

COUNTY FORUM MEETING NOTE

DATE: Thursday 25 June 2019
TIME: 6.30 pm – 8.30 pm
HOST: Mold Town Council
VENUE: The Jubilee Room, Mold Town Council, Earl Road, Mold

ATTENDANCE

1. Introductions & Apologies

1.1. Present

Flintshire County Council:

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| • Leader of Flintshire County Council | Ian Roberts |
| • Deputy Leader of Flintshire County Council | Carolyn Thomas |
| • Chief Officer for Governance | Gareth Owens |
| • Chief Officer for Planning, Environment & Economy | Andrew Farrow |
| • Development Manager, Planning | Mandy Lewis |
| • Strategic Performance Advisor | Jay Davies |
| • Executive Officer | Joanne Pierce |

Town and Community Councils:

- Broughton & Bretton Community Council
- Caerwys Town Council
- Cilcain Community Council
- Connah's Quay Town Council
- Gwernmynydd Community Council
- Halkyn Community Council
- Hawarden Community Council
- Higher Kinnerton Community Council
- Mold Town Council
- Mostyn Community Council
- Northop Community Council
- Penyffordd Community Council
- Saltney Town Council
- Sealand Community Council
- Trelawnyd & Gwaenysgor Community Council
- Whitford Community Council
- Ysceifiog Community Council

Other Representatives:

- Richard Williams, Chief Executive, Community Foundation Wales
- Deryck Evans, Wales Audit Office

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1.2. Apologies

Flintshire County Council:

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| • Chief Executive | Colin Everett |
| • Chief Officer for Streetscene and Transportation | Stephen O Jones |
| • Chief Officer for Housing and Assets | Neal Cockerton |
| • Chief Officer for Education and Youth | Claire Homard |
| • Chief Officer for Social Services | Neil Ayling |
| • Corporate Business & Comms. Officer | Sam Perry |

Town and Community Councils:

- Argoed Community Council
- Bagillt Community Council
- Buckley Town Council (*No longer attend County Forum meetings*)
- Brynford Community Council
- Flint Town Council
- Gwernaffield Community Council
- Holywell Town Council
- Hope Community Council
- Leeswood Community Council
- LLanasa Community Council
- Llanfynydd Community Council
- Nannerch Community Council
- Nercwys Community Council
- Northop Hall Community Council
- Queensferry Community Council
- Shotton Town Council
- Treuddyn Community Council

Gareth Owens thanked Mold Town Council for chairing the meeting and providing the venue.

Councillor Tim Maunders, Mayor of Mold opened the meeting, thanked everyone for attending. Councillor Maunders updated the Forum on housekeeping and fire evacuation procedures and introduced each agenda item.

The minutes of the last meeting held on 14 February 2019 were agreed as a true record and it was noted that both Gwernymynydd and Northop Community Council were present at the meeting but were not recorded as being in attendance.

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PART ONE

COUNCIL TOPICS

1A. Community Endowment Foundation

Richard Williams, Chief Executive of the Community Foundation Wales provided a presentation to the Forum aimed at raising awareness of the Foundation's funding opportunities. The charity is extremely active in Flintshire and is based on an endowment model whereby income is re-invested. The charity is 20 years old and based on a model that started in North America. There are panels based within Flintshire that local people sit on to review applications.

Other key points included:

- The Flintshire area is covered by two funds, the Community Endowment Fund which supports projects that support educational development of school aged children and young people; school-based projects that support health issues and healthy living; education attainment projects and education inclusion projects that support individual students with bursaries, travel, etc. The Welsh Church Acts Fund is also administered by the Foundation and provides help to groups for social, recreational and other charitable purposes. Capital grants can be awarded to help furnish and maintain buildings. Revenue grants support organisations with projects and activities to benefit the people of Flintshire.
- The criteria for application are;
 - individuals up to and including the age of 25 residing in Flintshire, (providing that the initiatives do not fall within the current statutory provision) can apply for a grant of up to £200.
 - Churches and organisations working with residents of Flintshire for a grant of up to £1,000
Applications must demonstrate exactly how they will meet the Fund's objectives and priorities and must not have previously received a grant from this fund.
- Applicants must apply online via the Community Foundation Wales website.

Richard also mentioned the Hawarden and District Relief in Need Fund which aims to help people with limited resources, those considered to be in crisis and groups involved in supporting vulnerable people. Previously, funds had been used for; equipment/activities for Hawarden based community groups and charities working with vulnerable people; the purchase of critical household items and items to help alleviate the suffering of food and fuel poverty (food parcels, blankets etc.).

