

CABINET
16TH MARCH 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of Flintshire County Council held virtually via Webex on Tuesday 16th March 2021.

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Roberts (Chair)

Councillors: Glyn Banks, Chris Bithell, Derek Butler, Dave Hughes, Christine Jones, Billy Mullin and Carolyn Thomas.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Housing and Assets), Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Strategic Finance Manager and Team Leader – Democratic Services.

OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors: Ian Dunbar and Patrick Heesom.

105. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

106. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th February 2021 were submitted and confirmed as a correct.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting be approved as a correct record.

107. FOOD POVERTY

Councillor Mullin introduced the report and explained that since the summer of 2018 the Council had been tackling food poverty and food insecurities in Flintshire. The food poverty strategy had been adopted by the Public Service Board with Flintshire being the regional lead.

Significant challenges had been raised over the last year, however rather than constrain progress, opportunities had been created and had enabled some of the future ambitions for delivery and business transformation to be brought forward.

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) explained that full details of the following work undertaken were outlined in the report:

- School Holiday Support;
- Slow Cooker Programme;
- Free School Meals – Alternative Delivery;
- Shielding and Vulnerable Residents Food Support – 14th April 2020 – 16th August 2020;

- Shielding and Vulnerable Residents Food Support – 17th August 2020 – 22nd September 2020;
- Well-fed Food Box at a Reduced Cost – 23rd September 2020 – 3rd November 2020;
- Christmas Food Boxes;
- Self-isolating and Shielding Residents;
- Work Plan – Research;
- Well-fed at Home: Meal Box Scheme – Reimagining ‘Meals on Wheels’;
- Good Food Hubs – Emergency Food Support;
- Hospital to Home – Well-fed Safety Box;

Details were also provided on the following future projects:

- Opening a Shop;
- Slow Cooker Pilots – Reimagined;
- Free Fruit for High Schools;
- Conference;
- Community Capacity Building; and
- “A Right to Good Food”;

On “A Right to Good Food”, the Chief Officer explained the research that had been undertaken had considered how communities could best be protected and how the diet and wellbeing of residents could be supported in the longer term. He added the right to food was not about charity, but about ensuring that all people had the capacity to feed themselves with dignity.

He commented on the considerable support that had been provided by local volunteer groups which had had a major impact on local communities which in turn had brought people together.

All Members welcomed the report and the work that was being undertaken to tackle food poverty which demonstrated that Flintshire was a caring Council. Also welcomed was the focus on home cooking and nutritious food cooked from fresh. They also extended their thanks to the many volunteer groups across the County in providing support in their local communities.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the progress made to tackling food poverty and food insecurity in Flintshire be welcomed and noted;
- (b) That the ongoing work and the delivery plan for the next 12 months be supported; and
- (c) That the development of a “Right to Food” policy for Flintshire be supported.

108. DELIVERY OF ASPECTS OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME THROUGH A MEASURED TERM CONTRACT

Councillor Mullin introduced the report which proposed a procurement process that would deliver a programme of projects (circa £1m per year) e.g. Disability Discrimination Act work, Fire Risk Assessment works, School building works, Corporate property works, on time, on budget and to a high standard.

The proposed Joint Contracts Tribunal (JCT) Measured Term Contract (MTC) was planned to commence in September 2021 and expire in September 2025 with an anticipated spend of £4m over that period. The individual works would range from £10k to £300k.

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) explained that since 2010 the Property Maintenance and Design Consultancy Team had used a JCT MTS contract tendered on a Quality / Price basis with a partnering / collaboration ethos in order to deliver work. Part of the quality submission included Community Benefits e.g. local small and medium sized enterprises, local supply clauses and local spend. To date, that procurement process had delivered circa £14m of projects on time, on budget and to a high standard.

The MTC was an Industry Standard Form of Contract specifically for use in delivering multiple projects efficiently, ensuring time and cost constraints were achieved. If approved, it would be tendered on Sell2Wales in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules.

RESOLVED:

That the procurement method be supported and approved, noting the requirement was in compliance with Contract Procedure Rules and would support delivery of elements of the Capital Programme 2021/22 to 2023/24.

109. SUSPENSION OF CAR PARKING CHARGES

Councillor Thomas introduced the report which provided information on the proposal to further extend the suspension of car parking charges until 30th June 2021, and provided details of the financial impact of that proposal. The extension would support the re-opening of town centres once lockdown restrictions were removed, and support town centre regeneration efforts such as those undertaken in June 2020.

The report also sought support to explore alternative methods of contactless payment for car parking charges once charging was reintroduced.

