning to final stages. He also paid tribute to Councillor Aaron Shotton, for his work as former Leader of the Council and Chairman of the NWEAB, and Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, Leader of Gwynedd County Council. He spoke in praise of the collaborative partnership work undertaken under the leadership of Alwen Williams, Programme Director, and said that the NWEAB was cited as an example of best practice by the Welsh Government. Councillor Roberts moved the recommendations, as detailed above, and asked Members for their support.

In seconding the recommendations Councillor Derek Butler spoke of the work of the NWEAB during the last four years and said that the Final Growth Deal would ensure that the region was far better placed to meet the future than other areas in the United Kingdom. He thanked Officers for their hard work and also paid tribute to Ashley Rogers, North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council, for his work and contribution.

Councillor Ian Dunbar expressed concerns around future investment in Holyhead Port, the impact of BREXIT in Wales, and movement of freight in the Port. The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) explained that investment in Holyhead Port was not only in regard to freight but also securing other commercial opportunities for the long term citing ferries and cruise liners as examples. The Chief Executive advised that Holyhead Port had been identified as the biggest single risk to be managed post BREXIT in North Wales and said advanced discussions were being held with the Border Control force around capacity and work was underway regarding road enhancements and additional parking. He advised that a Strategic Coordinating Group was working on matters regarding the Holyhead Port in North Wales.

Officers responded to the further concerns made by Councillor Patrick Heesom around the integrated transport policy and the call-in and scrutiny process. The Chief

Executive reiterated that that there would be ample opportunity for local scrutiny and call-in to take place in the usual way. The Chief Officer (Governance) gave an explanation of how and when scrutiny and call-in procedures would be used regarding decisions made by the Cabinet or NWEAB and referred to the briefing and reporting arrangements. The Chief Officer commented that meetings of the NWEAB were published and Members were entitled to attend.

Councillor Tony Sharps referred to the importance of Mostyn Docks and the effective partnership established with the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council (formerly the Merseyside Dee Alliance). He asked that Mostyn Docks and the Mersey Dee Business Council be included in the future delivery of the Growth Deal.

Councillor Mike Peers referred to the reduced overall funding (£240m) for the transformational projects and asked if this would have an impact on the provision for North Wales. He also referred to the funding arrangements for the Portfolio Management Office and asked if any other Committees/Groups received similar payment arrangements and if any further contributions were required to the NWEAB. The Chief Executive explained that the vision remained broadly the same and the principal projects remained the same but some of the cost investments and the programmes had to be reduced. It was anticipated that more funding would be attracted in the future and cited the possibility of a second Growth Deal and supplementary funding as examples. The Chief Executive also provided clarification around the arrangements for the Programme office which supported the NWEAB. He confirmed that there were no payments to other committees or groups and no additional contributions had been made to the NWEAB other than the Authority's partner core contribution of £50k per year and supplementary contribution of £40k per year.

In response to the further comments made by Councillor Peers regarding scrutiny the Chief Executive suggested that a Forward Work Programme be provided in January to facilitate the arrangements for each of the Authority's overview and scrutiny committees. Councillor Richard Jones suggested that the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee should always be included in the local scrutiny process (as a joint committee if necessary) due to the economic impact of decision-making. In response to the further comments by Councillor Jones the Chief Officer provided additional clarification on the call-in process and timescales involved.

In response to a request from Councillor Dave Mackie the Chief Executive agreed to provide a list of project officers for the Growth Deal once finalised.

The recommendation in the report had been moved by Councillor Ian Roberts and seconded by Councillor Derek Butler. When put to the vote the recommendation was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That Council receives and adopts the recommendations of Cabinet as follows:

- (a) That the Overarching Business Plan be approved as the document that sets out the arrangements to deliver the North Wales Growth Deal as the basis for

entering into the Final Deal Agreement and acceptance of the Grant Funding Letter with the UK and Welsh Governments;

- (b) That Council notes the Cabinet approval of the provisions in Governance Agreement 2 relating to executive functions, and I approves the provisions relating to non-executive functions, and that Cabinet specifically adopts the delegations and Terms of Reference in “Governance Agreement 2: Appendix 1” thereof as the basis for completing the Final Deal Agreement and acceptance of the Grant Funding Letter with the UK and Welsh Governments;
- (c) That Council authorises the accountable body, Gwynedd Council, to sign the Grant Funding Offer letter on behalf of the Partners;
- (d) That Council accepts the Cabinet’s formal endorsements and d recommendations, and approves the method used to calculate the cost of borrowing notionally required to facilitate the negative cash flow for the Growth Deal, and to include a provision within the budget to pay this contribution and the established core and supplementary contributions as set out in GA2 ; and
- (e) That the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, Monitoring Officer, and Section 151 Officer, be granted delegated authority to agree minor changes to the documents with the Partners as necessary to complete the agreement.

30. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.55 pm)

.....
Chair