- Applications can be received from both individuals and organisations for grants of up to £750.
- Applicants must live in the ancient parish of Hawarden, in modern wards terms this includes; Aston, Broughton East/West, Buckley Pentrobin, Ewloe, Hawarden, Mancot, Saltney Mold Junction, Saltney Stonebridge, Sealand, Shotton East/West and Higher.

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Further information can be obtained by mailing grants@communityfoundationwales.org.uk or calling 02920 379 580

Questions & Answers:

Q How long does the funding process take?

There are two deadlines in July, with applicants being made aware of the result of their application by mid September. A crisis review meeting can also be scheduled.

1B. Financial Management and Governance and Internal Audit Arrangements for Town and Community Councils

A presentation around governance, financial management and internal audit was provided by Deryck Evans, Technical Team Manager, for Local Government, Pension Funds and Town and Community Councils based at Wales Audit Office (WAO)
Deryck outlined the key messages within the report:

- Local councils manage increasingly large sums of public money and hold reserves equal to the monies raised from Council Tax payers. Councils need to consider their future role and how this will impact on their financial management arrangements.
- A significant number of Councils have failed to meet their statutory responsibilities for preparing accounts and ensuring proper arrangements are made for the statutory audit.
- The number of qualified audit opinions has doubled in 2017/18 to 340 councils with auditors highlighting ongoing failings in financial management and governance.
- In 2018 the Auditor General exercised statutory powers to issue reports in the public interest to eight Councils in Wales.
- In 2018/19 and 2019/20 Town and Community Council audits will focus on areas that auditors consider that local councils can to improve their financial management and governance.

Hard copies of the report were made available

Questions & Answers:

Q. What is the process if a Council does not provide the required information?

Any criminality or fraud identified is reported to the Police.

Q. Where can we access a list of internal auditors?

We never recommend internal auditors, however, we are looking at holding a session with One Voice Wales around an internal audit accreditation for individuals with a financial background.

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Q. The volume of work required to get ready for an internal audit is onerous on the Clerk, especially if the Clerk only works part time. Going forward, recruitment for Clerks could be difficult.

Getting ready for audit should not be an onerous tasks if records are kept up to date. If you feel that the Clerk needs time to prepare for the audit, extra time should be given.

Q. A number of Councils are in between Clerks. It can be difficult if your Clerk has left and you are in the middle of an audit.

It is the Council's responsibility to ensure proper arrangements are kept and a full handover is undertaken, if you are struggling One Voice Wales can be contacted for assistance. Alternatively you could contact a neighbouring Clerk.

1C. Update on the Council Plan 2019/20

A presentation was given by Jay Davies on the development of the 2019/20 Council Plan and, in particular, the new areas included in the plan which Town and Community Councils can support.

The main points of the Plan are:

- The plan is statutory and published annually. It has been reviewed and updated for the period 2019/20 and is one of a number of corporate plans..
- The plan builds on last year's plan for areas such as housing and school modernisation and includes priorities from Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees such as waste and recycling. Priorities of partner organisations are also included such as Well-being, Community Safety and environmental mapping. The Plan also reflects local community needs, expectations and demands such as residential/dementia care homes and managing Universal Credit changes. National policy and legislation have also had a significant impact on the Plan's content.
- A set of six themes with 'in-year' priorities are set annually. Part 1 is the core content of our ambitions and deliverables for the year. Part 2 contains the detail of how we measure and monitor performance against progress (*this is to be agreed by the Council's Cabinet in July*). An illustrated plan will be available on the Council's website by the end of July.
- Engagement will start around November to inform next year's plan. The Forum and Councillors will be included within that process.

Questions & Answers:

Q. Within Plan 2; what does Customer Journey mean within the Connected Council section?

This is around the work undertaken for a single point of access customer contact centre.

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Q. Safe and Clean Council/Clean Communities. I am continuously trying to get roads and gullies tidy, its impossible, in Mostyn we are getting no service.

This must be discussed and fed through to your Streetscene Area Supervisor. There are schedules in place for this type of work to be undertaken.

Q. Grass cutting is late and lanes are becoming single access tracks. In parts of Hawarden the Council are maintaining areas and sub-contracting out other areas. On occasions the cut grass is blocking grids. There appears to be little planning around grass cutting.

Cllr. Thomas quoted the regulations and confirmed that, due to flooding, in some areas grass cutting had been delayed.