Members welcomed the report which they felt would help to support local business recovery.

The Chief Executive explained the rationale of the second recommendation on the possibility of extending the period, as it was not yet known when lockdown would ease. Welsh Government (WG) had confirmed that the Council could apply for lost

income for Quarters 1-2 of 2021/22 with no confirmed funding availability for Quarters 3-4.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the suspension of car parking charges in Flintshire's town centre car parks until 30th June 2021 be approved;
- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive, after discussions with the Deputy Leader and portfolio holder, to further extend the car parking charge suspension arrangement until 30th September 2021, if the circumstances in place at the time support such a move; and
- (c) That a review of alternative methods of payment for parking charges such as contactless payment or pay by phone be supported.

110. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2020/21 (MONTH 10)

Councillor Banks introduced the report which provided the latest detailed revenue budget monitoring position for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account for the financial year, and presented the position based on actual income and expenditure, as at Month 10. The report projected how the budget would stand at the close of the financial year if all things remained largely unchanged. It also took into account the latest position on Welsh Government (WG) Emergency Grant Funding announcements.

The projected year end position, without new actions to reduce cost pressures and/or improve the financial return on efficiency planning and cost control was:

Council Fund

- An operating surplus of £0.924m (excluding the impact of the pay award which would be met by reserves), which was a favourable movement of £0.552m from the surplus figure of £0.372m reported at Month 9.
- The operating surplus of £0.924m equated to 0.3% of the Approved Budget, which was within the target Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for a variance against budget of 0.5%.
- A projected contingency reserve balance as at 31st March 2021 of £2.339m.

The improved position had predominantly arisen from a detailed review of the risks included within the Streetscene and Transportation portfolio as a consequence of the pandemic in conjunction with confirmation of further funding from the WG Hardship Fund.

Housing Revenue Account

- Net in-year revenue expenditure forecast to be £1.642m lower than budget.
- A projected closing balance as at 31st March 2021 of £3.815m.

The Strategic Finance Manager provided details on the projected position, the projected position by portfolio, significant movements from Month 9, open risks, new emerging risks, achievements of planned in-year efficiencies, carry forward requests and reserves and balances.

Section 1.05 of the report detailed the main grant announcements at the time of writing. On the funding for the Unachieved Savings and Digital Transformation, £1.181m had now been received for each of those allocations. As that funding was unhypothecated, that would bolster the Council's reserves by £2.362m which was positive news and would provide an additional safeguard for the risks that would be faced in 2021/22.

The report had been considered at Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week where further information was requested on the expected contribution from Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board towards jointly funded care packages being less than originally expected.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the overall report and the projected Council Fund contingency sum as at 31st March 2021 be noted;
- (b) That the projected final level of balances on the Housing Revenue Account be noted; and
- (c) That the carry forward requests be approved.

111. COMMENCEMENT OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

Councillor Mullin introduced the report and explained that the Socio-economic Duty in Wales would come into force on 31st March 2021. The duty placed a legal responsibility on listed public bodies, when taking strategic decisions, to have due regard to the need to reduce the inequalities of outcome that resulted from socio-economic disadvantage.

The final list of relevant public bodies would be published in the Regulations and statutory guidance.

The Chief Executive explained that the report outlined the actions being taken to prepare for the new duty, which would be a key mechanism for supporting the most vulnerable in society.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the requirements of the Socio-economic Duty be noted;
- (b) That Cabinet be assured of the preparedness in meeting the new duty; and

- (c) That the report be shared with all Overview and Scrutiny Committees to ensure they are familiar with the requirements of the legislation.

112. PERFORMANCE OF THE WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD (WHQS) CAPITAL PROGRAMME – ASSURANCE REPORT

Councillor Hughes introduced the report which provided an update on the delivery of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) the Council was delivering through its Capital Investment Programme, and focussed on the achievements to date.

The work undertaken through the WHQS had transformed the Council's Housing stock and delivered substantial improvements to the quality of tenants housing both internally and externally.

Financial investment had been significant year on year since the start of the programme and from April 2021 a further investment of £21m would be made, with an additional £14m being committed to the new build programme. Over the life of the programme contractors engaged in the WHQS would have created training or job opportunities for 57 apprentices which was a significant achievement.

Throughout the WHQS programme customer satisfaction levels had been consistently high with the most recent satisfaction rating outcome at 96% and reflected the hard work the team had put into the programme.

Whilst there had been particular challenges and disruption this financial year due to the pandemic, the Council had continued to deliver the work. WG had noted those particular challenges and confirmed their agreement to extend the programme by a further year which would enable concentration on external areas and envelope work.

