

## **COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 15 September 2011 at 9.30 a.m.

### **PRESENT**

Councillors: D.I. Smith (Chair), I.W. Armstrong, B. Blakeley, J. Cahill, T.R. Hughes, S. Thomas and C.H. Williams

Co-opted Members: C. Burgess, G. Greenland, D. Houghton and J. Saxon.

**Observers:** Councillors W.L. Cowie (Chair of the Council), M.LI. Davies, H. LI. Jones, G.M. Kensler and E.W. Williams (Lead Member for Education)

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Corporate Director: Learning and Communities (HW), Engagement and Consultation Manager (DD), Head of Modernising Education (JW), Modernising Education Officer (HV-E), Head of School Improvement and Inclusion (KE), School Improvement Officer - Arts and International Links (DP), Scrutiny Coordinator (RhE) and Committee Administrator (EC)

### **POINTS OF NOTICE**

The Chair –

- welcomed Andy Bruce from the Wales Audit Office (WAO) who was attending the meeting
- requested that letters of accolade be sent to:
  - i. the choir of Ysgol Ben Barras, Ruthin who as a result of winning the Songs of Praise School Choir of the Year Competition had been invited to perform at the Royal Albert Hall; and
  - ii. Ysgol Dinas Bran, Llangollen's male voice choir, who having recently won the Music for Youth singing competition in Birmingham, had also been invited to perform at the Royal Albert Hall in November this year

### **1 APOLOGIES**

Councillors: J.M. Davies, D. Hannam and E.R. Jones

Co-opted Member: Dr D. Marjoram

### **2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor C.H. Williams declared a personal and prejudicial interest as a Community Co-opted Governor of Ysgol Llandrillo and would therefore be

unable to take part or be present for the discussion on business item 6 on the agenda.

The Chair, with the support of the Committee membership, asked Councillor Williams to attend the discussion on the item of business as a 'witness'. Councillor Williams agreed to the Committee's request and agreed to refrain from any vote on the matter.

Councillor H. Ll. Jones (observing) also declared a personal and prejudicial interest as Community Co-opted Governor of Ysgol Caer Drewyn, Corwen (also part of item 6 on the agenda). Similarly, members also requested that Councillor Jones remain in attendance for this item as a witness for the Committee.

### **3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

None raised.

### **4 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2011 were submitted.

#### **Matters Arising**

**Page 2:** Members were referred to the 'Information Brief' which included each of the scrutiny committees' forward work programmes for information.

**Page 6 & 7:** Members would be advised imminently of the dates for the Joint Working Group between Conwy and Denbighshire to discuss 'Control of Caravan Sites' on which Councillors T.R. Hughes and S. Thomas had agreed to serve.

**Page 7:** The Scrutiny Coordinator (SC) agreed to chase up Members' specific requests for information on the 'Allocation of Section 106 commuted sums for open space provision and maintenance' (i.e. Bodelwyddan) with the relevant officers and report back to the committee.

The SC went on to advise that with regard to *resolution (c)* because the Commuted Sums Scheme was subject to a fundamental review it was now being proposed that a presentation on the Scheme should initially be given to all councillors at Informal Council, prior to regular reports being presented to the area member groups.

**Page 11:** The Chair reminded members that there were still vacancies on the Service Performance Challenge Groups (appendix 4b of the Work Programme report). Those members we had not yet volunteered to become representatives were urged to consider the list and liaise with the SC.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2011 be received and approved as a correct record.

## **5 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SCHOOLS AREA REVIEWS**

The Head of Modernising Education (H:ME) submitted her report (previously circulated) updating the Committee on the current position of the national 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme, including the formal written statement by the Minister for Education (appendix 1).

