

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 MARCH 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the Community and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 14 March 2018

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Dunbar (Chairman)

Councillors: David Cox, Jean Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Rosetta Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, George Hardcastle, Ray Hughes, Ted Palmer, Mike Reece, Paul Shotton and David Wisinger

APOLOGIES: Councillors Dennis Hutchinson and Mike Reece

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Patrick Heesom and Helen Brown attended as observers

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Bernie Attridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing; Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise); Chief Officer (Organisational Change), Housing Strategy Manager; Service Manager Customer Support, Service Manager Enterprise & Regeneration

IN ATTENDANCE: Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

Prior to the start of the meeting Councillor George Hardcastle commented on the recent bad weather and raised concerns that the telephone number for urgent/emergency repairs had been unavailable. The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) reported that there had been a high number of calls during the recent bad weather but would look into Councillor Hardcastle's concerns following the meeting.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

51. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2018 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

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

52. NEXT PHASE OF STRATEGIC HOUSING AND REGENERATION PROGRAMME (SHARP) SCHEMES

The Housing Strategy Manager introduced a report to seek support to progress the next stages of the Council's Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme

(SHARP). He advised that the report also set out the proposals to develop 92 new social and affordable homes at the following sites:

- Nant y Gro, Gronant
- The Former Council Depot, Dobshell
- Llys Dewi, Penyffordd (near Holywell)

The Housing Strategy Manager reported that the development of the above sites for social and affordable housing was a strategic priority for the Council and the sites were pre-agreed for inclusion within the SHARP. He referred to the main considerations, as detailed in the report, on the proposed schemes, including location, proposed property types, design and layout, and projected build costs. He said the report also identified the preferred funding options and detailed the Development Scheme Assumptions against which the viability of the schemes were measured and assessed.

Councillor Bernie Attridge commented on the unacceptable behaviour displayed by some members of the public towards officers during public consultation meetings on planning developments and outlined the need for housing within Flintshire.

Councillor Paul Shotton expressed his congratulations to the Chief Officer and her team for the successful new build schemes which had taken place so far and spoke of the high standard of new housing, citing the recent developments in Connaught Quay as an example.

Councillor Ray Hughes commented on the council house development in Leeswood and expressed his thanks to the Chief Officer and her team for their support. He also asked that his thanks be passed to Michael Cunningham and his team, Whaites for the consideration and assistance given to local residents during the building programme.

In response to a question from Councillor David Cox, Councillor Bernie Attridge advised that all local members were invited to attend consultation events on proposed council house development within their ward.

On behalf of Councillor Mike Reece, Councillor Rosetta Dolphin asked for an update on the development of the old Canton Depot site at Bagillt. The Housing Strategy Manager agreed to contact Councillor Reece to advise him that progress was continuing.

In response to the concerns raised by Councillor Sian Braun concerning the condition of roads in Gronant, Councillor Bernie Attridge said he would be making representation to ask for funding to be made available through the capital programme to address the matters raised by residents in the area during the consultation process.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee support the development of 92 new social and affordable homes at Llys Dewi, Penyffordd; Nant y Gro, Gronant and the Former Council Depot, Dobshell;

- (b) That the use of prudential borrowing to the value of £9.823m (subject to final approval and verification) to fund the proposed development of the new Council homes be supported;
- (c) That the Committee support and recommend the use of affordable housing grant of £1.903m and shared equity reserves, shared ownership receipts and commuted sums of £1.722m in total to contribute to scheme costs; and
- (d) That proposals to develop 17 affordable properties by NEW Homes (subject to NEW Homes Board approval) be noted.

53. FLINTSHIRE STREET MARKETS REVIEW

The Service Manager Enterprise & Regeneration introduced a report to consider the recommended options for the future of street markets in Flintshire. He provided background information and advised that a review on the sustainability of smaller street markets in Flintshire had been undertaken. He explained that consultation had been carried out with Town Councils in Connah's Quay, Flint and Holywell, and with market traders in Flint and Holywell.

The Service Manager referred to the main considerations, as detailed in the report. He also referred to the income generated by each market for the Council compared to the running costs during 2016/17 and the findings and conclusions of the review.

The Chairman explained that Connah's Quay Town Council had expressed an interest in taking on the operation of the street market in Connah's Quay and commented on the possibility of consideration being given to an amalgamation with market traders in Flint and Holywell to form a single market which could locate to different areas.

