

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
24th FEBRUARY 2022

Minutes of the meeting of Flintshire County Council held as a remote attendance meeting on Thursday, 24th February 2022.

PRESENT: Councillor Joe Johnson (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Bernie Attridge, Janet Axworthy, Glyn Banks, Haydn Bateman, Marion Bateman, Sean Bibby, Chris Bithell, Helen Brown, Derek Butler, Clive Carver, Geoff Collett, Bob Connah, Paul Cunningham, Robert Davies, Ron Davies, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Mared Eastwood, Carol Ellis, David Evans, Veronica Gay, George Hardcastle, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Cindy Hinds, Patrick Heesom, Dave Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Alasdair Ibbotson, Paul Johnson, Rita Johnson, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Tudor Jones, Richard Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Hilary McGuill, Ted Palmer, Mike Peers, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect, Neville Phillips, Ian Roberts, Tim Roberts, Kevin Rush, Tony Sharps, Paul Shotton, Ralph Small, Ian Smith, Carolyn Thomas, Martin White, David Wisinger and Arnold Woolley.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy), Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Corporate Manager, People and Organisational Development, Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Programme Manager, Democratic Services Team Leader and Democratic Services Officers.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillors: Jean Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Andy Dunbobbin and Colin Legg

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Members declared a personal interest on the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 (agenda item 11) due to closely associated people employed by the Council:

Councillors Chris Bithell, Hilary McGuill, Ian Smith, Carolyn Thomas, Ted Palmer, Neville Phillips, Kevin Rush, Dave Hughes, Paul Shotton, Ian Dunbar, Ralph Small and Bernie Attridge.

88 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2022 were submitted.

Councillor Ian Dunbar moved them as a correct record and was seconded by Councillor Chris Bithell.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

89. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair confirmed that his communications had been emailed to all Members and provided a brief overview of the engagements he had carried out since the last meeting.

The Chair then sent his best wishes to the people of Ukraine and hoped a peaceful solution could be achieved.

He also thanked his Councillor colleagues who would not be standing at the May Election for their service over the years on the Council.

90. PETITIONS

None were submitted.

91. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

The Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) presented the report together with the Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Programme Manager

In presenting the Climate Change Strategy it was explained that the Welsh Government (WG) declared a climate emergency in 2019 and called for the Public Sector to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Cabinet resolved in December 2019 to resource the appointment of the Programme Manager to develop the Climate Change Strategy which would set key aims and actions for creating a carbon neutral Council by 2030.

The presentation included detailed information on the following: -

- Context
- Achievements so far
- Development of the Strategy – baseline
- Impacts from the Covid-19 Pandemic
- Development of the Strategy – Engagement

- The Strategy set out to achieve net zero carbon by 2030
- Climate Change Strategy
- Action Plan to Net Zero Carbon- behaviour
- Timeline to 2030

The Chief Officer (Planning Economy and Environment) paid tribute to the Programme Manager who, having joined the Council in June 2021, had undertaken an enormous amount of work with the Member working group to enable the Strategy to be presented today. The work already undertaken to reduce the Council's carbon footprint over the last 8 years was included in the Strategy.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Programme Manager for her contribution so far to the Council's Strategy and the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy). He also paid tribute to Councillor Carolyn Thomas who had been instrumental in developing much of the initiatives. He thanked Flintshire residents whose small changes in behaviour such as using public transport and recycling as much as possible were making a difference. Most residents had risen to the challenge, and he thanked them for their support. Referring to the WG call for Public Sectors to become carbon neutral he explained that Cabinet had taken a variety of decisions to enable the Council to reach the 2030 deadline. Children were very interested in carbon neutrality and carbon reduction issues, and he felt that following the commencement of the new Council, consideration should be given to creating a Children and Students Consultative Panel to discuss these issues. He moved the recommendation.

