

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
14TH MAY 2024

Minutes of the meeting of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Tuesday, 14th May 2024.

PRESENT: Councillor Dennis Hutchinson (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Glyn Banks, Pam Banks, Marion Bateman, Sean Bibby, Chris Bithell, Gillian Brockley, Helen Brown, Mel Buckley, Tina Claydon, Geoff Collett, Steve Cople, Bill Crease, Paul Cunningham, Rob Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, David Evans, Chrissy Gee, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Ian Hodge, Dave Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Alasdair Ibbotson, Paul Johnson, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Simon Jones, Richard Lloyd, Dave Mackie, Gina Maddison, Allan Marshall, Hilary McGuill, Ryan McKeown, Billy Mullin, Ted Palmer, Andrew Parkhurst, Mike Peers, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect, Carolyn Preece, Ian Roberts, Dan Rose, Kevin Rush, Dale Selvester, Sam Swash, Linda Thomas, Roy Wakelam, and Antony Wren.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy), Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Chief Officer (Social Services), Corporate Manager, People and Organisational Development, Democratic Services Manager, Team Leader – Democratic Services and Democratic Services Officers.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillors: David Coggins Cogan, Carol Ellis, Andy Hughes, Debbie Owen, David Richardson, Ant Turton and Arnold Woolley.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Glyn Banks, Pam Banks and Dale Selvester declared personal and prejudicial interests in agenda item number 3, Notice of Motion ‘Get Home Safe Licencing’.

12. NOTICES OF MOTION

The Chief Officer (Governance) advised that, although Councillor Coggins Cogan had left the meeting, his Notice of Motion was valid as other Members were able to speak on it.

The following Notices of Motion had been submitted:

Free School Meals - Councillor Coggins Cogan

“In 2023, the Labour Cabinet in Flintshire chose not to provide free school meals during holidays after the Labour Welsh Government stopped paying for them. After Liberal Democrats challenged the decision, it was agreed that provision would be put in place for Christmas 2023, and a long term solution would be reached.

For a second Summer, children in the greatest need in Flintshire face a lack of support, as the cost of living crisis continues to bite. This council cannot and will not allow children to go hungry. The council can afford to make provision for these children, as the cabinet has shown by finding money for other causes and funding pressures which were not included in the budget.

Therefore, this council:

1. Requests Cabinet to draw up plans to provide payments during the school Summer holiday to parents of children eligible for free school meals.
2. Requires that the cabinet approves such plans no later than 3rd June, to allow them to be implemented in good time.
3. Leaves the amount of payment to the cabinet's discretion, subject to a requirement that it not be less than £50 per eligible child."

In speaking to the Notice of Motion on behalf of Councillor Coggins Cogan, Councillor Parkhurst said last year the Council passed a motion for Flintshire County Council to find a way to feed hungry children in the school holidays with a longer term solution to be sought. He said no plan had been put in place or any funding allocated in the budget. He said it would cost approximately £250k for support to be provided over the summer period and he commended such support to the Chamber.

Councillor Glyn Banks seconded the Notice of Motion and said it was important for all Members to support it as it was something that had been provided in the past. It would be a budget pressure but funding needed to be found.

Councillor Ibbotson said his group fully supported the Notice of Motion and felt the Council should consider where it could be doing more, saying there was no greater priority than tackling child poverty.

In responding to the Notice of Motion, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Social Value said he would not be opposing the Notice of Motion but would accept it as it was without amendment. It would be reported to Cabinet so that the deadline of 3rd June could be met.

Priority One in the Flintshire County Plan was Poverty and moving forward, dealing with Poverty and supporting the vulnerable was and would be a high priority for the Council. Sadly, it would remain one problem amongst many for too many residents.

Members would understand that the Notice of Motion would have a financial consequence in terms of this year and subsequent ones, and he would expect that there would be a budget pressure that would have to be considered. He expressed his disappointment that the Working Group set up to look at solutions to Holiday Hunger was not more productive. It was set up by a motion of the Full Council to propose solutions to Council and consider potential impacts on the Budget. Holiday Hunger was not raised in any discussions on the Budget at Overview and Scrutiny Committees or Member workshops. By approving the Notice of Motion it was a commitment to deliver on Holiday Hunger and Food Poverty that the Council was taking and he called for a recorded vote.

He paid tribute to the Flintshire staff who worked tirelessly to deliver services to the county's most vulnerable.

Reporting back on the decision of Cabinet would be done at the earliest opportunity and that the programme would be evaluated.

That said, I support the Notice of Motion.

A number of Members supported the Notice of Motion, whilst raising points on the issue should have been raised during budget discussions; commitment of implementation; where would the money come from and would it result in an increase in Council Tax.

In his right of reply, Councillor Parkhurst thanked Members for cross party support in addressing child poverty. He said Welsh Government needed to recommence plans for such a provision and longer-term solutions.

The requisite number of Members stood in support of a recorded vote.

The following voted for the Notice of Motion:

Councillors: Buckley, Allport, Glyn Banks, Pam Banks, Bateman, Bibby, Bithell, Brockley, Brown, Carberry, Claydon, Copple, Crease, Cunningham, Rob Davies, Ron Davies, Davies-Cooke, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Eastwood, Evans, Gee, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Dave Hughes, Ibbotson, Johnson, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Simon Jones, Lister Lloyd, Mackie, Maddison, McGuill, McKeown, Mullin, Palmer, Parkhurst, Peers, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect, Preece, Rose, Rush, Selvester, Swash, Thomas, Wakelam and Wren.

