

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 JANUARY 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 14 January 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Patrick Heesom (Chairman)

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

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillors: Geoff Collett (for Joe Johnson) and Kevin Hughes (for Chris Dolphin)

APOLOGIES: Councillor George Hardcastle

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Marion Bateman and Haydn Bateman

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Carolyn Thomas, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Countryside; Councillor Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Planning & Public Protection; Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy); and Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), Highways Network Manager, and Regulatory Services Manager

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

52. VARIATION IN ORDER OF AGENDA

Following a suggestion by the Chair, a change in the order of business was agreed to bring forward agenda item 9, The Council's Response to the Challenges of Climate Change.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

54. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2019 were submitted.

The minutes were moved for approval by Councillor Patrick Heesom and seconded by Councillor Andy Dunbobbin.

RESOLVED:

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

55. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme. She advised that an item on the Ombudsman's report on investigation against Flintshire into a car wash which was causing a statutory nuisance of noise and water/chemical spray would be included on the agenda for the next meeting on 10 March. Councillor Derek Butler asked if consideration could also be given to a car wash service located at Broughton. The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) agreed to provide a report on the regulation of car wash services in Flintshire to a future meeting of the Committee.

It was agreed that the following items scheduled for the meeting to be held on 10 March would be deferred to a later date:

- Fleet electrification
- Provision of MOT's and other Commercial Opportunities

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Andy Dunbobbin and seconded by Councillor Paul Shotton.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved;
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chairman 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.

56. THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) presented a report to update the Committee on the Council's response to the challenges of climate change. He provided background information and referred to the key considerations. He advised that it had been agreed that an all Member workshop would be held on 25 February, to engage with elected Members on the challenges of climate change. The Chief Officer explained that the report to the meeting of Cabinet on 17 December, which was appended to the report, sets out the challenges to the public sector in general, and Flintshire County

Council in particular, in meeting the Welsh Government's target of a carbon neutral public sector by 2030.

The Chair thanked the Chief Officer for a comprehensive report.

In response to the comments made by Councillor David Evans regarding the role of Planning in reducing carbon emissions, the Chief Officer commented on the Local Development Plan which would contain a suite of policies designed to address climate change.

Referring to the information on bio-diversity in the report, Councillor Kevin Hughes expressed the view that increasing the urban canopy cover from 14.5 to 18% by 2033 was ambitious due to the impact of Ash die back. Councillor Hughes asked if Flintshire could legally adopt a local procurement policy. He also commented on the need for a proactive press and communication campaign to promote the Council's approach to climate change.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson commented on the use of enforcement in the private sector to ensure reduction in emissions.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas commented on the impact of climate change across all service areas in the Authority and reported on the corporate work being undertaken to respond to the challenge.

During discussion the Chief Officer responded to the further comments raised by Members concerning, flood risk, change in economies around renewables, reducing the use of plastic materials, and collaborative work with other local authorities.

The Chairman encouraged Members to promote awareness of the challenges of climate change with their local Town/Community Council.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Kevin Hughes and seconded by Councillor Cindy Hinds.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the attached Cabinet report in preparation for the all-Member workshop on 25 February 2020 be noted and promoted.

57. GRASS CUTTING POLICY REVIEW AND WILDFLOWERS ON GRASS VERGES

The Highways Network Manager presented a report to seek a recommendation to Cabinet to accept the revisions to the existing Grass Cutting Standard. He provided background information and advised that the Grass Cutting Policy had

been revised in January 2018 and a copy was appended to the report. The programme of grass cutting was scheduled as described in the Policy.

The Highways Network Manager reported on the main considerations relating to the grass cutting policy and grass collection, as detailed in the report. He also referred to the pilot programme of wildflower planting and managing areas for bio-diversity.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson expressed concerns around matters in his Ward relating to the grass cutting and clearance/collection services provided for some of his residents.

Councillor Owen Thomas commented on matters of safety around obstruction of visibility at junctions, bends, and rural lanes. He also referred to issues arising on the length of grass, and said there was a need for drainage on publicly accessible land, green spaces and playing fields.

Referring to a previous request from the Committee for information on the collection of grass cuttings, Councillor David Evans accepted the explanation, as detailed in the report, that it would be too costly for the Authority to provide that service. Councillor Evans said he was pleased that supervisors would be given discretion to request the removal of grass cuttings if necessary.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas acknowledged the concerns raised and said they would be looked into.

Councillor Paul Shotton supported the proposal to undertake a Winter Cut in January 2020 where appropriate. He also spoke in support of the initiatives for wildflower planting, as detailed in the report.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Paul Shotton and seconded by Councillor Sean Bibby.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes the cost of collecting grass during the grass cutting operation and recommends Cabinet approves the current policy; and
- (b) That the Committee supports the pilot programme of wildflower planting and managing areas for biodiversity with those Town & Community Councils who have expressed an interest in supporting the initiative.

