

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
17 SEPTEMBER 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 17 September 2019

PRESENT: Councillor Patrick Heesom (Chairman)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Sean Bibby, Chris Dolphin, Andy Dunbobbin, David Evans, George Hardcastle, Cindy Hinds, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Joe Johnson, Vicky Perfect and Paul Shotton and Owen Thomas

APOLOGIES: Councillors George Hardcastle and Councillor Derek Butler

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Carolyn Thomas, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Countryside; Councillor Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Planning & Public Protection; Chief Officer (Planning & Environment); Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation); Road Safety Officer and Area Co-Ordinator (Streetscene & Transportation)

IN ATTENDANCE: Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

17. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2019 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman and moved by Councillor Bibby and seconded by Councillor Shotton.

18. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration, and outlined the following:-

- The number of reports listed for the next meeting scheduled to be held at Greenfield Valley on 15 October 2019 which may need to be moved to the November meeting;
- The suggestion of a Joint Meeting with the Community and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee to consider the North Wales Economic Growth Bid; and
- Site visit to Parc Adfer on 10 March 2020.

The Chair referred to the Welsh Government (WG) draft national Development Framework that was currently out for consultation and suggested

it should be considered by the Committee. The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy advised that this was scheduled to be considered at the October meeting of the Planning Strategy Group.

Councillor David Evans requested that information provided to individual members following scrutiny committees should be included as part of the action tracking report so that all members could benefit from seeing the information. He suggested that this approach should be rolled out to all Scrutiny Committees. Members welcomed the suggestion and the facilitator agreed to advise the Democratic Services Manager of the request.

Cllr Shotton referred to the use of recycled plastics mixed with aggregate and bitumen which had been raised at previous meetings. The Chief Officer confirmed that work was moving forward with the company involved in the initiative and agreed to provide a progress report once the trials in Flintshire had been completed.

The Scrutiny Facilitator raised the issue of Call Centre response times. The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) explained that the Call Centre Team had moved from Alltami to join the Housing Team in Ewloe recently. He would provide performance data for the last 6 months and suggested that the Call Centre Manager could attend a future committee meeting if required.

The recommendations in the report was moved by Councillor Shotton and seconded by Councillor Evans.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee Forward Work Programme, as submitted, be approved;
- (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; and
- (c) That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

19. BUS LANES IN FLINTSHIRE – LIMITATION ON USE

The Road Safety Officer, Lee Shone introduced a report to seek a recommendation for Cabinet to approve the limitations on vehicles authorised to utilise the proposed bus lanes on the B5129 between Queensferry and Shotton to utilise Welsh Government Transport Grant funding.

He advised that additional priority measures had been highlighted within the Deeside Industrial Park to provide direct and dedicated 'bus only' access routes into the park.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) added that this was a long term plan and one piece of the jigsaw to get people out of their cars and using public transport which required a culture change.

Councillor Shotton raised concerns about the possible disruption while new lanes were being created but welcomed the abolition of right turns as the next phase. The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) said that all options would be looked at to make sure that the work would be carried out to limit disruptions. He added that the contractor appointed would be flexible and that the Streetscene Team would be available to talk to the business community and local residents to make sure that if there was any impact it could be acted upon.

Councillors Evans and Johnson raised issues regarding number plate recognition and questioned who would be running this and how it would be controlled. The Road Safety Officer confirmed that it would be run on a similar basis to parking ticket fines. The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) added that only vehicles authorised by Flintshire would be able to use bus lanes which included out of County vehicles, with a record of permitted users being recorded. Which included out of County vehicles, with a record of permitted users being recorded.

Members raised concerns about width of lanes, use of the lanes by school children on cycles and buses overtaking cycles. The Road Safety Officer advised that travel guidance was strict and had been rigorously adhered to. He added that engagement was taking place with schools regarding cycle routes and accredited cycle proficiency courses for pupils.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Shotton and seconded by Councillor Dunbobbin.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee recommends the limitations on vehicles authorised to utilise the proposed bus lanes on the B5129; and
- (b) That the Committee notes the enforcements on all other bus lanes and bus priority measures at key locations across the corridor.

20. WINTER MAINTENANCE POLICY REVIEW 2019-21

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Countryside introduced Mark Edwards, Area Co-ordinator for the Buckley area who was an expert in winter maintenance. She advised that 6 duty officers worked on a rota basis monitored weather forecasts 24 hours a day.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) introduced the report on the procedures for delivering the Council's winter maintenance and adverse weather services which is reviewed every 2 years. He advised that the weather forecast provider had recently changed to Metdesk by Welsh Government. He

added that improved communication with schools had been progressed to ensure they have copies of forecasts in a timely fashion to inform decision making with regard to school closures.

