

**CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**19 APRIL 2018**

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 19 April 2018

**PRESENT: Councillor Clive Carver (Chairman)**

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Paul Cunningham, Patrick Heesom, Andrew Holgate, Dave Hughes, Paul Johnson, Richard Jones, Hilary McGuill, Michelle Perfect, Andy Williams, and Arnold Woolley

**SUBSTITUTION:** Councillor Mike Peers for Councillor Bob Connah

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Mike Lowe and Vicky Perfect

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors: Bernie Attridge and Andy Dunbobbin. Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Housing & Assets)

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance; Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Assets, Chief Executive; Corporate Finance Manager, Corporate Business and Communications Executive Officer, and Finance Manager.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer

Prior to the start of the meeting it was reported that Councillor Bob Connah's mother has passed away and it was agreed that a letter of condolence would be sent on behalf of the Committee.

**78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None were received.

**79. MINUTES**

(i) The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2018 were submitted.

**Matters arising:**

Councillor Patrick Heesom referred to discussions between the Council and the Welsh Government (WG) concerning the future of the Flintshire bridge and other road issues and asked if there was any news. The Chief Executive explained that a number of discussions were ongoing and an update would be provided in due course.

Councillor Heesom also referred to the request that the Committee should receive a report outlining the effects of the capital expenditure (new schemes for

approval) and said it had been stated this would be made available for the April meeting. The Corporate Finance Manager explained that a report would be provided for the next meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Arnold Woolley commented on the quality of repairs to potholes in roads, raising concerns that value for money was not being achieved. The Chief Executive explained that more teams were working on repairs with an emphasis on cutting-out and filling. He advised that any poor workmanship was not acceptable and that any examples should be reported to Streetscene for investigation.

Councillor Arnold Woolley also referred to out of county placements and associated costs and asked if the Council was lobbying the WG to address funding needs. The Chief Executive said that constructive discussion was taking place with the WG and the Welsh Local Government Association and the issue of funding and the need for more regional provision and solutions was a strong lobbying point. Councillor Aaron Shotton also referred to ongoing discussions with the WLGA and said the principle of more funding was the key issue. The Chief Executive suggested that this should be an agenda item for consideration at the joint meeting of the Education & Youth and Social & Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 24 May 2018 if not previously identified.

Councillor Hilary McGuill commented on the need for funding for early prevention to be made available by the WG.

Councillor Richard Jones commented that funding for social care and out of county placements was a national not a local issue. Councillor Jones also referred to his comments at previous meetings that developers should pay for pest control when the construction of new developments displaced rats from building sites and said this could be achieved from Section 106 Agreement funding. Councillor Aaron Shotton commented that pest control charges had been raised at the Income Generation workshop the previous day.

- (ii) The minutes of the joint meeting of the Corporate Resources and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committees held on 15 March 2018 were submitted.

**RESOLVED:**

That both sets of minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman as accurate records.

**80. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY – FORECAST 2019/20**

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced the report to provide an update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) – Forecast 2019/20. He provided background information and advised that the Cabinet report which was appended provided the first detailed overview of the financial forecast for 2019/20 with further

work on forecasting up to 2021/22 to follow. He reported on the main considerations which were detailed in the report.

The Chief Executive advised that the potential budget gap of £10.6m for 2019/20 remained challenging and referred to the limited options to address the gap. He commented on the teachers' pay award and said that a full pay modelling impact report would be brought to the June meeting. He said there was a need to encourage a serious national debate in Wales around funding for Education.

Councillor Richard Jones commented on Domiciliary care costs for the terminally ill and asked how many service users were affected. The Chief Executive said he would pursue this information with the Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults.

In response to Councillor Patrick Heesom's comments on the impact of the teacher pay award and the need for early representations to be made, Councillor Aaron Shotton referred to the commitment from headteachers and governing bodies. He said that discussions were continuing in earnest. Representations had also been made by teacher unions seeking opportunities to start lobbying. He recognised that Education was a key national pressure.