The following voted against the Notice of Motion:

Councillor: Geoff Collett.

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion be supported.

Get Home Safe Licensing – Councillor Alasdair Ibbotson

Flintshire County Council notes:

- 1) that shift work is widespread in many industries, particularly hospitality, as well as health and care workers, retail, cleaning, security and porter staff, and can often entail late-night working
- 2) that many workers, especially women, are increasingly worried about their safety travelling to and from work at night

Flintshire County Council believes:

- 1) that while employers may feel their duty of care to staff ends when an employee finishes a shift, they also need to take into consideration journeys home, especially during unsocial hours

- 2) the weakness of enforcement of the law against sexual assault, including up-skirting, on public transport is appalling and only 2% of victims go on to report sexual harassment on public transport
- 3) that Unite the Union's Get Me Home Safely campaign, which calls on employers to take all reasonable steps to ensure workers are able to get home safely from work at night, is much needed and should be supported
- 4) that greater numbers of trained staff and stronger enforcement of the law against sexual assault and harassment on public transport are urgently needed

Flintshire County Council resolves:

- 1) to use its powers, as others such as East Dunbartonshire Council and Glasgow City Council have done, and adopt a policy that our licencing committee will ensure the process for approving late night licences will be linked to the provision of free transport home
- 2) to instruct that a draft policy shall be prepared, that Unite the Union will be consulted during the drafting of this policy, and that this draft shall be put before this council before the end of the 2024/25 municipal year for a vote on adoption
- 3) to publicly call for the municipal ownership of buses in order to lower prices and improve service provision, especially for night-time and off-peak services

In speaking to the Notice of Motion, Councillor Ibbotson referred to people being subject to assault and attack on walking home for which this would introduce protection. He felt most good employers would take steps for employees travelling to and from work when working unsociable hours. He sought support for endorsement of the scheme set up by Unite to ensure workers got home safe. He added that there would be no cost to Flintshire County Council.

In responding to the Notice of Motion, Councillor Bithell said "Schemes that encourage employers to consider the safety of their staff, going to and from their place of work, should be viewed in positive light. The 'Get Home Safely' scheme is an example of such an initiative.

From a Flintshire County Council perspective, it's good to support such initiatives. The Licensing Policy, in itself, cannot mandate the participation of premise licence holders, however specific reference could be made to it when the policy is next reviewed in 2026, subject to consultation with statutory partners.

The purpose of the Statement of Licensing Policy is to provide guidance for new applicants, and existing premises licence holders, as well as defining how the local authority exercises its functions as the licensing authority. The authority are required to publish a reviewed policy statement every 5 years, and must consult, as a minimum, with the consultees listed in the legislation regardless of whether a full or interim variation to the policy is proposed.

It is important to note that Licensing Committee scrutinises the implementation of the Licensing Policy.

With respect to the resolution concerning the municipal ownership of buses, this is a matter for Welsh Government to take forward on a national scale, however I believe it could benefit our county. If municipal ownership was introduced, I have every

confidence that Flintshire will work in partnership to ensure that local requirements and needs are represented.

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin explained that there was a review of the policy due in 2026 and felt this could feed into that review.

Councillor Simon Jones said he represented a rural ward which had a lot of young people travelling quite a distance to work in the evening. He queried if Unite had carried out a survey of residents in rural areas.

Councillor Ibbotson, in his right of reply, and in response to a comment from Councillor Chris Dolphin, said in the two areas in Scotland these arrangements had been incorporated into their policies. In responding to a question on enforcement, he said this was an employment question and an issue for trade unions or third-party support services for those workers who were not a member of a trade union. On whether a study had been carried out, he said that question would need to be directed to the union. On cost, he said there was no cost to Flintshire on calling for a municipal bus service.

Following queries, Councillor Glyn Banks, Pam Banks and Selvester were advised by the Chief Officer (Governance) that they had a personal and prejudicial interest in the Notice of Motion and were advised not to vote.

The Chief Officer (Governance) explained that the Statement of Licensing Policy would need to be consulted on and the Licensing Manager had confirmed she was content to include it in the next review.

On being put to the vote, the Notice of Motion was carried.

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion be supported.

13. QUESTIONS

Two were received and had been included in the agenda for the meeting.

One was from Councillor Swash on the Notice of Motion passed at Council in September 2023 relating to 'Report a Rogue Landlord' tool. A full written response had been provided to all Members from Councillor Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection and was also read out in the Chamber.

Councillor Swash asked a supplementary question to which Councillor Bithell duly responded to and a full response would be provided by the Chief Officer in writing.

The second one was from Councillor Ibbotson on Stop Notices. A full written response had been provided to all Members from Councillor Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection and was also read out in the Chamber.

Councillor Ibbotson commented on the response provided by the Cabinet Member and read out the numbers relating to his questions and asked a supplementary question which was responded to.

14. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 3.00 p.m. and ended at 4.00 p.m.)

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Chair