Some of the key points highlighted during the delivery of the report and subsequent discussion included:

- the amount of 'match funding' for specific projects provided by the Welsh Government (WG) had been significantly reduced. The suggestion was for it to be reduced from 70% WG contribution (against a 30% match from the Council) to 50% from each side.
- the Council was expected to raise funds from other areas – a key focus would be on creating revenue savings to fund prudential borrowing which was a process many local authorities in the country would be adopting. The Authority would also need to work more closely with the Diocese to explore effective ways of jointly delivering education
- In light of the significant reduction in WG funding officers were forced to adopt a sharper prioritisation process which would include revising the modernising education proposals in a 'radical' way. Officers were due to meet with WG officials imminently and, in light of the conclusions drawn at that meeting, would submit the revised proposals to the WG during the autumn
- 'Tranche 3' funding had been deferred, despite originally being granted, and would be released on a staggered basis – this meant plans to fund improvements to Welsh medium provision in the north of the county had been put on hold until clarity had been received on how and when capital funding from WG could be drawn down
- Members were assured that measures were being put in place to address any anticipated problems arising from funding constraints i.e. the Head Teachers of Glan Clwyd and Rhyl High Schools were engaged in planning for potential alternative solutions to avoid leaving school staff in 'limbo' during the intervening period
- The Council's next two priority areas for modernising education were the Ruthin and Rhyl areas. Since there were serious capacity issues in Rhyl, officers would be carefully monitoring intake trends. Officers confirmed that potential development sites for schools in these areas had already been earmarked for when funding became available

Some very specific concerns from the Committee followed which included: -

the formal written statement by the Minister of Education (appendix 1) included a paragraph which members found contentious. After deliberation it was unanimously agreed that spending was not intended solely for building and fabric works but essentially for the improvement of education provision across the board.

Whilst the Council had adopted a policy to try to eradicate the number of portacabins used for education provision in schools, there was also an onus on it to make best use of the available assets and resources. It was agreed that where possible portacabins should not be used as alternatives to classrooms as they were very costly in terms of revenue and maintenance and not an ideal environment for teaching or learning.

On discussing the capacity issues with respect to education provision in Prestatyn, meeting the Welsh medium demand had been identified as a key area of concern. Projections in Prestatyn were noted to be increasing and therefore it was important to ensure that the pupil population going forward was carefully predicted to be able to adequately accommodate pupils in the area. Officers gave assurances that the increase in primary school populations had been taken into consideration within the bigger plan for secondary education.

10.25 am: Councillors G M Kensler and M LI Davies arrived at this juncture.

Members expressed their disappointment and dissatisfaction with the WG's delay in clarifying the funding position which consequently impacted on the Council's ability to progress a number of school related capital projects. The Lead Member for Education and officers were asked to convey the Committee's sentiments to WG officials at their next meeting.

The Lead Member for Education emphasised his faith in officers' abilities and proactive approach to addressing the issues under very difficult circumstances, this was supported by the Corporate Director: Learning and Communities (CD: L&C) who stressed that Denbighshire in the past had not been in a position to apply for funding. Now that it was ready to apply for funding there was a huge responsibility on the Council to show that the surplus capacity in schools was being addressed in order for it to attract capital funding from the WG. Members:

**RESOLVED: –**

- (a) to note the current position regarding the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme,*
- (b) to support officers in their endeavours to tackle the funding issues associated with schools in the County, and*
- (c) that a follow up report on Capital Funding for Schools be submitted to the Committee following the Minister for Education's response to the revised proposals submitted*

**6 MODERNISING EDUCATION: REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PROVISION IN THE EDEYRNION AREA**

The H:ME delivered the report (previously circulated) which gave members a detailed overview of the process undertaken during the review of primary

school provision in the Edeyrnion area as well as a summary of the responses received to the formal consultation, including responses from parents of the affected schools, Assembly Members, MPs and other stakeholders (appendices 1 and 2 to the report).

The Chair stressed that the Committee was being asked to scrutinise the process which had been followed in undertaking the Review to ensure that it had contained sufficient detail and had been conducted and managed appropriately. The Committee needed to be sure that the process had been sound, fair and equitable to all concerned. He emphasised that a formal decision as to the way forward with the review would be made by Cabinet at its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2011, therefore any 'decision-related' concerns should be reserved until then.

Members were taken through the report and referred to the main stages along the timeline of events within the consultation process, which included 7 local schools in total.

