

COMMUNITY & ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
1 MAY, 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 1 May, 2019

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Dunbar (Chairman)

Councillors: Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Rosetta Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, Dennis Hutchinson, Ted Palmer, Mike Reece, Paul Shotton and David Wisinger

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillors: Haydn Bateman (for George Hardcastle), and Patrick Heesom (for Ray Hughes)

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Sian Braun, David Cox, and Jean Davies

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor: Ian Roberts and Mr John Ennis attended as observers.

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Interim Cabinet Member for Housing; Chief Officer (Housing & Assets); Chief Officer (Governance); Enterprise and Regeneration Manager, Housing Programmes Service Manager

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

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

68. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2019 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

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

69. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

The Enterprise and Regeneration Manager presented a report to set out the future approach to regenerating town centres in the County. He provided background information and advised that the report had been produced in response to the ongoing challenging economic conditions being faced by town centres; a commitment in the 2018/19 Council Plan to develop a response; and concerns over the vitality of Flintshire town centres and the need for the Council to establish a proactive response.

The Enterprise and Regeneration Manager reported on the key considerations, as detailed in the report, concerning the approach to town centre regeneration and referred to the economic challenges facing town centres across the UK which impacted on their

sustainability. He gave an outline of the proposed responses to increase the diversity of use in towns; to strengthen the role of local stakeholder groups; and to support businesses to adapt and compete more effectively. He also referred to delivery of the North Wales Growth Vision, which through the initial phase of Growth Deal capital projects and wider programmes of work, had the potential to bring significant benefits to town centres. He explained that further specific projects such as digital infrastructure would help to improve business competitiveness and town centre connectivity.

The Chairman commented on the loss of high street banks in town centres and referred to the proposal to impose charges for withdrawing money from cash machines which he felt would have a further detrimental impact on the need for people to visit town centres.

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin commented on the impact of street markets in the County and their future viability.

Councillor Paul Shotton spoke about the role of Town Centre Managers and their local knowledge and contacts. He said there was a need for collaborative working between stakeholders, Town and Community Councils, and local communities to develop entrepreneurial opportunities for the future. The Enterprise and Regeneration Manager provided information on the Business Improvement District programme funded by WG which would be focused in Mold but said that it would be monitored to see if it could be rolled out to other Towns across Flintshire.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson expressed a number of concerns regarding the regeneration of Buckley Town Centre and invited the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and the Enterprise and Regeneration Manager to attend a future meeting of Buckley Town Council to discuss a way forward. Councillor Derek Butler accepted the invitation and emphasised that the Council was open to all suggestions for economic improvement. He said all opportunities presented had been robustly explored and commented that a number of major retailers had been approached but, for commercial reasons, had decided not to establish new stores in the area. Councillor Butler also spoke on the issue of limited resources and the conditions which were attached to the small one-off grants received from the Welsh Government for development in areas of deprivation.

Councillor Patrick Heesom said there was a need for improved road network and public transport services into town centres to increase new business, visitors, and footfall. He asked that regular reports on town centre regeneration be presented to future meetings of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee endorses the approach to support the regeneration of town centres in Flintshire.

70. DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY DEVELOPMENT

The Enterprise and Regeneration Manager introduced a report on the development of digital infrastructure in North Wales and Flintshire. He provided

background information and advised that the report provided an update on the digital work carried out to date by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB), and in particular the development of the Digital Connectivity Strategy for the region. The report also provided an update on the Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) project being developed to secure funding from UK Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

The Enterprise and Regeneration Manager provided background information and presented the key considerations, as detailed in the report, on the North Wales digital connectivity strategy and local full fibre network programme.

Councillor Ted Palmer asked if new residential developments in Flintshire would benefit from the investment in the fibre network. The Housing Programmes Manager explained that new build Council properties could benefit from improved digital connectivity.

During discussion the Enterprise and Regeneration Manager responded to the questions raised by Councillor Rosetta Dolphin regarding access to the network and the mapping of key strategic sites for North Wales and 'white' residential properties in North Wales as illustrated on pages 29 and 36 of the report.

Councillor Patrick Heesom spoke of the need for improved access for local communities. In response to the further comments made by Councillor Heesom, the Chief Officer (Governance) advised that the Council continued to provide face-to-face and telephone access to services in addition to online provision. He referred to the benefits of the investment in fibre network and said the Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) proposal currently stood at £9m worth of investment in the region. Delivery of full fibre broadband would result in high quality connectivity typically only available in larger urban areas and would improve access in remote and rural locations. The increased connectivity to Council properties through the LFFN programme would also create opportunities to improve services through future-proofed technology.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee supports the progress made in creating and implementing an ambitious programme for digital connectivity in North Wales.

71. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration. The Committee agreed the following items scheduled for the next meeting to be held on 26 June 2019:

- Welfare Reform Update – Universal Credit Roll Out
- Quarter 4/Year end Council Plan 2018/19 Monitoring Report
- Homeless Local Action Plan Update
- update on Housing Rent Income
- Modular Homes

The Facilitator explained that she would update the Forward Work Programme to include the further meetings of the Committee to be held during 2019/2020 following consideration of the draft schedule of meetings at the Annual meeting of the County Council on 7 May. The Facilitator also advised that following a pilot by the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee, a report on action tracking would be included as a standard agenda item for future meetings of the Committee. It had also been agreed that the Forward Work Programme would in future be scheduled for consideration at the beginning of meetings of the Committee.

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.

72. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 – TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting for the following item by virtue of exempt information under paragraph(s) 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

73. NORTH EAST WALES (NEW) HOMES BUSINESS PLAN 2019/2048

Councillor Sean Bibby, the Interim Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report to consider the North East Wales (NEW) Homes Business Plan 2019/2048. He provided background information and advised that the Business Plan sets out key elements of the proposed Development Strategy to increase the number of affordable rent properties over the next three years. He reported on the main considerations, as detailed in the report, and referred to the NEW Homes Business Plans, Development Strategy, and Performance Plan which were appended to the report.

During discussion the Housing Programmes Manager responded to the questions raised by Councillor Rosetta Dolphin regarding provision in the proposed Development Strategy to meet the needs of elderly people in the future. He also responded to the further comments made by Councillor Dolphin concerning the withdrawal by NEW Homes of the managed lettings service for private landlords.

Councillor Ted Palmer commented on discussions he had had with the previous Cabinet Member around the possibility of building single occupancy apartments at the former Ysgol Y Fron site in Holywell. The Housing Programmes Manager said he was not aware of the discussion but would speak to Councillor Palmer following the meeting.

Members congratulated Officers on the achievements gained by NEW Homes to date.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee support the NEW Homes Business Plan 2019/48; and
- (b) That the Committee support the increase in future Prudential Borrowing through the Council (up to a maximum of £20m) for on-lending to NEW Homes for the purposes of developing or purchasing affordable homes subject to New Homes meeting agreed lending parameters.

74. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press and one member of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.55 am)

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Chairman