

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
8TH DECEMBER 2020

Minutes of the meeting of Flintshire County Council held as a remote attendance meeting on Tuesday, 8th December 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Marion Bateman (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Janet Axworthy, Glyn Banks, Haydn Bateman, Sean Bibby, Chris Bithell, Helen Brown, Derek Butler, Clive Carver, Geoff Collett, Bob Connah, Paul Cunningham, Jean Davies, Robert Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Mared Eastwood, Carol Ellis, David Evans, Veronica Gay, George Hardcastle, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Patrick Heesom, Cindy Hinds, Dave Hughes, Ray Hughes, Joe Johnson, Paul Johnson, Rita Johnson, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Tudor Jones, Colin Legg, Brian Lloyd, Richard Lloyd, Dave Mackie, Hilary McGuill, Billy Mullin, Ted Palmer, Mike Peers, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect, Neville Phillips, Ian Roberts, Tim Roberts, Kevin Rush, Tony Sharps, Aaron Shotton, Paul Shotton, Ralph Small, Ian Smith, Carolyn Thomas, Owen Thomas, Martin White, Andy Williams and David Wisinger

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Housing and Assets), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy), Chief Officer (Social Services), Corporate Finance Manager, Principal Accountant, Pension Fund Accountant, Head of Democratic Services, Democratic Services Team Leader and Democratic Services Officers

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillors: Bernie Attridge, David Cox, Kevin Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Mike Lowe, David Williams and Arnold Woolley.

31. PRESENTATIONS

The Chair invited the following to the meeting:

Representing Flintshire County Council

Neil Ayling, Chief Officer (Social Services); Susie Lunt, Senior Manager – Adults Services and Dawn Holt, Social Services Commissioning Manager.

Representing NEWCIS

Claire Sullivan, Elaine Jones, Claire Challinor and Lesley Parry.

She explained that this item was to celebrate the Social Services Accolades where NEWCIS won the award for its 'Bridging the Gap' project, which allowed unpaid carers to access reliable and flexible respite solutions. It allowed carers to take a break to suit their needs and could support an urgent need for respite.

Claire Sullivan thanked the Chair for the invitation to the meeting and said she was delighted that NEWCIS won the accolade. The project started in 2012 and was funded by Flintshire County Council. She never envisaged how flexible and

adaptable the scheme would become, with thousands of unpaid carers receiving respite when they needed it. When the judges visited NEWCIS they spoke to 15 carers who spoke passionately about the service offered. She thanked the team for their continued hard work.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) said NEWCIS was the best carer service in Wales and commented on the excellent partnership they had with the Council.

Councillor Christine Jones, Cabinet Member for Social Services, expressed her thanks for NEWCIS for the support they provided to the carers and congratulated them for winning the award.

Representing HFT

Jordan Smith and Andrew Horner, along with service users Jessica Butler, Tamara Hijazi, Kevin Roberts and Ryan Williams.

The Chair welcomed HFT to celebrate the highly commended Finalist, Flintshire County Council Social Services, for its project providing daytime activities for more than 250 people with learning disabilities. The project helped people learn new skills, develop independence, and make social connections and friendships. It also worked with a supported living programme to help the people it supported, their parents and carers to access respite services.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) said the Council had worked in partnership with HFT for three years and leading services had been developed, such as Hwb Cyfle. He commented on the work opportunities and the Project Search which saw six young people achieving paid work. He congratulated the team.

Councillor Christine Jones also congratulated HFT for the support and care they gave to the service and the work opportunities they provided.

Jordan Smith thanked the Chair for the invitation to the meeting. He paid testament to the Council for their investment in Hwb Cyfle and also commented on the outcomes from Project Search which saw service users obtaining paid employment.

Paul Cunningham congratulated NEWCIS and HFT.

32. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th October 2020 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors: Axworthy, Banks, Bibby, Brown, Butler, Collett, Cunningham, Jean Davies, Davies-Cooke, Dunbar, Dunbobbin, Ellis, Gay, David Healey, Gladys

Healey, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Tudor Jones, Richard Lloyd, Mackie, McGuill, Mullin, Palmer, Peers, Michelle Perfect, Phillips, Rush, Paul Shotton, Smith, White and Wisinger all declared personal interests in agenda item number 8 – Capital Programme 2021/22 – 2023/24 as they were school governors.

34. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair commented on how much lives had changed since March. Today was a very important landmark day as it saw the first vaccination against Covid-19 being administered to a 90 year old lady in Coventry.

35. PETITIONS

None were submitted.

36. CAPITAL STRATEGY INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2021/22 TO 2023/24

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced the report which sought approval of the Council's Capital Strategy. It explained the requirement for the Strategy, its key aims and the contents of each of its sections.

Under the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code), authorities were required to set a range of Prudential Indicators (PI's). The Capital Strategy included details of the Council's Prudential Indicators for 2021/22 – 2023/24.

The key aims of the Strategy were to explain the ways in which the Capital Programme was developed and funded, the potential impact it had on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the way in which it related to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy. The Strategy was an overarching document and referred to other documents such as the Capital Programme, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy. The Strategy was split into a number of sections which were outlined in the report.

The report had been submitted to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet and no issues had been raised.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Banks and seconded by Councillor Roberts.

Councillor Roberts thanked all officers involved for ensuring the programmes remained financed and liquidity remained good.

On page 27, Councillor Peers asked if an affordability criteria was built in to the funding as Table 2 showed a 500% increase in specific grants/contributions/loans. The Corporate Finance Manager said there was a significant increase in 2023/24 due to the 21st Century Schools programme. Future plans had been built into those calculations and also built into the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Councillor Richard Jones asked if there was any risk to the Council on the level of debt as outlined in table 5 of the appendix. The Corporate Finance Manager explained that the level of debt was closely monitored throughout the year to ensure that the debt was below the capital requirement. The Council was legally obliged to set an authorised limit for external debt each year and to keep it under review.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Capital Strategy be approved; and
- (b) That the following be approved:
 - The Prudential Indicators for 2021/22 – 2023/24 as detailed within Tables 1, and 4-7 inclusive of the Capital Strategy; and
 - Delegated authority be granted for the Corporate Finance Manager to effect movements between the separately agreed limits within the authorised limit for external debt and the operational boundary for external debt (Table 6 of the Capital Strategy)

37. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22 – 2023/24

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) introduced the report which presented the proposed Capital Programme for the period 2021/22 – 2023/24 for approval, supported by a PowerPoint presentation.

The Council's Capital Programme covered investment in assets for the long term to enable the delivery of high quality and value for money public services. Assets included buildings (such as schools and care homes), infrastructure (such as highways, IT networks and waste transfer stations) and assets not owned by the Council (such as works to improve and adapt private sector homes). The proposed capital investments outlined within the report were closely aligned to portfolio service business plans and the Council Plan.

The Council had limited capital resources from Welsh Government (WG) to support Council priorities, needs and liabilities. However, it had the powers to fund Capital schemes by borrowing – this was temporary and ultimately, the cost and repayment of any borrowing was charged to the Council's revenue budget. Schemes funded by borrowing were carefully considered due to the long-term impacts on the Council's revenue budget.

The Council Fund Capital Programme was divided into three sections:

1. Statutory / Regulatory – allocations to cover regulatory and statutory works.
2. Retained Assets – allocations to fund infrastructure works necessary to ensure service and business continuity.
3. Investment – allocations to fund works.

The Chief Officer provided details of each of the tables within the report, which were part of the presentation, and supported by explanations in the report on each table.

Details were provided on potential future schemes, which were also detailed in the report.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Roberts and seconded by Councillor Thomas.

Councillor Roberts expressed his thanks to the Chief Officer and his team for the work that had gone into developing the Capital Programme. He said the programme showed the depth of involvement in schools, care homes, infrastructure and IT networks. He commented on the homeless hub, Hwb Cyfle, Ysgol Glan Yr Afon, Castell Alun, the plans for the Saltney and Broughton and Mynydd Isa areas for schools. He also commented on Marleyfield, the joint archive facility and the redevelopment of Theatr Clwyd.

Councillor Thomas concurred with the comments of Councillor Roberts and thanked officers for drawing capital funding through the various avenues available to them. She explained that the Council was waiting to hear the outcome on the bids submitted for schemes under the Economic Stimulus funding.

Councillor Dunbar also concurred with the comments and expressed his thanks for the funding for play areas. He took the opportunity to thank officers for the work undertaken on the bridges at Wepre Park. He asked what the longer term plan was for Deeside Leisure Centre. The Chief Executive explained that initially clarification from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board as to how long they needed the building as the temporary field hospital. It was thought the hospital could be decommissioned in quarter three in 2021. Following the closure of the hospital the Leisure Centre would revert back to what it was. However, the building was coming to its end of life and consultants had been commissioned on what a new building could look like, with more emphasis on health and well-being facilities, and public services.