Councillor Sean Bibby spoke as Chair of the Climate Change Programme Board and paid tribute to the work undertaken by the Programme Manager and Chief Officer to formulate the Strategy. In seconding the recommendation, he thanked his fellow Members of the Climate Change Programme Board for their challenges and contributions.

In response to questions from Councillor Richard Jones on the cost implications, the Programme Manager confirmed it was difficult to provide financial information as the projects had to be scoped further. Business cases would be developed for each of the areas where investment was required with a clear understanding of the financial implications involved. The Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) added that it was too early to predict at present but reassured Councillor Jones that the investment business cases would be presented to Council. The costs of new technologies which were required to achieve carbon neutrality were unknown at present.

The Chief Executive provided information on a number of WG initiatives which were being discussed, such as the decarbonisation of housing components and the development of carbon neutral schools. There were also several decarbonisation pilots taking place. Some of the new technologies required were still in the developmental stage which was an issue for WG and the Council. He understood the concerns raised by Councillor Jones but provided reassurance that the business cases would be brought back to Council for consideration once the information was available. Councillor Jones re-iterated his concerns in agreeing to the Strategy without any indication of the costs involved.

Councillor Ian Smith welcomed the report saying the impacts of climate change were being felt everywhere and he referred to initiatives at Wepre Park.

As Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection, Councillor Chris Bithell welcomed the report which celebrated the Council's range of achievements to date and set out the Strategy going forward to meet the net zero goal set by WG by 2030. He said that this was a joint effort requiring every person to play their role in reducing carbon emissions and that the County should be proud of how its residents had contributed, especially regarding recycling. The Programme Manager was visiting town councils spreading the message and encouraging them to support the fight against climate change. He thanked the Chief Officer, the Programme Manager, and the team for their work on this.

Councillor Paul Shotton welcomed the positive report and asked for an update on the work that National Resource Wales (NRW) were undertaking on the prevention of flooding. In response the Chief Officer (Planning Environment and Economy) confirmed that there were ongoing discussions with NRW regarding responsibility for the maintenance of these assets. He referred to the impacts of Storm Kristof last year when there were five outbreaks and confirmed flood plans were developed for each of those areas. He reported on the work in Sandycroft to help prevent future flooding.

Councillor Dave Healey commended everyone who had enabled the Council to reach this point and said if the Council achieved net zero by 2030 it would only be responsible for 3% of carbon emissions. He said the theme behaviour brought everything together and strategies had to be developed to reach out to the whole of the county. He supported the Leader's suggestion of a "Children and Students Consultative Panel" and congratulated the residents of Flintshire for the way they had embraced the recycling policy.

Councillor Tudor Jones asked questions on emissions, tree planting, loss of trees and insulation of buildings. In response the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) provided clarification on the funding and long-term maintenance of trees at Wepre Park and data collected on trees lost to Ash Dieback

The Programme Manager provided an explanation of the different landscapes where carbon absorption could be identified. It was important to pin-point and map the different landscapes and habitat types that existed across the county to properly determine the carbon absorption figures. As this information was not available for all areas of Flintshire land, it had been included as an action within land use to map those areas to provide a better understanding. She went on to provide clarification on the reporting mechanism for emission factors to WG and the approach to future tree planting. Councillor Tudor Jones commented that this was a difficult task which needed to be addressed now to understand how successful this scheme had been.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas reported on the positive outcomes from a discussion with a resident on the recent solar panel installation at her property. She referred to works carried out in previous years across portfolios and to the funding obtained from WG for schools, HRA funding for low carbon housing, solar parks, installation of solar panels on properties together with the increased recycling rates

and LED lights. She felt this should be publicised more so that residents understood what the Council had achieved over the last 12 years and highlighted when more grant funding was been sought from WG.

Councillor Paul Johnson referred to the role of procurement in the Climate Change Strategy which was included as objective 3 and in the action sheet. It was vital that all aspects of the supply chain were identified and included and that procurement in the Social Value Strategy was developed. Procurement was one of the key areas in the Climate Change Strategy and he fully supported this moving forward.