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) added that the next challenge would be to decarbonise the housing stock, making them as energy efficient and low carbon as possible.

Members thanked all of the team involved, including WG who had stopped the sale of Council houses which meant Councils could retain their stock and manage housing issues effectively.

Members also said the positive information contained within the report demonstrated that the decision of tenants in the housing ballot in 2012 for the Council to retain the housing stock had been the right one.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made in delivering the Welsh Housing Quality Standard programme be noted, and the Capital Investment Programme be supported in its final year.

113. SCHOOL MODERNISATION

Councillor Roberts introduced the report which provided an update on progress on the Welsh Government's (WG) 21st Century Schools Capital Investment programme, Band B.

In order that progress was made through the programme, the report sought Cabinet approval to procure a contractor (or contractors) through the North Wales Construction Partnership to proceed with proposed projects at Ysgol Croes Atti, Y Fflint and Drury County Primary school. Both projects were noted in the Council's Strategic Outline Plan (SOP) submitted to WG for the Band B Investment Programme.

Members welcomed the report which was a significant step forward for the Council in building a Welsh primary school.

RESOLVED:

That the commissioning of a contractor or contractors to enter into a two stage design and build contract for proposed projects at Ysgol Croes Atti, Y Fflint and Drury Council Primary school be approved.

114. SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2022/23

Councillor Roberts introduced the report which provided details on the outcome of the statutory consultation exercise on the admission arrangements for September 2022.

The consultation process took place between 11th December 2020 and 29th January 2021 and no comments were received. There were no changes proposed to the admission arrangements. The proposed admissions timetable had been drawn up in consultation with neighbouring authorities and took into account factors such as allowing parents sufficient time to visit schools and express their preferences and the time needed to process applications. The timetable also incorporated the "common offer dates" prescribed by the School Admissions Code.

As part of the consultation, Headteachers were asked if there had been any changes to the accommodation at their schools which could necessitate a review of their Admission Number. No requests had been received and therefore there were no changes proposed to any Admission Numbers for 2022/23.

Councillor Roberts urged parents and carers to ensure that their application forms were submitted by the deadline, adding that 96% of school children were given their first choice of school. The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) explained that schools assisted parents and carers in that process with providing them with details of approaching deadlines. Support was also offered for help to complete any forms if required. In response to a question, the Chief Officer explained that the admissions policy made the school transport policy and eligibility criteria clear which parents and carers had to acknowledge before the form could be submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed admission arrangements for 2022/23 be approved.

115. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS

An information item on the actions taken under delegated powers was submitted. The actions were as set out below:-

Housing and Assets

- **Council Rent – Application to Write off Tenancy Arrears**
Financial Procedure Rules (section 5.2) stipulates that individual bad and irrecoverable debts in excess of £5,000 are considered for write off in conjunction with the relevant Cabinet Members.

The decision to write off is in respect of one tenant who is subject to a Debt Relief Order (DRO). Rent Arrears of £6,500 are included in the DRO which are now irrecoverable as a result of the award of the DRO.

- **Community Asset Transfer – Pentre Halkyn Playing Field, Pentre Halkyn Football Ground and Premises, Uwch Y Mor, Pentre Halkyn, Flintshire**
The transfer of Pentre Halkyn playing field, Pentre Halkyn football ground and premises.

Education and Youth

- **Local Authority Appointed School Governors**
Appointment of Local Authority Governor(s) representatives on school governing bodies in accordance with The Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2005.

Streetscene and Transportation

- **School Meal Price Increase**
Increase the price of meals within schools to continue to provide a quality service whilst bringing them more into line with other school meal providers across Wales.
- **Ffordd Llewelyn, Ffordd Glyndwr, Maes Alaw, Albert Avenue, Coed Onn Road, and Glan Gors, Flint**
To advise Members of the objections received following the advertisement of the proposed Prohibition of Waiting, Prohibition of Waiting At Any Time and Limited Waiting on Ffordd Llewelyn, Ffordd Glyndwr, Maes Alaw, Albert Avenue, Coed Onn Road and Glan Gors, Flint.

**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 items by virtue of exempt information under paragraph(s) 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

116. TRANSPORTATION TENDERS

Councillor Thomas introduced the report and explained approximately 200 school transport route tenders were due for renewal in July 2021.

For the reasons outlined in the report it was recommended that the existing school transport contracts be extended for one year to a point in time when contractors would be in a better position to tender for the work.

RESOLVED:

That the revised timetable to extend existing school transport tenders for a period of one year be approved.

117. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and ended at 11.22 a.m.)

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Chair