Councillor Jones thanked the Chief Officer for the report. On page 36, he asked if there was any doubt if the grant between £0.700m to £0.900m would be received. The Chief Officer said that he was optimistic that the grants in the region of the figures advised within the report would be forthcoming. Councillor Jones also asked what the Council would do if anticipated capital receipts did not materialise or were delayed. The Chief Officer explained that schemes would either be re-phased, deferred or consideration given to using prudential borrowing, if appropriate. In response to a comment from Councillor Jones on sports facilities affected across the county and in this context Buckley Town Football Club, the Chief Officer agreed to meet with Councillor Jones, socially distanced to discuss further

Councillor Gladys Healey also thanked the Chief Officer for the report and welcomed the funding made available for Castell Alun High School, including the works to be undertaken on the toilets with funds from a recent Section 106 agreement. She commented on the all-weather pitch which also needed to be

replaced. The Chief Officer said he was aware of that and any funding opportunities would be considered when they became available.

Councillor Peers commented on school building works and the backlog of toilet upgrades and said if £0.100m per annum was spent on the upgrades, it would take 15 years to do the work as it was estimated to be in the region of £1.5m. The Chief Officer explained that it would not take 15 years to complete the toilet refurbishment as some of this work would be addressed through the Councils new build school programme and other wider refurbishment projects within schools.

On play areas, Councillor Peers asked if the Council had any committed sums to assist with the replacement of play equipment. The Chief Executive said the play strategy was being reviewed with Aura and the Council also wanted to review planning policy on play areas.

On the joint archive facility, Councillor Peers asked if the current records office building would be sold once the new facility was open, and was the new facility to be funded on a 50/50 basis with Denbighshire and Flintshire. The Chief Officer explained that planning work was currently being undertaken on the current building. The financial allocation (DCC and FCC) with the major contributions coming from the Heritage Lottery.

Councillor Peers commented on the building works that had taken place in Penyffordd, with the new Penyffordd CP School generating increased pupil numbers. On the 106 contributions which would be used to offset some of the costs for the extension required at the school, he asked if the contribution criteria from developers needed to be re-looked at. The Chief Officer explained that this was a question for the planning department.

Councillor Peers asked if there was any intention to review industrial estates. He was aware of somebody who wanted an industrial unit and was told there were not any available, and was there any scope to increase the supply of the units. The Chief Officer explained that industrial estates were significantly occupied but that it was recognised they needed some investment.

He welcomed the success story of Marleyfield which was for all residents in Flintshire, and also welcomed the improvements to the recycling processing facility located in Buckley.

Councillor Aaron Shotton thanked the Chief Officer for the presentation, and all officers involved in bringing together the Capital Programme. He sought clarity on the timelines for the future plans for Deeside Leisure Centre and how it would be reported to Members. He said there was concern locally on future plans for the Leisure Centre as it was a much loved facility. He was aware the tender closure date for proposed future plans for the Leisure Centre was mid-March. The Chief Officer said the fee proposals would be reviewed and work would take place on evaluating them within the next few weeks. Details in response to the brief would then be developed by the appointed technical consultants and shared when all aspects of the brief has been fulfilled.

Councillor Bithell welcomed the Capital Programme which addressed priorities and needs. He particularly welcomed the investment for Historic Building Conservation.

In response to a question from Councillor Ron Davies, the Chief Executive confirmed that the ice rink would be reinstated at Deeside Leisure Centre once it had been decommissioned as a hospital.

Councillor Sharps said an enquiry had been made from a company two years previous which would release a capital receipt for the Council, but it had not been pursued. The Chief Officer said he would look into the matter.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the allocations and schemes in Table 3 for the Statutory/Regulatory and Retained Assets sections of the Council Fund Capital Programme 2021/22 – 2023/24 be approved;
- (b) That the schemes included in Table 4 for Investment section of the Council Fund Capital Programme 2021/22 – 2023/24 be approved;
- (c) That it be noted that the shortfall in funding of schemes in 2021/22 in Table 5 at this point in the approval process allows flexibility. Options including a combination of future capital receipts, alternative grants (if available), prudential borrowing or the re-phasing of schemes will be considered during 2021/22, and included in future Capital Programme reports; and
- (d) That the schemes included in Table 6 be approved for the specifically funded section of the Council Fund Capital Programme which will be funded in part through borrowing.

38. REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE

The Chief Officer (Governance) introduced the report and explained there was a need to review the Council's political balance calculations following the remaining three members of the Flintshire Independent Group joining the Independent Alliance Group. There was one non-aligned member of the Council.

The Council's political groups and the number of Members on each was as follows:

Labour	34
Independent Alliance	16
Conservative	6
Liberal Democrats	6
New Independents	4
Independents	3
Non-aligned member	1

Committee seats were allocated to political groups (so far as was practicable) in the same proportion as those groups had to the total membership of the County Council. Details of what must be recognised for the allocation of seats on Committees were outlined in the report.

The political balance calculation was appended to the report. It was one possible lawful allocation of seats and other possible lawful allocations may exist.

Seats formally held by the Flintshire Independent Group could be transferred in totality with no other political groups being affected. He thanked Councillor Peers for agreeing to this report being considered at this meeting instead of the meeting in November.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Roberts and seconded by Councillor Peers.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the seats on Committees be allocated in accordance with political balance as shown in Appendix A; and
- (b) That any changes to nominees for Committee places be notified to the Head of Democratic Services as soon as possible.

39. AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Chief Officer (Governance) introduced the Audit Committee's Annual Report for 2019/20 which provided the Council with the necessary information to meet the CIPFA's best practice 'Audit Committees – a Practical Guidance for Local Authorities 2018', and the requirement for the Audit Committee to be held to account by the Council for the work they undertook.

The Audit Committee's Annual Report was designed to provide assurance to the Council in holding the Committee to account. In particular:

1. **Supporting the Council's accountability to the public and stakeholders**
 - Each Audit Committee meeting was held in the public domain with all Committee papers available on the Council's website
2. **Supporting accountability within the Council**
 - Through the review of the reports received by Audit Committee, the Committee holds to account those responsible for the implementation of recommendations and action plans. In addition to that, the Committee oversaw the process for evaluating and improving governance, risk, financial management and control
3. **Holding the Audit Committee to account**
 - The Committee had fulfilled its agreed Terms of Reference and adopted the recommended best practice;

- Members of the Audit Committee had assessed their own development needs and taken the opportunity to attend briefing and training sessions;
- The Committee had assessed its own effectiveness, developed an action plan and monitored progress; and
- The Committee demonstrated they had a positive impact on the improvement of governance, risk, financial management and control within the Council.

A report would be submitted to County Council in January outlining proposed changes to Audit Committees in Wales.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Chris Dolphin and seconded by Councillor Paul Johnson.

Councillor Chris Dolphin gave an overview of the Annual Report, and confirmed there were no areas of concern to report to Council. Councillor Paul Johnson thanked Councillor Dolphin for the chairmanship of the Committee and his thorough nature.

Councillor Roberts also expressed his thanks to the Chair of the Audit Committee, the Members and also the co-opted members for their valuable contributions.

RESOLVED:

That the Audit Committee's Annual Report for 2019/20 be approved.

40. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Head of Democratic Services presented the report and explained that the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report was drafted on an annual basis by the officer team, in consultation with the relevant Committee Chairs. The draft was then submitted to Constitution and Democratic Services Committee for Members comments before being submitted to Council for formal approval.

The Annual Report provides the Council with assurance that the Overview and Scrutiny function was fulfilling its constitutional role.

Following a recommendation at Constitution and Democratic Services Committee, it was agreed that the redundant wording relating to the forward work programme could be removed.

An amendment was required as Councillor Paul Johnson was listed as vice-chair of Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee instead of Councillor Cunningham. In addition, a further amendment was required as Councillor Dave Hughes was listed as a Member of the Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee which was incorrect. The amendments would be made prior to the final version of the report being published on the Council's website.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Phillips and seconded by Councillor Michelle Perfect.

Councillor Phillips thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Facilitators for their support over the past year. He also paid tribute to Councillor Mackie who had chaired the now disbanded Organisational Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee for three years. Councillors Roberts and McGuill concurred with the comments of Councillor Phillips.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/20 be received.

41. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None were received.

42. QUESTIONS

None were received.

43. NOTICE OF MOTION

None were received.

44. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 p. m. and ended at 4.25 p.m.)

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Chair