Councillor Mike Peers supported the Climate Change Strategy moving forward but agreed with the comments made by Councillor Richard Jones that this would be funding dependant. He asked questions on the Green Energy Tariff, land set aside for tree planting, car charging points and public transport.

In response, the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Environment) stated that this was a very complex issue with some of the technologies not available yet. Referring to tree planting, consideration was given to biodiversity, and he confirmed that community consultation would be carried out to ensure it was the right thing to do for that area. This ensured that the public were consulted, on board and supporting what was proposed in the Strategy. Referring to the points raised on public transport he agreed with the comments made saying it went beyond the scope for some of the things that could be provided but that this could hopefully influence a second bid for the improvement of services along that line.

As Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Councillor Derek Butler thanked Members for their contributions saying the Council's record and list of achievements were tangible and creditable. He added areas such as wetlands and reed beds brought another biodiversity and assisted with cleaner water. He referred to WG Public Sector Route Map to Decarbonisation Framework and said out of the five objectives the greatest was behaviour, starting with small steps. He praised the report which set out clear targets and he thanked the team presenting it today.

As Cabinet Member for Streetscene, Councillor Glyn Banks stated that there was a need for every single person in Flintshire to play their part, starting with small changes such as using the safer routes to schools instead of taking the cars and maximising household recycling.

Councillor Hilary McGuill backed the recommendations but highlighted the importance of actions being implemented. She said that careful consideration should be given prior to removing/replacing larger trees.

Councillor Alasdair Ibbotson said that it was a huge responsibility for the Council to be a leader in the local area and support decarbonisation projects in the private sector. This was a starting point with the financial implications and decisions to be determined at a later stage. This had to be a live document which was revisited and revised as 2030 approached. Referring to the last 30 years, he praised the actions taken by many young people in raising this issue which had led to the stance taken by WG.

Councillor Helen Brown asked whether the governance arrangements set out at point 23.2 should be re-worded to reflect any changes leading up to 2030. In response the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) said the wording was accurate in naming those who had led on the strategy at that point in time. Referring to Councillor Ibbotson's comments, the third recommendation highlighted that Climate Literacy training would be provided as a core element of the induction programme for all Members. In response to Councillor Thomas' point, the Chief Officer commented that this was covered in recommendation 4 and that the website would be developed to highlight what had been achieved in the past and set out the challenges for the future.

Councillor Ian Dunbar referred to the provision of electric charging points with Flintshire being one of the councils leading on this. He took the opportunity to commend the involvement of local people in the tree planting scheme at Wepre Park.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Ian Roberts and seconded by Councillor Sean Bibby.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That progress made in delivering carbon reduction measures to date is acknowledged;
- (b) That the Climate Change Strategy for 2022 – 2030 and its aims therein be endorsed;
- (c) That a briefing for new Members following the election be arranged to highlight the work undertaken to date and the commitments of the Council moving forward, and that the Climate Change Strategy forms part of the Member Induction Programme; and
- (d) That the Council's website be updated to include the Climate Change Strategy.

92. DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY ACTION PLAN

In presenting the report the Chief Officer (Governance) provided an overview of the work undertaken in 2017 by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to understand how elected councillors reflected the demography of the areas they represented. This was adopted by County Council in July 2021.

The Chief Officer (Governance) reported on the workshops where this was debated, with Members supportive of the proposed action plan. Good practice already existed within political groups and the national parties to promote and increase diversity. The aim was to recognise that some sections of our population were under-represented on the Council and to look at the reasons for this and address any obstacles. This could result in a more diverse range of candidates on the ballot paper which provided greater choice for the electorate.

The action plan had been split into 11 work streams with each one aimed at increasing awareness of the role of becoming a councillor, the benefits and process of how to stand. Assurance was also included that training and support would be provided once elected. The Chief Officer (Governance) then referred to the profiling for International Women's Day on the 8th of March and provided information on the press release and profiles of female councillors to encourage more women to stand for election.

