

EXECUTIVE
21 JUNE 2011

Minutes of the meeting of the Executive of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 21 June 2011

PRESENT: Councillor A. Woolley (Chairman)

Councillors: H. D. Hutchinson, N. M. Matthews, L. A. Sharps, N. Steele-Mortimer and M. G. Wright

APOLOGIES: Councillors: H. Brown, C. A. Ellis and N. Phillips

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: J. B. Attridge, Q.R.H. Dodd, F. Gillmore, R. G. Hampson, R. B. Jones, D. I. Mackie, A.P. Shotton and C. A. Thomas

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Director of Environment, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Finance, Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development, Head of ICT & Customer Services, Head of Housing, Democracy and Governance Manager and Committee Officer

26. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2011 were confirmed as a correct record.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

28. IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2011/12

The Leader and Executive Member for Asset Management introduced the Improvement Plan 2011/12.

The Chief Executive reported that the Improvement Objectives were proposed as the set of Council Priorities at the last Executive meeting on 17 May, 2011 and the Improvement Plan was audited by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) as part of the annual Corporate Assessment. The 10 primary priorities, as outlined in the Appendix to the report, were supported by the more detailed secondary priorities set out in the three Directorate plans and in the corporate governance plans. The Improvement Plan provided high level actions, milestones and targets against each of the priorities which could be monitored over time.

The Plan would be presented to full Council on 29 June 2011 before being published on the Internet and made available for on-going public comment and feedback.

RESOLVED:

That the Improvement Plan 2011/12 be adopted.

29. REGULATORY PROGRAMME

The Leader and Executive Member for Asset Management introduced the proposed Regulatory Programme for Performance Audit Plan of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) for the period April 2011 to March 2012; the 2010/11 Financial Audit Outline for Flintshire County Council and the 2010/11 Financial Outline for the Clwyd Pension Fund.

The Chief Executive explained that the range of work that the Auditor General and regulators would carry out would be detailed in a Work Plan and Timetable and would reflect the Council's improvement planning arrangements aligned to its improvement objectives. The fee base for this year reflected a reduction in audit and inspection activity based on risk and was identified as a result of improving performance and levels of assurance.

The Head of Finance outlined the key milestones of planned activity around the audit of financial accounts which would be reported to the Audit Committee and Council as appropriate.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed Regulatory Programme for Performance Audit Plan of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) for the period April 2011 to March 2012, the 2010/11 Financial Audit Outline for Flintshire County Council and the 2010/11 Financial Audit Outline for the Clwyd Pension Fund be accepted.

30. FLINTSHIRE FUTURES – GOVERNANCE

The Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Asset Management introduced the developing arrangements for governance of the Flintshire Futures Programme.

The Chief Executive provided details on the following democratic leadership and decision-making arrangements which were now in place:

- Regional Collaboration – the Regional Leadership Board oversaw all regional activity and brought together all six Council Leaders and Chief Executives.
- Local Collaboration – The Local Service Board oversaw all local activity and brought together the professional leaders of the local partner organisations and the Leader of the Council.
- Corporate Change – the Corporate Change sub-programme was broad-based and complex. A full report would be made on the progress of the programme and its project at least twice a year to both Executive and Overview and Scrutiny.

- Service Change – the Service Change sub-programme involved a number of service reviews which were reported to Executive and to Overview and Scrutiny at inception and scoping.

Further information could be provided to Members in the interim on request.

RESOLVED:

That the developing governance arrangements for the Flintshire Futures Programme be endorsed.

31. REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND REGULATORY SERVICES PROGRAMME BOARD – PROGRESS REPORT

The Chief Executive introduced a progress report on the work of the Regional Environment and Regulatory Services Programme Board. Its terms of reference and membership were detailed in the appendix to the report.

The Environment and Regulatory Services Programme Board was one of four Boards appointed by the Six Councils in North Wales to promote and achieve collaboration on Local Government functions and services. The Board had sponsored a number of new collaboration projects over the past year and had taken over responsibility for several projects where collaboration was already well established. Details of the new sponsored projects were detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.

No formal Welsh Government (WG) response had been made to the ‘Simpson Review’, which built on the positive work of collaborative working at a regional level, but the work of the Board would ensure that the Council was well positioned to implement any recommendations from the WG.

