

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 JANUARY 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 15 January 2019.

PRESENT: Councillor David Evans (Vice Chair in the Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Haydn Bateman, Sean Bibby, Chris Dolphin, Andy Dunbobbin, Cindy Hinds, Dave Hughes, Vicky Perfect, Paul Shotton and Owen Thomas

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Patrick Heesom (for Ray Hughes)

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Carolyn Thomas, Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside, Councillors: Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection, Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy), Highway Network Manager, Fleet Manager, and Senior Technical and Performance Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

42. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2018 were submitted.

Matters arising

Referring to his comments on Environmental Enforcement, Councillor Paul Shotton advised that various local groups and organisations would be engaged in a 'clean-up of discarded litter' around Connah's Quay during March.

RESOLVED:

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

43. NORTH EAST WALES METRO

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced the report to provide an update on the progress of the North East Wales Metro Project, including the latest bids to Welsh Government (WG) for funding. He provided background information and explained that to provide a long term sustainable transport solution it was essential that all modes of transport were successfully integrated. Key to this was maintaining and promoting a sustainable, affordable, and environmentally friendly Public Transport Service with links to all of Flintshire and the wider region. Proposals

provide a platform which can be widened in scope to provide a transport solution for other local key areas of employment, particularly Broughton and the nearby Airbus site, providing seamless access for people wishing to work in the area whilst living in other areas of North/Mid Wales and North West England.

The Chief Officer reported that further bids had recently been submitted to the WG 'Local Transport Fund' (LTF) for funding in the 2018-2021 period. The Authority had been successful in securing £1,373,500 WG funding in 2018/19 with a further commitment of £2,675m in 2019/20 and £1,6025m in 2020/21 for the delivery of further schemes as detailed in the report.

The Chief Officer invited the Senior Technical and Performance Manager to report on progress on the following ongoing schemes within the wider project:

- Access to employment – active travel and bus stop infrastructure throughout Deeside Industrial Park
- Developments for passenger growth – Deeside corridor
- B5128 Queensferry roundabout to Denbighshire County Boundary
- Partial signalisation of Parkway roundabout – Zone 2, Deeside Industrial Park
- A5104 Broughton to Saltney cycleway phase 2

The Chief Officer advised that consultation on the schemes had taken place with the Deeside Business Forum, businesses in Deeside Industrial Park, local Town and Community Councils, elected Members, and the WG. A public consultation exercise would also be undertaken in the near future.

The Chief Officer acknowledged the comments from Councillor Vicky Perfect on the North East Wales Metro proposal and a link to the railway station in Flint, and said that the importance of the coastal rail line was recognised.

Councillor Paul Shotton commented on the difficulty experienced by some people in gaining access to Deeside Industrial Park. He spoke in support of the scheme for active travel and bus stop infrastructure throughout Deeside Industrial Park and welcomed the upgrade to the shuttle service with more emphasis on energy efficiency. He asked for an update on the park and ride scheme. Officers advised that work was taking place with the Welsh Government to develop the park and ride scheme and was currently at the planning stage and funding should be secured in the near future. A suitable site had been identified and the business community were in favour of park and ride. Councillor Carolyn Thomas commented that the park and ride scheme would address the issue of congestion and provide a regular shuttle service.

The Chief Officer referred to the linking of Shotton station to enable access into the centre of Deeside Industrial Park in addition to the link between Flint and Shotton which would allow further access to employment from the North of the County.

Councillor Patrick Heesom said he supported the concept of the North East Wales Metro but expressed concerns that there had not been proper consultation with Members and emphasised the importance to the wider infrastructure of the County. Referring to the integrated transport network he referred to the need for

links from the major road arteries (A55 and A548) to connect to the Deeside Business Park . He also expressed a number of concerns around the red route which he said would result in the transfer of blockages up to Northop. He had made representations to the Minister in Welsh Government and felt that a solution would be a new bridge from the roundabout on Shotwick bypass to the junction of Bagillt/Flint. He commented that the red route did nothing for Connah's Quay and Flint. He added that the report indicated that £13million was being used to resolve certain issues in Deeside but was not available to the rest of the Council area and expressed the view that the rest of Flintshire was being failed by the Council.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas advised that the Committee had considered the routes as part of the WG consultation and had supported the red route.

Councillor Shotton also commented that the First Minister was also committed to the red route which was welcomed.

Councillor Chris Dolphin welcomed the report but commented that this was a significant amount of funding which was Deeside orientated. He took the opportunity to comment on Holywell High Street and referred to the need for WG to support improvement works. Officers agreed to discuss the matters raised by Councillor Dolphin concerning Holywell High Street following the meeting.

Councillor Owen Thomas asked if the shuttle bus service would take into consideration the needs of employees who worked shift hours on Deeside Industrial Park. The Senior Technical and Performance Manager explained that that shift working patterns had been taken into consideration and the shuttle service would mirror shift patterns. He also reported that streetlighting was being provided on cycle lanes across the river in response to feedback received.