Feedback from the workshops and the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee had resulted in several Members commenting that this would have been helpful when they stood for election. An overview was provided of the actions undertaken and work required to produce that level of change with positive suggestions emerging from the workshops such as profiling councillors on international women's day. Another barrier was time off from work to attend meetings and discussions were being held with employers to address this and provide a better understanding of the role. It was also suggested that the information pack provided to Members at the election count should be reduced with more information subsequently provided at the induction sessions

The Chief Executive and Chief Officer (Governance) would shortly be holding online election awareness briefing sessions to answer questions, provide information and ensure the Diversity Action Plan succeeded.

Councillor Tony Sharps felt it was up to the political parties to provide candidates for elections.

Councillor Gladys Healey commented that if the support outlined in the report was provided it would be very beneficial to new Members and should be developed further.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Neville Phillips and seconded by Councillor Michelle Perfect.

RESOLVED:

That the Diversity in Democracy action plan be approved.

93. WLGA FAIR CAMPAIGNS PLEDGE

In presenting the report the Chief Officer (Governance) referenced the coarsening of political debate with the extreme cases resulting in fatal attacks on MPs, with physical abuse, abuse of property and social media abuse across all levels of government. To address this worsening situation, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) had been promoting the Fair Campaigns Pledge "that candidates will campaign on the basis of issues and policies rather than the personalities of their political opponents". Flintshire was asking its Members to make the Fair Campaign Pledge and if this was supported, the Chief Officer and Chief Executive would be asking new candidates to take that Fair Campaign Pledge.

In calling upon the support of all Members, as the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Roberts moved the recommendations and encouraged all Group Leaders to pledge on behalf of their groups. He confirmed that he was one of the original signatories when this was presented to the WLGA Executive with all Council Leaders in Wales signing the Pledge. Whilst he did not have an issue with robust public debate about the issues, he said that this should not include personalities and abuse which demeaned the whole democratic process. In referring to the impact of such abuse, he fully supported the campaign pledge on behalf of himself and the Labour party.

Councillor Mike Peers seconded the proposal. Whilst Group Leaders had been asked to pledge for their group, he said it was for his individual group Members to commit to a fair campaign and vote how they wished and not for him to pledge on their behalf. Referring to Section 1.03 of the report, he said serving Members seeking re-election remained bound by the statutory Code of Conduct which they signed when taking up office. He agreed with the comments made by the Leader, and he had also witnessed serious incidents and he hoped this year would be different. He said the Fair Campaigns Pledge acted as a reminder of how Members should conduct themselves during the election period and section 1.04 provided a link to information on the expected standards and that the Code of Conduct still applied.

Councillor Chris Dolphin supported the recommendations and acknowledged the positive aspects of social media as well as those that were not so positive.

Councillor Clive Carver pledged his own commitment albeit that he would not be standing for re-election.

Councillor Tony Sharps agreed with the Leader's comments and said that his group were unanimously supportive of the Pledge.

During the debate, Councillor Ian Roberts requested a recorded vote to which the requisite number of Members indicated their support. On being put to the vote, the recommendations were carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That all Councillors intending to seek re-election make a Fair Campaigns Pledge, and
- (b) That the Returning Officer be requested to ask all candidates at the forthcoming elections to make a Fair Campaigns Pledge.

94. DRAFT PETITIONS SCHEME

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented a report for the Council to approve a draft scheme to fulfil its legal duty in enabling members of the public to submit online petitions. Having been amended and endorsed by the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee, Members' approval was sought for the scheme to be published on the Council's website. The report also set out proposed criteria for

accepting petitions either submitted online or via local Members as part of the existing process. The outcomes of all accepted petitions would continue to be reported to Council on an annual basis.