Key points arising from the report and ensuing debate included –

- the process had highlighted an unanimous lack of 'appetite for change' with most significant concerns stemming from local communities – including a group called the 'Edeyrnion Schools Alliance' (ESA) who submitted a report (a copy of which had been made available to Committee members prior to the meeting) detailing their concerns, a number of which officers had taken on board. However, the majority of the concerns raised related to the community aspect of the proposals rather than the educational aspects, and they did not address the fundamental issues of surplus places at the schools
- Officers had introduced workshops as an additional platform for stakeholders representing each school to voice their concerns. Although these were set up in good faith, in hindsight they had proved to be more problematic as officers were restricted in the number of stakeholders they could accommodate which caused some disquiet at the time, having the adverse affect
- A proactive approach was adopted in gaining views from as many perspectives as possible. All forward-planning and consultation documentation had been made available and accessible in hard copy and electronic format to all interested parties. The in-depth process had spanned a two year period
- Members noted that a lot of 'actions' were derived from the additional drop in sessions which had been set up for parents
- The key criticism from stakeholders and local communities was that Council officers had carried out the initial 'impact assessments'. Since this was a cause of concern a decision was taken to engage independent external consultants to carry out further assessments – the results of these assessments would be presented to Cabinet on 27<sup>th</sup> September. It was noted that the communities themselves had been asked to suggest potential consultants to undertake the

assessments, the communities had also signed off the brief for the appointed consultants

- At present the decision making responsibilities for federating schools lie with the relevant governing bodies. However, a future change in legislation due to come into force within 12 months, would enable local education authorities to take decisions with respect to federation
- Members and officers agreed that it was imperative that an effective mechanism to invest in education be sought to avoid further budgetary problems, as with most other local authorities throughout the UK a huge emphasis was being put on prudential borrowing. Members were assured that whilst the borrowing thresholds were well within the allocated borrowing limits, this was closely monitored by the Treasury Management team

11.20 am: Councillor W L Cowie arrived at this juncture

In response to the Committee's request that he give evidence Councillor C.H Williams stated that it was fair to say that as far as he could see officers had followed the required processes and guidelines in undertaking the review. As no decision had yet been made, or recommendations put forward, with respect to the next steps with the review he could not at this stage comment on the appropriateness of any decisions. He emphasised that 86 households in Llandrillo had objected to the proposals for Ysgol Llandrillo, which equated to approximately 70% of the village population. He was of the view that it was important for Cabinet to bear this in mind when it eventually decided on the proposals. Councillor Williams drew attention to the point raised by Ffred Ffransis of the Welsh Language Society (appendix 1) which questioned the Council's powers to eventually close the school on the Llandrillo site once a decision had been taken to build an area school at Cynwyd, and requested clarification on the position.

Mr Ffransis' query related to the fact that as the area school would be operating from two sites for a period of time until the new school was ready, it would effectively be operating on a federated basis. Therefore, should the power to decide upon the closure of the Llandrillo site not lie with the new federated governing body rather than the Council? In response, officers advised that should proposals be endorsed by Cabinet to open a new area school, it would be the responsibility of Denbighshire County Council to ensure the site moves and associated actions were carried out – this had been confirmed by WG officials during specific discussions on this point.

Upon being put to the vote it was, by a majority:

**RESOLVED** that the –

- (a) Committee was satisfied that the process undertaken by the authority to date with respect to the review of primary school provision in the Edeyrnion area had been carried out equitably; and*

*(b) responses to the formal consultation had been dealt with adequately and the subsequent actions carried out by the authority were done so in an appropriate and effective manner*

Councillor C H Williams did not take part in the vote

## **7 PROVISION OF MUSIC WITHIN SCHOOLS**

The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion (H:SI&I) and the School Improvement Officer - Arts and International Links (SIO) co-delivered a report (previously circulated) which outlined the progress made in ensuring the appropriate level of provision exists for the development of music, art and drama within the County's schools, subject to the existing framework.

Following requests by the former Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee, that members be kept informed of the developments of the Music 'Task and Finish' Group, the H:SI&I explained that the Group, which had been set up by the 6 North Wales local authorities to review current arts and music provision and work regionally through collaboration on national youth arts provision, had met 3 times to date and was due to meet again on 12<sup>th</sup> October to determine the next steps in moving forward towards collaborative working.

The SIO went on to discuss the information collated through the Group and the developments made as a result; the budget implications in light of the cut backs and the rationale behind the Authority's future plans for arts and music provision within Denbighshire.