Councillor Haydn Bateman asked for an update on the Mold to Broughton cycleway. The Chief Officer explained that significant funding had been received and said that a presentation would be made to a future meeting of the Committee to update on progress.

The Chair raised a query on the dedicated bus lane through Shotton and asked how this would fit in. The officer advised that a transport planning survey had been undertaken and there was sufficient room to put in a bus lane from Asda junction to the Shotton traffic lights.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbins welcomed the report and expressed appreciation to the Chief Officer and his team for the progress achieved. He commented on the positive improvements in Zone 3 and referred to the benefits to be gained from tourism from an integrated transport strategy for Flintshire. Referring to the Park and Ride scheme he asked if there would be a charge for the service. The Chief Officer advised that it was intended that the service would be pay and display with the use of permits allowed. He commented that the majority of the business community shared a paid approach to park and ride.

Councillor Cindy Hinds asked for an update regarding the timescale for the 3 hubs and referred to the need to ensure the bus network linked into hubs and train

stations. The Chief Officer acknowledged the comments and said that the Bidston line was key to progressing this. He added that this was a short term aspiration.

Councillor Patrick Heesom reiterated his concerns that large areas of the County were not being consulted on the proposals and a strategy was needed for the rest of the County. He also reiterated his comments that the red route would not resolve any of the issues around access to Deeside Industrial Park from other areas of the County. He also said there was no support in the proposals for the development of Mostyn Dock.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas reassured the Committee that where possible there were “joined up” plans for the rest of the County and funding for development across Flintshire would be pursued. She advised that consultation would be made available online.

Members agreed that further consultation would be of benefit and welcomed the commitment to online consultation.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That progress made to date on Flintshire County Council’s Integrated Transport solution and its links to the wider North East Wales Metro plans supported by the Welsh Government, be noted;
- (b) That the recent award of Welsh Government Local Transport funding be noted; and
- (c) That further consultation takes place with the wider business community

44. **FLEET CONTRACT**

The Highways Network Manager introduced the report to provide an update on the progress of the countywide Fleet Contract two years after implementation and with an evaluation of the efficiencies delivered by the change in delivery method.

The Highways Network Manager provided background information and referred to the key considerations, as detailed in the report, concerning the anticipated financial benefits and the current position, and the anticipated service benefits. He reported that the majority of anticipated service benefits had been realised and the fleet had been modernised with replaced vehicles. The actual total cumulative saving of the Fleet Contract by Year 2 (17/18) is calculated as £1,134,912, however, this is made up by the much improved position of non-cashable savings provided from the reduced processing of invoices.

The Highways Network Manager advised that an Internal Audit review of the contract was undertaken in May 2018, as a matter of good practice, and had identified areas where the Authority needed to work more closely to ensure activities became embedded in service area’s review processes. He added that advice and information from the Fleet Team and the partnering contractor are acted on to improve utilisation

and efficiencies. An Action Plan is in place to resolve all outstanding issues raised in the report.

Referring to the modernisation of the Authority's fleet of vehicles following the provision of new vehicles by the partner, the Chief Officer said this had resulted in fewer vehicles in operation than in the past and greater efficiency with less maintenance and repair work required. As a result proposals are being considered to enable the in-house workshop staff who carry out the maintenance activities on the vehicles on behalf of the contractor, to take on third party business through the workshops with the Authority to be paid for the hours worked.

Members expressed appreciation to the Chief Officer and his team for the progress and efficiencies achieved to date as a result of the new fleet working arrangements.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

45. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE

The Chief Officer introduced the report to enable the Committee to consider the draft strategy. He provided background information and referred to the increased demand for electric vehicles (EVs) in the UK and advised that it was essential for the Authority to engage with the new technologies to reduce the risk of public abandonment in terms of tourism, residential development and business growth.

The Chief Officer advised that the Council had a major role both in developing a strategy to facilitate the implementation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points and in providing opportunities for the introduction of appropriate and effective Charging Points at strategic locations throughout the County. The Authority would achieve this by making locations available and by ensuring that the local electricity supply network was sufficient to accommodate the additional demand. This approach would ensure long term sustainability and provide the Council with some potential long term financial benefits from local lease arrangements. An approved strategy would allow the Council to bid for a funding stream made available by the Welsh and national Governments to help local authorities to secure a network of electric vehicle charging points across the country.

The Chief Officer explained that the Authority could mitigate the risk of impact on its finances by adopting the role of an 'enabler' to facilitate the implementation of electric vehicle charging points, rather than assuming the role of a direct provider. He reiterated that this approach would allow the Council to enter long term lease agreement with specific suppliers which would provide long term income potential. This would involve the Authority bidding for available funding from the Welsh Government to upgrade the existing electricity supply network at those sites which have a proven business case. Sites may also be prioritised due to the potential to integrate ancillary energy facilities such as Solar PV (solar carports, solar arrays) and battery storage. The Chief Officer reported that it was essential that both urban and

rural aspects of the County were considered when facilitating the growth of an EV charging network.