RESOLVED:

That the progress of the work of the Board be noted and endorsed.

32. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) 2011-15 UPDATE

The Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Asset Management introduced an update on the developing Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2011-15 which included feedback from the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee and proposals for the adoption of the MTFS by the County Council.

The discussions at the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 19 May, 2011 had been helpful in identifying how the draft MTFS document could be enhanced particularly in Section 6, on Financial Planning and Operating Principles to more fully describe the intent to examine existing budgets and reduce costs as well as examining new proposals in detail. An improved explanation of Value for Money (VFM) and a

simplified VFM model had been produced with the advice of Councillor R.B. Jones. Officers had continued to develop the MTFs and a final document which took into account the comments from the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be presented to full Council on 29 June, 2011 as part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework under the Constitution.

The Chief Executive commented on the importance of forecasting for future resource levels and needs and to have clear priorities with appropriate support throughout the rigorous work that would be required.

RESOLVED:

That the Medium Term Financial Strategy be recommended to County Council for adoption as part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework under the Constitution.

33. CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY 2010/2013 – PROGRESS REPORT

The Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Asset Management introduced an update on the progress made towards the implementation of the Customer Services Strategy.

The Head of ICT and Customer Services provided details of the Customer Access Channel Shift project, which was a key project within the Flintshire Futures Programme with the objective of realising efficiency savings by moving customers to more cost effective ways of accessing the Council's information and services. Data gathering was underway to identify how customers access the Council on a service level basis, via the telephone, website or face to face.

In partnership with the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) a 'tell us once' service had been developed which was due to go live on 8 July, 2011. The end result would be the ability for members of the public to notify all necessary agencies and Council departments (e.g. Pensions, Passport Office, Council Tax, Benefits, etc.) that a person had deceased rather than contacting numerous agencies separately.

A new approach to customer services training had been developed in partnership with Deeside College. The training material which would be used to achieve the Flintshire County Council Customer Service Award had been accredited by the Oxford Cambridge RSA (OCR) awarding body.

In response to a question on the recording of telephone calls, the Head of ICT and Customer Services said that this was being considered as part of the new telephone system project.

RESOLVED:

That the report and progress made in implementing the Customer Services Strategy be noted.

34. 14 – 19 INSPECTION

The Executive Member for Education introduced the published report from Estyn on the “Area Inspection on the quality and standard of provision for 14 to 19 year old learners in Flintshire”. He congratulated the Principal Learning Advisor for Secondary Schools, all Headteachers, staff and School Governors for a positive report which judged current performance and prospects for improvement as good.

The Director of Lifelong Learning reported that the outcome of the inspection of 14 – 19 provision in Flintshire was significantly better than any previously published 14 – 19 Area Inspections in Wales. Actions resulting from inspection recommendations were to be integrated into the Council’s improvement planning and would be monitored as part of regular link inspection visits.

The Chief Executive commented that the gradings awarded by the inspection team matched those within the self evaluation report produced by the local partnership.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Tourism commented on the positive results which he felt would assist young people in gaining the skills base needed for their future.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the contents of the Inspection report be noted and endorsed and congratulations be expressed to all partner organisations involved in the process; and
- (b) That work continues on the programme of School Modernisation in order to meet the requirements of the first recommendation in 3.03 of the report.

35. QUARTER 4/YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT REVIEW 2010/11

The Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Asset Management introduced the report which detailed the Quarter 4/Year End service performance reports produced at the Head of Service/Divisional level under the adopted business model of the Council. The update of the Strategic Assessment of Risks and Challenges (SARC) summary was contained within the performance reports.

The Chief Executive explained that Appendix 1 to the report contained a schedule of all of the Improvement Targets which were reported on a

quarterly basis. This was in line with the revised list of Improvement Targets endorsed by Executive on 18 January 2011. A schedule of the Outcome Agreement measures could be found at Appendix 2 of the report. This contained an assessment of performance using the Red, Amber and Green (RAG) Status.