Members raised a number of issues and queries, some of the significant points were addressed as follows:

- whilst the authorities were fully committed to change and aware of the benefits to be gained from regional collaboration, officers were also keen to resolve some specific local issues first, such as the overall quality of the provision to those who had music lessons and those who were 'gifted and talented' and were involved in provision of music within the community
- some members referred to the 'County Music Ensembles and Events' (appendix 1) having attended a number of the events they expressed accolade to those involved and felt proud of the talent within the County. Councillors were urged to attend and support the events wherever possible
- officers proposed to look at the levels of attainment among those pupils who receive extra curricula music lessons to see if they also studied and attained GCSE/A level music, and if relevant the reasons behind their choice not to study music as a subject. Members agreed this would be helpful
- members and officers commended Ysgol Dinas Brân on their independent grant funded scheme which gave opportunities to year 7 pupils to lease a musical instrument for two years encouraging them to learn/develop skills from the offset of their secondary school experience. This good practice had been shared with the William Mathias Centre who coordinated a

- number of the County's musical education programmes. It was felt that this good practice should be shared with other schools in the County
- The SIO agreed to directly respond to Councillor H. Ll. Jones about his query into why the Corwen Schools Wind Band no longer used Ysgol Carrog as its rehearsal venue
  - Members felt it was important that children from disadvantaged families were still able to have lessons and/or develop their talents and questioned what schemes were available to those children who may not be able to afford the lessons/instruments. Officers were looking into the possibility of introducing a 'sliding scale' of charges which could potentially be means tested, this was an area to be explored through the Task and Finish Group in the near future

It was unanimously agreed that it was still important for the Authority to develop its own separate local plan for music provision and then feed that into the collaborative plan through the Task and Finish Group, therefore members agreed that the local plan be submitted to the Committee when available. Following consideration of the plan, and dependent upon the progress made in the Task and Finish Group, members felt that future reports may be more suitably placed with the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to avoid duplication. It was:

**RESOLVED** that –

- (a) the Committee notes the content of the report and continues to support the on-going work with respect to music development in the County's schools;*
- (b) following consideration of a further report detailing the County's local plan for music provision and the progress achieved with the collaborative Task and Finish Group that the Committee considers whether future reports on the subject be referred to the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee for consideration; and*
- (c) the Authority's local plan for addressing specific issues with respect to music provision be submitted to the Communities Scrutiny Committee in late 2011*

## **8 DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Community Engagement Manager (CEM) introduced his report (previously circulated) outlining the development of the Authority's Community Engagement Strategy, a draft version of the strategy had been attached in appendix 1. Copies of the draft Toolkit which would accompany the Strategy were distributed at the meeting for members' information.

Following a brief update on the developments to date members were referred to the draft strategy and asked to comment on it. During consideration of the strategy and ensuing discussion around community engagement, the following key points were highlighted:



- the draft strategy would be subject to 3 month consultation period, with a view to being finalised and becoming a 'corporate document' in the new year
- members were urged to promote the document and raise awareness of the consultation which would aid the general understanding of the steps involved in effectively engaging with the community
- officers were keen for members to have input into what 'bringing the council closer to the community' meant and how the Authority was trying to work to bring this into fruition
- this strategy would feed into Denbighshire's 'Big Plan' and therefore all officers would need to take note of its content
- a specific group of officers would be assigned to deal with 'Children & Young People' as the Authority was aware of the specific engagement and consultation methods which young people preferred to use

12.10 pm: Councillor W.L. Cowie left at this juncture

Members referred to a recent situation which had arisen in Rhuddlan where Councillors had not been adequately informed of the Authority's plans to be in a position to reassure residents within their ward. Members reiterated their concerns that there seemed to be a 'missing link' between officers and members in terms of providing notice of significant issues/events taking place in their wards.

As a consequence of the concerns raised, the CEM agreed to include a reference in the final strategy document emphasising the importance of early and regular engagement with elected members. Members:

**RESOLVED** that –

- (a) subject to the inclusion of a reference to the importance of early and regular engagement with elected members in the Strategy document, to approve the draft Community Engagement Strategy for consultation;*
- (b) the Consultation Engagement Manager prepare guidelines for officers to follow on how to effectively engage with elected members; and*
- (d) that the overall process for members' involvement in 'bringing the council closer to the community' and how this would tie in with the Community Engagement Strategy be discussed at the Committee's October meeting*

## **9 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Coordinator (SC) submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking members to review the Committee's future work programme (appendix 1) and to consider a request for an agenda item on highway verge grass cutting at its October meeting (appendix 2). Also attached to the report for information purposes were the Cabinet's forward work programme (appendix 3) and a list of representatives on the Council's Programme Boards/Groups 2011/12 and Service Performance Challenge Groups (appendix 4).