Councillor Mike Peers said there was a lack of detail in the report around the spending requirement and a need to review it. The Chief Executive commented on the need to detail the allocation of spend to portfolios.

Councillor Paul Johnson said that monitoring of the consequences and the impact of changes to service provision on the residents of Flintshire, and on the poorest communities in particular, was important. He asked if impact assessments were being undertaken. The Chief Executive agreed that an impact assessment would be a useful exercise and explained that an item on the integrated impact assessment model and its application had been included on the Forward Work Programme for the Committee.

In summing up, the Democratic Services Manager asked whether the Committee wished to raise its concerns on the impact the Medium Term Financial Plan might have on the poorest communities in Flintshire. The Committee agreed to this. Councillor Patrick Heesom requested that his abstention on the vote be recorded.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Committee informs the Cabinet that it has noted the Medium term Financial Strategy (MTFS) – Forecast 2019/20 Report and specifically raises concerns at the impact which it might have on the poorest communities in Flintshire.

#### **81. REPORTING ON INVESTMENT IN COUNTY TOWNS**

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced a report on investment in Flintshire's County towns and how this might be developed. He provided background information and explained that the report addressed the issues arising

from a Notice of Motion at County Council in December 2017 and the agreement that reports on certain types of expenditure would display expenditure broken down by town. The report suggested a basis for the definition of 'town' for this purpose only and identified the areas of spend within the 2018/19 capital programme which could be included in the reporting process whilst explaining some of the difficulties in obtaining the information. The Corporate Finance Manager reported on the main considerations as detailed in the report.

Councillor Richard Jones expressed concern that the report did not provide the information he had requested and emphasised the importance of identifying the spend on each town and the need to ensure all towns were treated equally. He asked for details on the spend per capita/per head to understand how the funding was aggregated between towns and where it was spent.

Councillor Aaron Shotton supported the points raised by Councillor Jones and suggested that the matter also be referred to Cabinet for consideration. He gave assurance that the report was a first draft of work in progress and that further detail would follow.

Councillor Paul Johnson said the report did not provide a definition of 'fair' and 'need' and commented on the need to look at communities on the basis of 'need' and what was being defined as a 'fair allocation' to meet the need.

The Chief Executive concurred that more work needed to be undertaken around defining the 'county towns' referred to in the notice of motion. He advised that there wasn't a single definition and said the report should indicate where the Council was spending money and why. It was agreed that a further Member workshop on the Growth Bid would be arranged and that a further report would be submitted to the meeting of the Committee to be held in June.

Councillor Arnold Woolley referred to the first sentence in paragraph 1.02 of the report and suggested that the word 'easily' be replaced by 'accurate'.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee notes the representations made and awaits the further report.

**82. DRAFT WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION STRATEGY**

The Chief Executive introduced the report to seek approval of the draft five year Welsh Language Promotion Strategy for formal consultation.

The Chief Executive provided background information and commented that Flintshire was an exceptional authority in terms of its commitment to the Welsh language. He referred to the main considerations as detailed in the report and invited the Corporate Business and Communications Executive Officer to provide further information. The Corporate Business and Communications Executive Officer explained that the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy would also contribute to the Council's Well Being Plan as required by the Well-being and Future Generations Act 2015 and Welsh Government's goal to provide 'a Wales

of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language'. She commented on the consultation process which would take place in May 2018 and advised that the final Strategy would be presented to Cabinet in July 2018 for approval before publication and implementation.

Councillor Hilary McGuill commented on the decline in the number of Welsh speakers between the ages of 5-20 as indicated in table 2, page 62 of the report. The Corporate Business and Communications Executive Officer suggested that this may be because some young people did not continue to develop their Welsh language skills after leaving school.

Councillor Billy Mullin spoke of the Welsh Government's Strategy to achieve one million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050 and commented on the excellent work undertaken by Welsh medium schools in Flintshire.

The Chair sought clarification around the data provided in table 3, page 63, of the report. The Chief Executive explained that the information was obtained from census data and agreed to review how the census questions had been structured.