Councillor Paul Shotton spoke in support of the recommendations which he said would reduce the operating deficit for the markets overall. He commented on the general decline in shopping in street markets due to competition from large multi-national retailers and on-line shopping.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support and recommend to Cabinet:-

- The closure of Flint street market;
- Provisional agreement to transfer the operation of the Connah's Quay street market to Connah's Quay Town Council, subject to confirmation from the Town Council and agreement of terms; and
- Continued operation of the Holywell street market on an interim basis and continued discussion with Holywell Town Council on future cost saving options.

54. FLINTSHIRE SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME GRANT, LOCAL SPEND PLAN AND REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

The Customer Support Manager introduced a report to present the Supporting People Programme Grant Local Spend Plan for 2018/19 which had been developed to align with the priorities laid out within the North Wales Supporting People Regional Strategic Plan.

The Customer Support Manager provided background information and advised that the report provided an overview of the progress made by the North Wales Regional Collaborative Committee across the priority areas outlined in last year's plan and an overview of emerging risks to the programme. The report also provided a summary of the range of challenges creating a pressure on the homeless service and the risk of a growing financial burden for the Council. The Local Spend Plan proposed to progress planned reductions of services where efficiencies had been identified or where services were not deemed a priority to fund. Released funding would be invested in services that can demonstrate they contribute to local strategic objectives or regional priorities as presented in the Regional Strategic Plan.

The Customer Support Manager referred to the main considerations, as detailed in the report, on the Regional Strategic Plan, local priorities for Supporting People Programme Grant, decommissioning, and spend plan 2018/19.

During discussion Members expressed concern that the funding that would usually be allocated to Supporting People had moved to a new Early Intervention – Prevention and Support Grant which merged the budgets for Flying Start, Families First, Communities First Legacy Fund and a new Employability Grant. The combined total of £252m across Wales was £13m less than the combined total of the individual grants in 2018/19. In response to the questions raised the Chief Officer explained that the Authority's share of the grant was not yet known.

Members referred to the support provided for prison leavers across the region, citing the provision of council housing in particular. In response to the questions and concerns raised Councillor Bernie Attridge confirmed that where the Authority had a statutory duty to provide social housing for prison leavers there was a robust housing management policy in place to address any matters arising.

Referring to page 43 of the report, David Cox sought clarification on the need to recruit posts in the Leaving Care Team and in the Homeless Prevention service. The Chief Officer provided further information on the need to recruit in both services and explained that the support provided by the Leaving Care Team to individuals in the early stages of independent living ensured a more successful outcome in the longer term and was more cost effective for the Authority.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the Supporting People Grant Spend Plan for 2018/19 and the North Wales Regional Strategic Plan.

55. QUARTER 3 COUNCIL PLAN 2017/18 MONITORING REPORT

The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) presented the Quarter 3 Council Plan 2017/18 Monitoring report. She advised that the report presented the monitoring of progress at the end of Quarter 3 of 2017/18 for the Council Plan priorities 'Supportive Council' and 'Ambitious Council' which were relevant to the Committee.

The Chief Officer advised that the monitoring report for the 2017/18 Council Plan was a positive report, with 81% of activities being assessed as making good progress, and 69% likely to achieve the desired outcome. Performance Indicators showed good progress with 84% meeting or near to period target. Risks were also being successfully managed with the majority being assessed as moderate (67%) or minor (10%).

The Chief Officer reported on the performance indicator 'average number of calendar days taken to deliver a DFG' which showed a red status for current performance against target and the following major risk for the Committee, as detailed in the report.

Priority: Supportive Council – debt levels will rise if tenants are unable to afford to pay their rent or council tax.

The Chief Officer advised that progress against the risks identified in the Council Plan were included in the appendices to the report.

During discussion Officers responded to questions raised concerning DFGs and adaptations undertaken to council properties. Officers advised that procedures were in place to safeguard against the risk of a property being sold in the short term following extensive adaptations undertaken.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

56. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme (FWP) for consideration. She advised that the FWP would be populated for the forthcoming year following approval of the committee diary of meetings to be submitted to the Annual General Meeting of the County Council in May.

Councillor Paul Shotton asked that a report on food poverty be presented at a future Committee meeting.

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin asked that an update report on garage sites also be presented at a future meeting of the Committee.

The Chair expressed thanks, on behalf of the Committee to Clare Budden for the positive impact she had made to housing in Flintshire and for her support and work

with the Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee. He wished her success in her new role with Pennaf Housing Association.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted; and
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

57. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 10,00 am and ended at 11.20 am)

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Chairman