Members were reminded of the questions to consider when determining a subject's suitability for inclusion on the work programme and subsequently agreed to include the proposal on 'Highway Verge Grass Cutting' (appendix 2) in the Committee's forward work programme for its October meeting.

The SC referred to the 'Supporting People Strategy Update and Operational Plan'. The strategy had historically been considered by the Social Services and Housing Scrutiny Committee, sometimes as an agenda item other times as a 'consultation report'. The proposal, to offer a training seminar for Committee members on this subject on 17<sup>th</sup> October (invitations had been circulated to members previously) was accepted. The item was therefore removed from the Committee's agenda for its October meeting. The SC would confirm details of the seminar and ask relevant officers to liaise with members accordingly.

Due to the agenda pressures on the Committee's October business agenda the Chair advised that strict time keeping would have to be adhered to when discussing the five subjects listed for discussion. He also urged members who had not yet volunteered to serve on the Service Challenge Groups to do so forthwith.

Councillor T. R Hughes referred to the forthcoming 'Etape Cymru' cycle event on 9<sup>th</sup> October which he had received a number of complaints about since there would be a rolling road closures programme through main roads in his ward, such as the Horseshoe Pass. Local trades people had approached him with their concerns regarding the loss of trade they would suffer over the lunchtime period on a Sunday. The Committee agreed that it was imperative that local elected members had prior notice and knowledge of such events to be able to handle queries raised with them. Members were of the view that there had been relatively little consultation with non-executive members with respect to this event. The CD: L&C would liaise with the relevant officers to see if any 'damage-control' could be carried out and to see where, if any, failings had occurred. Members agreed there needed to be a process in place for future events of this type, perhaps involving the Lead Member for Regeneration and Tourism. Members:

**RESOLVED: –**

- (a) that subject to the amendments agreed above that the forward work programme as detailed in Appendix 1 be approved; and*
- (b) to remove the item on 'Supporting People Strategy Update and Operational Plan' from the work programme and accept the invitation to a seminar on 17<sup>th</sup> October to consider the matter separately*

The meeting concluded at 1.40 p.m.

**Report to:** Communities Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 27th October 2011

**Lead Member/Officer:** Corporate Director: Demographics,  
Wellbeing and Planning

**Report Author:** Head of Adult and Business Services

**Title:** Review of Day Care Provision for Older People  
in North Denbighshire

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**1. What is the report about?**

The Review of Day Care provision in the north of the county for Older People and proposals to take this work forward.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

To provide Members with the background to the review, on work done to date and on the next stage in respect of developing options for further consultation.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

That Members:

- 3.1 receive the report and provide observations on its contents; and
- 3.2 support further work going forward in formulating the options to be considered for consultation in relation to the provision of day time activities for older people in the north of the county.

**4. Report details**

- 4.1 There is a need to review the provision of day services to older people in the light of the developing agenda around the provision of Extra Care and Reablement, both of which focus on the maintenance and support of independent living.
- 4.2 The existing day centre model is generally a traditional one which currently presents little scope for the support of the independent living agenda. In addition the focus on buildings, the need to staff them adequately and the provision of transport to and from the centres results in a relatively high cost service.

- 4.3 Day care provision was identified within the Adult Services Medium Term Plan as an area to secure savings of £180k over the three year period.
- 4.4 Against this background a review was commissioned with the following parameters:
- To identify current day service provision across all partners.
  - To separate out Local Authority statutory duties and activities that support those duties and which promote /maintain independence.
  - To analyse current provision in the light of relevant demand information to establish sufficiency and appropriateness.
  - To develop a proposed action plan (including a brief training and communication strategy with milestones) to deliver an appropriate, achievable model for day time activities.
  - To ensure that an outcome focussed and reabling ethos is an integral part of any redeveloped day service provision.
  - To ascertain the views of existing users and their carers and relevant key staff.