Councillor Mike Peers referred to the aim of the draft Strategy. He asked for a breakdown of the percentage of Welsh medium schools, primary schools, and members of the public. He also commented on the number of primary school pupils currently receiving Welsh medium education and asked whether this would satisfy the target over the next five years.

Councillor Hilary McGuill asked if funding was available to support initiatives in the community to develop Welsh language skills. The Corporate Business and Communications Executive Officer explained that the Authority was unable to finance such community projects from Council funds, however, there may be an opportunity to apply for a grant from the Community Chest fund. The Chief Executive commented that there was also the opportunity for local councils to 'self-organise' to support local social enterprise.

Councillor Paul Cunningham commented on the need to promote the use of the Welsh language in all Flintshire schools.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Committee supports the draft five year Welsh Language Promotion Strategy.

## **83. COUNCIL PLAN UPDATE**

The Chief Executive provided a verbal update on the Council Plan 2018/19. He advised that the Plan was being reviewed to reflect the key priorities of the Council and would be considered at the meeting of the Cabinet on 24 April 2018.

An all-Member workshop was to be held on 29 May, when the content of the draft Plan would be shared along with key target areas for national measures. The Chief Executive advised that formal feedback would be considered by a special

meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 4 June.

The Plan would then be presented to Cabinet and County Council on 19 June. The Chief Executive explained that the integration of the Well-being Plan priorities which the Council was responsible for leading on had been aligned within the Council Plan.

## **RESOLVED**

That the verbal update be noted.

### **84. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2017/18 (MONTH 11)**

The Finance Manager introduced a report to provide the Revenue Budget Monitoring report for 2017/18 as at Month 11. She advised that the Revenue Budget Monitoring report would be presented to Cabinet on 24 April 2018 and a copy was appended to the report.

The Finance Manager explained that the monthly report provided the current revenue budget monitoring position for 2017/18 for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account. The report presented the position based on actual income and expenditure, as at Month 11 of the financial year and projected how the budget would stand at the close of the financial year if there were no significant unforeseen events.

The Finance Manager reported on the main projected year end position for the Council Fund and the Housing Revenue Account as detailed in the report. She also reported on the main considerations on the Month 11 position and referred to the overall position of the Council Fund, the latest in-year forecast, winter maintenance, inflation, reserves and balances, and requests for carry forward of funding.

The Finance Manager advised that for the Council Fund the overall projected in-year position now included £1.422m due to the change in accounting policy for Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charges as agreed by County Council on 1 March. This had the effect of eliminating the operating deficit with net spend projected to be £1.531m less than budget. The Projected Contingency Reserve balance as at 31 March was £8.353m although this reduced to £5.948m when taking account of agreed contributions for the 2018/19 budget. The Finance Manager reported that for the Housing Revenue Account the net in-year expenditure was forecast to be £0.035m higher than budget and the projected closing balance as at 31 March 2018 was £1.081m.

The Chair commented on the WG announcement on late underspend and asked if the WLGA was to apply to the WG for an additional allocation for winter maintenance services from the underspend.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee notes the revenue Budget Monitoring 2017/18 Month 11 report and confirms that on this occasion there are no issues which it wishes to bring to the Cabinet's attention.

**85. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Democratic Services Manager referred to the Forward Work Programme which had been reviewed and amended at the informal session prior to the meeting. He advised that the following items were also to be submitted for consideration:

- a financial report on capital to the meeting of the Committee on 17 May
- a report on investments in county towns and a report on pay modelling to the meeting of the Committee to be held on 14 June.

It was agreed that the Forward Work Programme as amended at the informal session earlier in the day be approved with the additional items above. The Democratic Service Manager reminded Members that a special meeting of the Committee would be held on 4 June to consider feedback on the Council Plan.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Forward work programme, as amended at the informal session earlier in the day be approved;
- (b) That the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-chair be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, should this become necessary; and
- (c) That the Forward work Programme be considered at the beginning, rather than the end of future meetings of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

**86. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE**

There was one member of the press and no members of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 a.m. and ended at 12.15 p.m)

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**Chairman**