The Chief Officer advised that the Authority current operated a fleet of around 315 vehicles and whilst it aspired to achieve an all electric fleet the batter technology currently available restricted the range of electric vehicles. However, the Authority would continue to work with its fleet supplier to monitor opportunities to integrate electric vehicles into its own fleet in line with the advancement of battery technology.

He invited the Network Support Manager to report on the main considerations as detailed in the report and to respond to the questions and comments raised by Members.

Members spoke in support of the proposals that the Authority should act as an 'enabler' rather than a direct provider of electricity charging points and should facilitate the upgrade of the existing electricity supply network at economically viable locations on the highway network and other key locations in the County. Members also supported the strategic locations identified across Flintshire's own asset portfolio which would require further work to prioritise bids to access any available Welsh Government or national funding to install the necessary electrical infrastructure for charging points at these locations.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee supports the proposals that the Authority should act as an 'enabler' rather than a direct provider of electricity charging points and should therefore facilitate the upgrade of the existing electricity supply network at economically viable locations on the highway network and other key locations in the County;
- (b) That the Committee supports the strategic locations identified across Flintshire's own asset portfolio which would require further work to prioritise bids to access any available Welsh Government or national funding to install the necessary electrical infrastructure for charging points at these locations; and
- (c) That the Authority continues to aspire to achieve an "All Electric Fleet" of service vehicles in line with the advancement of battery technology.

46. COUNCIL PLAN 2018/19 MID-YEAR MONITORING REPORT

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced a report to present a summary of performance at the mid-year point 2018/19 for the Council Plan priority 'Green Council' relevant to the Committee.

The Chief Officer advised that the mid-year monitoring report showed that 88% of activities were making good progress with 81% likely to achieve their planned outcomes. 79% of the performance indicators had met or exceeded their targets. Risks were being managed with a minority of 18% being assessed as major. The report was an exception based report and therefore focussed on the areas of under-performance.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) referred to the major risk identified for the Committee regarding adverse weather conditions on the highway network. He advised that the risk trend had increased due to the severity of the 2017/18 winter, with road conditions throughout the County detrimentally affected by road surface defects and potholes. Additional funds, resources and contractors had been deployed across the County during the summer to repair the network as defects were identified. This included the priority resurfacing and patching capital schemes. The Chief Officer explained that although expensive and permanent repair work to remove significant defects and improve the condition of the roads whilst reducing the risk on the network was undertaken this may not be sufficient to halt decline in the network. However the Chief Officer reported that additional funding had been allocated to enable the Authority to undertake some major schemes this year.

Councillor Owen Thomas expressed concerns regarding the risks associated with public safety due to potholes on some of the roads in his Ward. Councillor Carolyn Thomas offered to discuss the specific concerns raised by Councillor Thomas following the meeting.

Councillor Chris Dolphin reiterated the concerns expressed by Councillor Thomas regarding the poor condition of some roads and commented on the method of inspection used to identify defects. Councillor Carolyn Thomas acknowledged the point made and explained a backlog of repair work was required to bring roads up to the required standard, however, without sufficient funding to undertake the work the network would continue to deteriorate.

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) referred to the major risk that funding would not be secured for priority flood alleviation schemes, as detailed in section 1.11 of the report. He advised that the implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood & Water Management Act which required the local authority to also act as the Sustainable Drainage Approving Body (SAB) as of 7 January 2019, placed further duties on the Flood Risk Management team with no additional funding being made available from the Welsh Government.

Councillor Patrick Heesom commented that local authorities should not be expected to undertake additional duties without adequate funding and expressed the view that local Members needed to be involved in pre application discussions for planning matters. Councillor Carolyn Thomas emphasised that strong representations had been made concerning the need for funding to be made available.

In response to a query from Councillor Haydn Bateman concerning the Mold flood alleviation scheme the Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) explained that a more affordable plan was in place but there was no timescale at the current time to implement it.

Councillor Paul Shotton expressed thanks for the repair work carried out on potholes in Connah's Quay. He referred to the suggestion at previous meetings that alternative types of materials for road surface dressings be explored and asked if there had been any progress on this. The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation)

explained that an update on progress would be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the mid-year Council Plan Monitoring Report 2018/19.

47. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the Forward Work Programme for consideration. She advised that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 26 February 2019 and the following items were scheduled for consideration:

- Q3 Council Plan Monitoring
- School Transport – Hazardous Routes

The Facilitator explained that it was intended that the meeting of the Committee scheduled on 9 April, would be held at Wepre Park, Connah’s Quay, and this would be confirmed to Members when agreed.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be amended; 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.

48. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.45 pm)

.....
Chairman