To deliver a report outlining a series of recommendations that would then be used to develop options for the service model going forward.

- 4.5 The fact that this work was being undertaken was shared with Members of the People and Places Board and at the July meetings of the Rhyl Member Area Group and the Prestatyn/Meliden Area Group. In addition there has been correspondence on this matter with both the local AM and MP. As part of the review work the reviewer has also met with current users of the two day centres in the north of the county (Hafan Deg in Rhyl and Llys Nant in Prestatyn), with their carers and with staff in the centres. She also met with a wider group of Carers and with various practitioners in the area covered by the centres.
- 4.6 The first draft of this review report has now been received and officers will use this as the basis for working with a wider group of stakeholders to develop a range of options for more formal consultation.

## **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

- 5.1 The development of appropriate day time activities that encourage and support older people to maintain their independence is important in respect of demographic pressures.
- 5.2 The re-modelling of the current service to an approach that provides for more effective and efficient delivery is critical in respect of the achievement of the required financial savings.

**6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

- 6.1 No additional resources are identified at this time however as part of the development of the options to take forward an equality impact assessment will need to be undertaken.
- 6.2 It is likely that as the options are developed there will be implications in respect of other council services for example developing stronger working relationships with Leisure Services and the development of stronger links with ICT in considering how our older citizens can be supported to access and use information technology more effectively.

**7. What consultations have been carried out?**

- 7.1 No formal consultation has yet taken place as this will form part of the work to be undertaken when the options are developed and will include a range of stakeholders including the third sector and other providers.
- 7.2 Service Manager met with managers, staff and Union representatives to brief them on the proposed review.
- 7.3 As part of the review work the responsible Service Manager of the reviewer met with those groups as detailed in 4.5 above.

**8. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

The review forms a significant part of the agreed savings for Adult Services. The savings resulting from the review have obviously slipped this year so it is vital that it progresses to allow savings to be made in 2012/13. Should the saving target not be achieved, alternative options would have to be proposed. The issue can be explored further in the forthcoming service challenges.

**9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

There is a risk that a delay in formulating and consulting on the options or in the development and implementation of the new model will impact on the savings identified in the medium term financial plan. It is already the case that the savings identified in this financial year will not be achieved in this area although other compensating savings are being considered.

**10. Power to make the Decision**

No decision is sought at present

**Report To:** Communities Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 5 October 2011

**Lead Member / Officer:** Lead Member for Environment and Sustainable Development

**Report Author:** Section Manager Network Services

**Title:** Review of Roadside Grass Cutting

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**1. What is the report about?**

To review issues surrounding the grass cutting of roadside verges during the 2011 growing season.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the changes that were made to the grass cutting arrangements for the 2011 season and advise of the challenges and difficulties which have been experienced.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

That Members consider the options given in paragraph 4 below and decide whether any changes to the regime are necessary.

**4. Report details.**

Following discussion of the report's contents Members can then discuss how they feel this aspect of Highway maintenance could be undertaken in the future and options with regards to this are given below:

- 4.1. **Option 1:** This is the approach which has been taken this year.  
First cut to be internal bends and junctions only,  
Second cut is a full cut. (As shown in Appendix A)

Advantages                      Increases the ecological aspects as one side of the verge is allowed to grow without compromising safety with respect to visibility.

Disadvantages                  Will still leave some areas looking untidy due to the reduced cutting. It may also lead to verges 'narrowing' the carriageway where it is not necessary to cut it for visibility reasons.

NOTE If this option is to be pursued it will be necessary to raise awareness of the cutting regime and the reasons behind it. This will help in managing expectations.

4.2 **Option 2:** Revert back to two full cuts per year.

Advantages Experience has shown that this maximises safety and minimises the potential for complaint. Members of the public will not resort to having to walk in the road or to cutting the grass along the frontage to their properties.

Disadvantages Minimises the ecological aspects with respect to biodiversity – an aspect of which the current regime is popular with many members of the public. This is the most expensive option

4.3 **Option 3:** Undertake a single cut using increased resources commencing in mid July and ending early in September

Advantages Likely to be the least expensive option and allows wild flower season to finish before cutting begins

Disadvantages If the growing season starts early or extends into September/October then visibility will be reduced on bends and some verges may become overgrown. It may lead to the need to 'spot treat' which will drive up costs and also lead to an increase in complaints.