Analysis of the Quarter 4/Year End SARC showed that 2 of the risks were currently identified as high (red) compared to 5 in the previous quarter. The two high (red) risk areas were:-

- CD23 Procurement of Independent Sector Placements for Looked after Children
- CD20 School Buildings/School Modernisation

The Chief Executive suggested that these areas be referred to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees for consideration and proactive management action.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That high (red) risk performance areas outlined within the report be referred to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for management action;
- (b) That the year end position of the Strategic Assessment of Risks and Challenges (SARC) contained within the performance report be noted;
- (c) That the progress made against the Improvement Target Action Plans contained within the performance report be noted; and
- (d) That the progress made against the Outcome Agreement measures be noted.

36. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2010/11 (MONTH 12)

The Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Asset Management introduced the report which provided the most up to date revenue budget monitoring information (Month 12) for the Council Fund and the Housing Revenue Account in 2010/11. He thanked the officers for the work undertaken to present an improved position for the Authority with the projected year end position as estimated at Month 12 being:

- Council Fund – Net underspend of £0.303M (underspend of £0.037M at Month 11)
- Housing Revenue Account – Net underspend of £0.520M (underspend of £0.311M at Month 11)

A significant reason for the improved position was the notification from the Welsh Government (WG) on 28 March, 2011 of grant funding of £0.221M which had been used to help reduce the overspend on Children's Services

Out of County Placements from £0.440M to £0.207M. The Chief Executive explained that the grant funding would assist in meeting the growing demand and costs for Domiciliary Care.

The Head of Finance reported that the Final Outturn position would be reported to Executive on 19 July, 2011 and the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 July, 2011.

Movements to date on unearmarked reserves and the estimated level of contingency sum were detailed in the appendix to the report. As a result of the movement, the estimated amount currently projected in the Contingency Reserve was £1.362M. This was £1.071M more than the £0.291M anticipated when the 2011/12 budget was set.

Various requests for carry forward funding had been received which were detailed in the report.

Appendix 8 to the report detailed the reasons for significant variances occurring to date on the Housing Revenue Account, and actions planned to deal with them. The Head of Housing reported that proposals for how the Housing Revenue Account budget was presented in the future to show how expenditure impacted on the performance of the service were being considered.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the carry forward requests be approved;
- (c) That the estimated Council Fund Contingency Sum as at 31 March 2011 be noted; and
- (d) That the projected final level of balances on the Housing Revenue Account be noted.

37. SCHOOL MODERNISATION: SECONDARY REVIEW

The Executive Member for Education introduced the report to commission a community consultation for Area Reviews of Secondary School Provision, in accordance with the Council's School Modernisation Strategy and 14 – 19 Transformation Strategic Outline Case.

The Flintshire School Modernisation Strategy included the requirement to review schools with over 25% surplus places. There were currently 3 Secondary Schools in excess of this percentage. It was recognised that solutions could not be found without the Local Authority, Schools and other partners working together and the reviews of the provision were to be held on an area basis. This would involve wider planning discussions in the three

areas of Holywell, Queensferry/Shotton/Connah's Quay and Mold/Mynydd Isa/Buckley.

The Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 9 June, 2011 to consider this report and recommended to commission a seminar on the initial option appraisals for each area on 30 June, 2011. It was proposed that the initial consultation period began before the end of the 2011 academic year and all responses to the consultations would be reported to Members where consideration would be given to the formulation of preferred options. In the event of objections, the decision would be for Welsh Ministers of the Welsh Government (WG) to make.

The Director of Lifelong Learning commented that the Council was committed to working with schools and communities to secure high quality learning opportunities for all. He referred to the challenge to ensure that Flintshire schools continued to provide an appropriate 'fit for purpose' environment for the 21st century at a time when limited funds were available to deliver increasing expectations. Following consultation with stakeholders on the original School Modernisation Strategy parents and students would now be involved in developing the next steps for education in their local areas.

The Chief Executive added that in its 2009 report on the strategic management of education in Flintshire, Estyn identified tackling school modernisation as a key recommendation. Whilst recognising that considerable preparatory work had been undertaken, the 2009 14 – 19 Area Inspection recommended that there was a challenge to address inefficient provision. The future allocation of funding to improve learning environments also depended on the Council meeting the WG expectation in reducing surplus capacity.

The Executive Member for Waste Management sought an assurance that all options suggested through community consultation would be considered. The Director of Lifelong Learning gave this assurance and explained that options appraisals would be carried out for all suggested options.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Environment raised concerns around the expectations of the WG and possibility of future funding being reduced if the Council did not meet the WG recommended levels of surplus places. He asked if the cost of a surplus place could be provided to all Members during the Workshop on 30 June, 2011 and asked how the WG calculated the cost of surplus places.