Members spoke highly of the adverse weather service that was being provided across Flintshire. Councillor Owen Thomas suggested that on occasions there had been issues in rural areas and suggested that farmers should be empowered to use their own initiative to go out in severe conditions, rather than wait for the go ahead by the area co-ordinators, as sometimes conditions were not always the same as where they were being monitored and deteriorated rapidly. The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) suggested that a way forward may be for contractors to ring the co-ordinators before they go out to get agreement.

The Chairman agreed that the winter maintenance teams were highly regarded and welcomed the opportunity to review the policy based upon lessons learned.

Councillor Dolphin asked if there were any plans for a permanent building instead of the sheeting that was currently being used to cover the 7000 tonnes of rock salt stored at Greenfield Recycling Site. He also asked whether there were plans to reduce the amount stored.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) advised Members that the rock salt was being stored there due to the national shortage experienced in previous years following advice from the Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh Government. He explained most Councils retain a stock of rock salt which was used and re-stocked to maintain reasonable levels.

Councillor Evans reported that most complaints he received were about schools closing and the domino effect whereby once one school closed others followed. Whilst he agreed Flintshire delivered good service, the main reason for Schools closures appeared to be teachers who lived out of County being unable to reach the schools safely. The Chief Officer acknowledged Cllr Evans' concerns and referred to the work being undertaken with schools previously alluded to with regard to improved communication.

The recommendations in the report was moved by Councillor Evans and seconded by Councillor Johnson.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee recommends to Cabinet the reviewed Winter Maintenance Policy (2019-21) which also contains the procedures for delivering the Council's winter maintenance and adverse weather service.

21. YEAR-END COUNCIL PLAN MONITORING REPORT 2018/19

The Chief Officer (Planning & Environment) introduced the Year-end Council Plan Monitoring Report 2018/19. He explained that the report presented the monitoring of progress for the Council Plan priority Green Council and indicated that the key risk was a lack of Central Government Funding.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) provided background information and highlighted some of the positive areas. In response to a question raised by Councillor Dunbobbin concerning the RAG status of 4.1.1.2 reported as green although only 50% complete. The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) agreed to look into the matter and report back to the Committee.

Councillor Evans raised concern with taking PVC to Household Recycling Sites and asked if a new policy had been introduced at specific sites. The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) confirmed that there had been no policy changes and would investigate the matter and respond to Members of the Committee.

Councillor Dolphin didn't agree with the green RAG status for the Council's road repairs and maintenance and felt it should be amber. He suggested that Highway Supervisors contact Councillors to find where the problem areas were, and in some areas suggested that it was necessary to walk the areas rather than driving them. .

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Countryside commented on the recognition by Welsh Government that Flintshire had the best maintained roads in Wales and said that Members were aware of the reduction in funding which had taken place of the last 10 years.

The Chairman congratulated Officers in the way in which additional funding from WG was allocated in a quick and efficient manner.

The recommendations in the report was moved by Councillor Bibby and seconded by Councillor Shotton.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

22. ALL WALES CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL SCHEME – REPLACEMENT OF TRAVEL CARDS (BUS PASSES)

Prior to consideration of the report on the replacement of travel cards the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Countryside highlighted the recent problems with the crashing of the Transport for Wales database. She emphasised that the current passes did not expire until the 31 December 2019 and that anyone could apply on behalf of somebody else as long as they had the relevant information. She added that PDF copies were now available to download from the Transport for Wales website. The Chairman thanked the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Countryside for taking the lead on this.

Councillor Dolphin asked if the £173k contribution from Flintshire was a one off payment or annual contribution. Members were keen for more information to get out to the public about the reasons why the concessionary passes needed to be renewed and how they could apply as the public were concerned that it was a waste of money. Councillor Shotton suggested that members put it on their social media.

Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) explained that the fee dated back to when the Council ran the Concessionary Travel Scheme and since the Welsh Government had taken it over nationally this was an ongoing contribution. He also added that the scheme had been in place for 10 years and needed updating as many people had moved or their details had changed. Leaflets had been distributed giving advice and the Connects Offices in Flintshire who were able to assist with applications. The Chief Officer agreed to raise the issues raised by Members of the Committee with Transport for Wales.

The recommendations in the report was moved by Councillor Bibby and seconded by Councillor Shotton.

RESOLVED:

That the process to re-issue Concessionary Travel Cards to all eligible residents in Flintshire be noted.

23. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.40 am)

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Chairman