## 5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

### 5.1 General

- 5.1.1 In simple terms Denbighshire operates two forms of grass cutting regime in the county. Essentially grass cutting within urban areas is undertaken by the Public Realm arm of Environmental Services and is undertaken primarily for aesthetic purposes. The cuts are carried out more frequently and to a high standard. Outside the urban locations (defined as areas outside the 30 mph speed restriction) the cutting is the responsibility of Highways and Infrastructure and it is this aspect that is the subject of this report.
- 5.1.2 Grass verges along these roads are not cut with aesthetics in mind but purely for safety considerations, although obviously they do look better when they have been mowed and therefore enhance the appearance of the network. The regime is for a 1 metre wide swathe along the

carriageway edge to be trimmed but in areas of poor visibility this is widened as appropriate. In addition to this basic layout road junction areas and locations where visibility is important for safety are also cut.

5.1.3 In Denbighshire the growing season tends to extend from north to south due to both the geography and topography of the county so as a general rule we follow this on the first cut, however we do monitor the situation and do our best to deploy machines where the need is greatest.

## 5.2 The Contract

5.2.1 Until this summer we have generally split the grass cutting work into two parts. Due to the more onerous requirements relating to traffic management we have always let the cutting on the A and B Class roads out to contract. All other roads were cut by our in-house DSO staff. In 2010, as part of the collaboration with Conwy we jointly put the work out to tender and the rates came back indicating that significant savings could be made. However, at that time we still had four of our own tractors available so we again kept the same principal road/minor road split. The new contractor came in and quickly and effectively cut the A and B roads with minimal fuss and an overall saving.

5.2.2 In 2011, with our own machines now no longer available to us and our DSO staff diverted onto other necessary work we let the whole contract out to the winning tenderer from 2010. This summer they have again cut the A and B roads to our satisfaction and we have therefore been pleased with this element of the work. I should add at this point that the contractor is a local one with many years experience in this type of work which he has undertaken for a number of other local authorities.

5.2.3 Over time however it became obvious that the contractor was having difficulties with keeping up with our intended programme. We cut about 225 kilometres of A and B roads but when you add in the more minor rural roads this pushes the figure up to over 1100 kilometres and the volume of work clearly increases very significantly. We had discussed this with the contractor beforehand and they assured us they had sufficient resources to undertake the work and we therefore let the contract on that understanding.

5.2.4 With the grass cutting season well under way in late June it was becoming obvious that the programme was slipping and the level of complaints was beginning to rise but at this point they were no higher than we would expect to get at this point in the programme. Nevertheless we impressed upon the contractor the need to keep up with our intended target of getting all of the first cut completed by July 31<sup>st</sup>.



5.2.5 The complaints were based on two separate elements:-

- a) The delay to the grass cutting starting in the areas
- b) The untidy nature of the reduced biodiversity cut.

Members should also note however that, at this point were receiving an almost equal amount of correspondence complimenting us on leaving so much of the verge uncut as it encouraged wildlife.

5.2.6 Traditionally we have always carried out two full grass cutting sequences in the summer months; each sequence taking approximately 12 weeks to complete. Clearly grass growth responds to the environmental conditions so it isn't always easy to judge how much growth there will be at any one particular time but over the years it has been found that if the first cut begins at the end of May and the second cut starts in early August then problems relating to long grass impeding visibility can be minimised.

5.2.7 We raised concerns with the contractor about the delays in completing the cuts and they did respond by bringing in additional resources. However it is clear that the overall performance of the contractor is not as it should have been.

5.2.8 In order to respond to the rising complaints from elected Members and the public we decided to bring in additional resources from another contractor to accelerate the completion of the programme.

5.2.9 The contractor has accepted that the performance has not been up to standard and the contract will be reviewed prior to any further work being awarded. It is accepted that new contracts of this nature will experience 'teething troubles' and it is clear that the contractor has made every effort to respond to their shortfalls. They are learning from the experience i.e the logistics needed to get machines, drivers and fuel to remote locations and we will work with them to improve the situation.