58. OUTCOMES OF WALES AUDIT OFFICE AUDIT OF FLINTSHIRE HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CENTRES

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) presented a report on the outcome of the recent Wales Audit Office report on Flintshire Household

Recycling Centres (HRC's). The Chief Officer provided background information and referred to the survey, during April and May 2019, of HRC's in Flintshire by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) to consider the Council's current arrangements and performance against the vision set out in the Municipal Waste Strategy. He advised that the report detailed the findings of the audit report and provided recommendations for service delivery in future years.

The Chief Officer invited the Regulatory Services Manager to report on the key considerations, as detailed in the report. In conclusion she advised that the WAO had reported that the Council was following a clearly set out vision, continued to invest in its HRC's and had listened to service users to help it secure public satisfaction. A recommendation to improve Flintshire's residents understanding of recycling mirrored the outcome of the Council's own public survey which took place during September/October 2019. The WAO survey also highlighted the concerns of residents regarding the opening hours of HRC sites and had requested regular opening hours during the year. It was proposed that the opening hours remained the same throughout the year.

Councillor David Evans commented on his experience of using a local HRC site and expressed some concerns around the site operation. He welcomed the change in opening and closing times which would ensure consistency throughout the year.

The Chair commended the Chief Officer and his team on the wide range of recyclable and waste materials accepted at HRC sites.

Councillor Kevin Hughes also congratulated the Chief Officer on the Christmas recycling campaign which he said had been well promoted through social media etc. Councillor Hughes commented on the issue of disposal of asbestos which was only available at Buckley and Greenfield HRC sites and expressed the view that this could result in fly-tipping of asbestos waste. The Regulatory Services Manager explained that disposal of asbestos required an environmental permit which was only available at two HRC sites in Flintshire but could be reviewed in the future.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Ray Hughes and seconded by Councillor Andy Dunbobbin.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the outcome of the Wales Audit Office audit on Flintshire Household Recycling Centres be noted; and
- (b) That the recommendations from the report to improve recycling understanding and the working arrangements on Flintshire Household Recycling Centres be supported.

59. EFFECT ON THE PUBLIC HIGHWAY OF ROADWORKS BY UTILITY COMPANIES

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced a report to provide an overview of the statutory requirements of the Council to manage and inspect the Highway Network during roadworks undertaken by Public Utilities and other organisations. He provided background information and reported on the main considerations as outlined in the report.

The Chief Officer advised that the Council facilitated quarterly co-ordination meetings with all the utility companies that operated in the County. The purpose of the meetings was to explore opportunities for all works promoters to share long term plans for asset upgrades and major maintenance projects and promote opportunities for trench, site sharing, and long term strategic road space booking. Each time a utility carried out roadworks on the highway their subsequent reinstatement was guaranteed for a period of 2 years. If defects were identified within the 2 years the utility were responsible for any remedial works, following this period the burden fell on the Council. Under section 72 of the New Roads and Street Works Act the Highway Authority were empowered to carry out investigatory works to check whether or not a utility had complied with the duties placed on it in respect of reinstatement of the street. To ensure the burden of remedial costs do not fall onto the Council, Flintshire inspect a far higher percentage than required. In addition to the visual inspection, in April 2019, the Council introduced a core sampling programme on completed reinstatements.

The Council issued a roadworks bulletin to all stakeholders on a weekly basis which included details of all planned works for the following week. The Council used the 'One Network' mapping platform which detailed road works on the network in real-time.

The Chair commended the Chief Officer and his team on the work undertaken by the Council as Highway Authority in relation to utility works carried out on the Highway Network.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Paul Shotton and seconded by Councillor Andy Dunbobbin.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the content of the report and acknowledges the statutory framework and duties on the Council as Highway Authority in relation to utility works carried out on the Highway Network.

60. THE INSTALLATION OF VEHICULAR CROSSINGS ON THE PUBLIC HIGHWAY

The Highways Network Manager presented a report to provide details of the policy and processes required to lower highway kerbs to allow access to private properties.

The Highways Network Manager advised that most properties in the County had existing crossing points and the Council, as Highway Authority, were responsible for maintaining the facility. However, the Council regularly receives requests for additional or new access points and a policy for the installation of new Vehicular Crossings had been previously approved by Cabinet. Residents could apply to lower the kerb outside their property and install a vehicular access to their property from the adopted highway network which would be constructed to an agreed specification and at the cost of the applicant. Details of the processes associated with the installation of vehicular crossings was appended to the report.

Councillor Sean Bibby raised a number of concerns regarding on street parking and dropped kerbs. In response the Highways Network Manager referred to Section 3 of the Policy addressing vehicular crossings and advised that each application was considered in the context of what was most appropriate for the street.

Councillor Chris Bithell queried what procedures were in place to ensure that dropped kerbs were authorised and what action was taken if not. The Chef Officer advised that if the Council are made aware of unauthorised work then retrospective action could be taken.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor David Evans and seconded by Councillor Owen Thomas.

RESOLVED:

That the process for installing a vehicular crossing on the Highway Network be noted.

61. 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 12.15 pm)

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Chairman