Q. How well were last year's aims met?

Generally very well, Flintshire is one of the lowest funded Councils and higher performing Councils in Wales.

Q. Will Part 2 show a comparison for the current year and next year performance?

No, Part 2 will be the supporting detailed work, however we do use a tracker on comparisons that we can share. In addition, we have published Key Performance Indicators from Welsh Government that can be presented at a future Forum.

Q. Its noted that Flintshire was number one for filling in potholes, but that's only main roads and trunk roads.

For the first time we have set aside money for rural areas; potholes, grass cutting and patching work. We currently have a £40m backlog of work which is being addressed. Cllr. Thomas offered to attend a future Cilcain Community Council meeting to discuss these issues further, if the Clerk would like to invite her.

Actions:

Cilcain Community Council to invite Cllr. Thomas to a future Community Council meeting.

[Cilcain CC to action]

1D. Overview of the Council's Digital Strategy and Digital Customer Account.

The Council approved the Digital Strategy last year to increase the range of services available on the website with a view to enabling customers to have direct access to their account and pay for services they wish to receive. This service called 'My Account' has recently been launched.

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The account gives access to information customers may be interested in within their local area for example bin collections. The 'My Enquiries' screen shows logged enquiries and their status, any planning applications the customer has commented on and local councillor details.

The first service to go live will be Housing which will enable Council tenants to link all their housing information for example rent account details, logged repairs and status. The aim is for all Council services to be on 'My Account'. Aligned to this is a general improvement to the Flintshire website, particular attention has been paid to the Social Services pages. It is hoped that our customers see the benefit and convenience of the new system. This however, this will not take away the availability of our established Contact Centres.

Questions & Answers:

Q. A lot of people reporting repairs won't have access to the system.

A considerable number of people are digitally active, and work is ongoing with accommodation support officers to aid digitalisation. Our local Connects offices are also being kept open to help with such issues.

Q. I already have an account, and use it to report faults. Can we set an account up for Community Councils?

We are in the process of designing a site for all Town and Community Councils, there is also reporting function already designed which everybody can use.

Q. This sounds a great idea, how do you access it?

Access is via the Flintshire County Council website, on the front page. You can also download the application on your mobile device.

1E. Welsh Government Statutory Pre Consultation Process for Major Development

Mandy Lewis provided a short presentation on Welsh Government's Statutory Pre Consultation Process for Major Developments.

Key messages from the presentation were:

- This process was implemented in August 2016 and affects development in excess of 100 square meters or 10 or more houses. Developers must carry out pre-consultation prior to submitting a planning application. A number of pre consultation exercises have taken place already throughout the County.
- The developer must make the draft planning application available for consultation, including a Design and Access Statement, plans/surveys, and technical documents. The consultation should be for a minimum of 28 days

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and include site notices. Notices should advise residents of the proposals and consultation process. The developer must consult each Community Council where the proposed application is located.

- The developer does not have to notify the Local Authority that they are undertaking a Pre Application Consultation as the Local Authority is not a consultee. However, some parts of the Local Authority, such as Streetscene may be consulted.
- Actions the Town or Community Council should take include publicising to all members a copy of the notice of Pre Application Consultation. Members ought to try and attend any consultation event being held and feedback at their next meeting. If this falls outside the 28 day consultation period, the Town and Community Council should formulate an agreement about to formally respond. Should any assistance be required around how to respond to a Pre Application Consultation Mandy Lewis can be contacted via email; Mandy.Lewis@flintshire.gov.uk

Questions & Answers:

Q. Developers ignore Town and Community Councils and have little regard for the community.

This is Welsh Government legislation and must be adhered to by developers.

Actions:

Joanne Pierce to send Mandy Lewis the email address of all Clerks and Mandy will circulate further information.

[JP/ML to action]
Done

PART TWO

TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL ITEMS

2A. No further items were submitted by Town and Community Councils

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PART THREE

FUTURE MEETINGS

Future County Forum meetings have been arranged as follows:

Date: Monday 7 October 2019

Time: 6.30pm – 8.30pm

Venue: Hawarden Community Council, Scout Hut HQ, 133 The Highway,
Hawarden, CH5 3DN

Proposed Work Plan October 2019:

- **Waste Consultation Strategy** – Stephen Jones, Flintshire County Council
- **Update on Environmental Planning Enforcement and Funding Scheme** – Stephen Jones, Flintshire County Council
- **Update on the Council Plan 2019/20** – Jay Davies, Flintshire County Council