The Director of Lifelong Learning said that details around the costs of surplus places at the three affected Flintshire secondary schools would be provided to all Members during the Workshop.

In response to comments around future funding, the Chief Executive explained that the WG had not committed to withdrawing future funding but it

was not clear how not meeting the criteria on surplus places would be enforced.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the outlined methodology be adopted for consulting with communities;
- (b) That the full involvement of the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee in considering developing option appraisals in each area be supported and formal reports at each stage of the area review process be received; and
- (c) That a further report following the Consultation Stage which sets out recommendations following the full option appraisal consultation in each area be commissioned.

38. DEESIDE LEISURE CENTRE: PHASE 4 SPA POOL

The Executive Member for Leisure Services and Public Protection introduced a report to seek approval for Phase 4 of the re-development of Deeside Leisure Centre.

The development of the spa facility at Deeside Leisure Centre was due to commence in August 2011. Alliance Leisure Services and the project board had recommended the inclusion of a spa pool into the development as it would give the Council greater flexibility when considering the future of the two other health suites offered within the County at Flint Pavilion and Holywell Leisure Centre. Further reports outlining development proposals for both Flint and Holywell Leisure Centres would be submitted to Executive in due course.

It was clarified that the reference to Tanning treatments outlined in the Appendix to the report did not refer to sunbeds. This followed the decision taken by the Executive on 6 October, 2009 that all sunbeds be removed from Council Leisure Centres.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed Phase 4 re-development works at Deeside Leisure Centre (subject to the spa pool falling within the electrical loading restrictions) be approved and officers be authorised to conclude a Works Contract to meet all requirements within the financing constraints.

39. COMMUNITY HOUSE REVIEW

The Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Asset Management proposed that this report be deferred to the next meeting of the Executive to allow the Executive Member for Housing to introduce and speak to the report.

RESOLVED:

That this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Executive scheduled for 19 July, 2011.

40. SECOND CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING MANAGER POST WITHIN SOCIAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

The Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Asset Management introduced the report which sought permission to appoint a second Children's Safeguarding Manager to fill the current capacity gap, plus accompanying administrative support.

The Head of Housing commented that the number of children on the child protection register had risen in recent years as a result of national high profile child death cases. It was clear therefore that the rise did not reflect a short term increase but rather a long term trend which was anticipated to continue. New requirements as outlined in the Children Act 2008 further demonstrated the need for increased capacity to advise on placements in the health and education sector. The costs of appointing to these posts would be met within existing budgets.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposal to recruit an additional post of Children's Safeguarding Manager for a three year contract be endorsed;
- (b) That an additional part time administrative support for the same period be endorsed;
- (c) That the situation be reviewed in 2014 and a decision made at that time to extend or delete the post; and
- (d) That the Head of Social Services for Children and the Head of Development and Resources commence discussions with the relevant officers with a view to developing the ideas around a Safeguarding Unit.

41. MENTOR/VOLUNTEER PROJECT UPDATE (MAY 2011)

The Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Asset Management introduced a report which outlined the review of the Mentor/Volunteer Project and proposals to increase the post-holder's hours to meet the growth and demand generated by the project.

The Head of Housing explained that the project had exceeded expectations in its first year and was expected to further expand in 2011/12 with volunteers beginning to demonstrate effective outcomes. This represented a positive achievement in terms of service development combined with valuable outcomes for the children/young people in receipt of

services. It was expected that the additional costs for increasing the postholder's hours would be met by the Social Services for Children base budget allocation.

RESOLVED:

That the expansion of the project by increasing the postholder's available hours as detailed in the report be approved.

42. RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR WALES 2007-2013, BUSINESS PLAN 2

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Tourism introduced an update on the progress of the implementation of the Rural Development Plan (RDP) for Wales 2007 – 2013 for both Business Plan 1 and Business Plan 2.

The County Council acted as the Lead Body providing the administration, support and management for the programme and was responsible for overseeing the implementation of Axis 3 in Flintshire. Measures under Axis 3 sought to increase economic performance and income levels and improve the quality of life, whilst addressing issues of social inclusion and isolation within rural areas. Axis 4 sought to pilot innovative rural development projects and was delivered by Cadwyn Clwyd who contract directly with the Welsh Government (WG).