As Chair and Vice-Chair of the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee, Councillors Neville Phillips and Michelle Perfect moved and seconded the recommendation.

Councillor Mike Peers highlighted the importance of petitions on planning matters being submitted within the 21-day consultation period prior to the application being determined. To clarify this, he proposed an amendment that the words 'during the consultation period' be inserted at the end of section 8(2). The Chief Officer explained that the process would allow for petitions received and accepted after the consultation period to be reported as part of the 'late observations' considered at each Planning Committee meeting. Whilst agreeing with this approach, Councillor Peers said that responses to planning applications should be encouraged within the statutory consultation period where possible. This seconded by Councillor Richard Jones.

Councillor Hilary McGuill commented on the need to define the period by which petitions were collected, accepted, and responded to. Following guidance by the Chief Officer, she proposed an amendment that the 21-day limit for collecting signatures be extended to 30 days and that a further 30-day deadline should apply to the petition being accepted and disposed of. This was seconded by Councillor Marion Bateman.

In response to Members' questions, it was clarified that the initiator of a petition (the promoter) must provide their name and Flintshire postcode. On the format of petitions, the Chief Officer said that whilst a petition template could be made available online, this did not prevent individuals from creating their own.

In view of the proposed amendments, Councillor Derek Butler proposed that the scheme be referred back to the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee for further consideration and contributions. This was seconded by Councillor Patrick Heesom.

The Chief Officer suggested that for the Council to meet legislative requirements within the deadline, the draft scheme be adopted incorporating the proposed amendments and that the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee review the document in the new Council term to establish if any further changes were required.

All three amendments were accepted by the mover and seconder of the recommendations, Councillors Neville Phillips and Michelle Perfect, and on being put the vote, were carried, and formed part of the substantive motion.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Council approves the petitions scheme for inclusion in the Constitution, subject to the following changes:

- To insert the words ‘during the consultation period’ at the end of section 8(2) to encourage that practice and to note that petitions received after the planning consultation period will be reported in the late observations;
 - That the maximum period for collecting signatures be extended to 30 days and that decisions on the acceptance and disposal of petitions be made within 30 days of their submission;
 - That the scheme be adopted to meet the deadline and that it be subject to further review by the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee in the new Council term; and
- (b) That the Council adopts consistent criteria for petitions that are deemed acceptable.

95. APPOINTING LAY MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

In presenting the report the Chief Officer (Governance) clarified that following the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 the Council was required to increase the number of lay members on its Governance and Audit Committee. This was to ensure lay members made up one third of the Committee. An overview of the recruitment process and closing date for applications was provided.

As the term of office of one of the existing lay members was due to expire in May 2022, it was proposed that their term be extended for a period of 12 months to allow for the current recruitment process and for the new Council to consider whether to re-appoint that person for a further term of office.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Chris Dolphin and seconded by Councillor Patrick Heesom.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Council notes the update on the current recruitment process; and
- (b) That Council reappoints the Lay Member for another 12 months

96. PAY POLICY STATEMENT FOR 2022/23

In presenting the report, the Corporate Manager (People and Organisational Development) reported that this was the 10th Annual Pay Policy Statement and reflected the current arrangements regarding pay. Information was provided on the policies for 2021/22 in a number of key areas, which were similar to previous annual reports. There were no changes to principles but in lieu of updated Welsh

Government (WG) guidance and changes to legislation several sections had been added, updated, or removed and these were outlined.

Councillor Clive Carver moved the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Geoff Collett.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That County Council approves the appended draft Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23; and
- (b) That County Council delegates authority to the Corporate Manager, People and Organisational Development to update the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23 during the course of the year to reflect any changes required by legislation, Government policy or national negotiations so that it remains accurate and current.

97. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None were received.

98. QUESTIONS

None were received.

99. NOTICE OF MOTION

None were received.

100. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 p. m. and ended at 16.54 p.m.)

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Chair