In December, 2010 the WG approved detailed project applications with a total value of approximately £4.98M for investment in Flintshire's rural communities. The Executive Member for Regeneration and Tourism also took the opportunity to thank the Rural Development Officer for the way in which the projects were administered. His comments were echoed by the Leader of the Council.

In response to concerns raised around future maintenance costs, the Executive Member for Regeneration and Tourism recognised the pressures placed on Councils following the creation of new walking, cycling and riding routes. A number of suggestions on how to meet the demand of on-going maintenance were being considered and the concerns raised would be noted.

RESOLVED:

That the progress be noted and the implementation of the Rural Development Plan (RDP) for Wales 2007-2013 for both Business Plan 1 and Business Plan 2 be approved.

43. FLINTSHIRE FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT

The Executive Member for Environment introduced the report advising of the requirement to undertake a Flood Risk Assessment and areas of potential risk.

The Director of Environment reported that following a report undertaken by Sir Michael Pitt in 2007 the Government published two key pieces of legislation which gave Councils in Wales additional responsibility to develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for dealing with surface water, ground water and ordinary watercourses.

He outlined the three Key Stages of the Flood Risk Management Cycle under the Flood Risk Regulations and explained that in reviewing the areas which may form the basis of the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment no locations had been identified in Flintshire, through the use of the guidance. There was however, clear historical evidence that problems had been caused by flooding in areas of Flintshire and as part of the Councils Project Appraisal Reports, potential areas of concern would be reported to the Welsh Government (WG) to inform general levels of cost/expenditure throughout Wales for dealing with potential areas of flooding.

RESOLVED:

That the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment be noted and approved.

44. SALARY OVERPAYMENTS

The Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Asset Management introduced the report which advised on progress made in managing the salary overpayments and provided a factual and balanced overview of the issues and the handling strategy.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that the cause of the majority of overpayments was a result of late notification of changes and leavers from departments to the HR Service Centre. Notifications from schools were highlighted as a particular area of concern and procedures within payroll and education staffing had been enhanced to ensure that employees were not paid beyond the notified contract date. Following the overpayments audit conducted in August, 2010 a follow up audit had since been carried out in which the auditors had been pleased to note that all recommendations had been implemented.

Early settlement of disputes was encouraged through a combination of protocols and active case management by Human Resources staff whose aim was to provide a comprehensive framework for good practice in communicating with employees, managers and trade union representatives.

RESOLVED:

That the work undertaken be noted and the measures and actions continuing to address the identified issues and risks be endorsed.

45. FLINTSHIRE LEAN ACADEMY

The Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Asset Management introduced the report which provided an overview of the Lean Academy project, a key enabling and support project within the Flintshire Futures Programme. The report also detailed the outcomes of the initial series of lean reviews undertaken.

The Head of ICT and Customer Services reported that the objective of the Lean Academy project was to create local capacity in the use of lean business improvement techniques to deliver change, service improvements and efficiencies aligned to the Flintshire Futures Programme. Rather than depend on expensive external resources to meet the increasing requirement for lean skills and capacity it was decided to improve the capability and capacity internally. Feedback from staff who had participated in the Flintshire Academy project had been extremely positive and the staff involved had shown enthusiasm, energy and commitment to the reviews they had undertaken.

Reviews had been undertaken on Procurement, Accounts Receivable, Planning Enforcement, Complaint Handling, Committee Administration, ICT Service Requests, Education Statementing and Planning Appeals. The approach taken to develop lean capacity was innovative and had the potential to be replicated in other organisations and offered potential collaborative opportunities.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Tourism commended the work of the Lean Academy project and encouraged close working between the Council and Toyota to develop this initiative further.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and the approach taken to introduce lean skills and capacity within the organisation be endorsed.

46. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 9.30 a.m. and ended at 11.30 a.m.

47. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were two members of the press and two members of the public in attendance.

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Chairman

SUMMARY OF DECLARATIONS MADE BY MEMBERS
IN ACCORDANCE WITH FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S
CODE OF CONDUCT

EXECUTIVE	DATE: 21 JUNE 2011
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MEMBER	ITEM	MIN. NO. REFERS
NO DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST WERE MADE		