5.2.10 It must be acknowledged that a good proportion of the complaints have been based on the 'untidy' effect of the biodiversity cut and this cannot be blamed on the contractor.

### 5.3 **The Biodiversity Cut**

5.3.1 The idea of undertaking a cut which took into consideration the notion that highway verges are refuges for wildlife came from discussions held with community groups a few years ago. Areas were trialled and proved popular and over time there seemed to be a desire to extend the regime to other areas of the county.

5.3.2 It was against this background that a paper was taken to Environment Scrutiny Committee in October 2009 so that options could be discussed. The outcome of that was the decision to undertake the cutting regime we are undertaking now which, as stated earlier, has received both a positive and negative response.

5.3.3 Clearly we cut grass in order to make use of the highway as safe as possible and there is therefore an argument that the more we cut the safer it must be, however we also need to bear in mind that Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 states:

*“Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”*

This is a duty placed upon us and therefore we must try to take a reasonable approach to comply with it.

5.3.4 To what degree we try to meet this duty is of course open to debate but the options laid out in Paragraph 3 of this report give Members the chance to discuss how they feel the Highway Authority should try to blend the two requirements.

#### **5.4 A summary of the difficulties experienced this year.**

5.4.1 Although the principles of what is inferred by a Biodiversity cut may be understood the approach to implementing it have been open to interpretation; even amongst our own supervisors there were differences of opinion and as each one dealt with the contractor his views tended to add to the misunderstanding of what we were trying to produce. Clearer guidance should have been given so that a more consistent approach would have resulted.

5.4.2 Knowing precisely what he was aiming to achieve would have made the contractor’s job not only easier but probably more efficient too. This is evidenced in the second cut which has been achieved with a minimum of supervision and a focussed approach from those involved.

5.4.3 As previously stated many of the complaints we received were about the apparently haphazard and ‘scruffy’ manner in which the verges were being left. In the majority of cases the complainants later accepted that ‘if that had been our intention then they could accept it’. Often we carry out an operation truly believing that we are doing things with an obvious purpose but in this instance we could have deflected much of the negativity by having a proper plan in place. We should have notified the press and Town and Community Councils as to our intentions and I am sure that the situation would have been vastly improved.

- 5.4.4 If Members decide to continue with the current regime next year then we will learn from our experiences and fully communicate via the media and through the Town and Community Councils so that everyone is clear from the start why we are doing it in that way and what we are aiming to achieve through the growing season.
- 5.4.5 Similarly we will work with the Contractor so that he is clear as to what is expected of him in both of the cuts and a consistent approach will then be assured across the county. Different grass, in varied locations grows at different speeds but at least we can cut it evenly!
- 5.4.6 Our contractor is large and does have the resources to cope but it is clear that we need to work with him to programme the work more thoroughly so that he can target his resources accordingly. The growing season is a relatively short one but the length of road that needs cutting is significant and of course grass, being natural, does not always allow us to pick and choose what can and cannot be put into the programme but we will do our utmost to try.
- 5.4.7 The contractor will also be the first to say that he has learnt a lot this year in terms of undertaking work in remote areas. We have many roads that only serve one or two properties in very isolated locations and yet we still have a duty to cut the grass and the logistics of doing so, though by no means insurmountable, do need to be learnt and understood.
- 5.4.8 It is easy to say that we have received many complaints and therefore we must have failed but in the context of what we are trying to achieve it has not been a disaster. Lessons need to be learned and then implemented and I feel that we will then be in a better position to provide a safe, attractive and cost effective service

**6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

The costs will be contained within existing budgetary allocations.

**7. What consultations have been carried out?**

- 7.1 Feedback from Customer Services with regards to the level and type of complaints received has been ongoing throughout the summer.
- 7.2 Feedback from Members has been a regular facet of communication since the season began.

**8. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

The cost implications of the various options should obviously be considered as part of the process. Any savings as a result of the new contractual arrangements must be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2012/13.

**9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

It is clear that there are risks to the County's reputation in terms of the quality and extent of the cut and it is expected that these can be overcome by means of the methods explained in the report. There is also a financial risk but this can be mitigated by greater control and liaison with the Contractor.

**10. Power to make the Decision**

Highways Act 1980.

**Contact Officer:**

Section Manager (Network)

Tel: 01824 706875



**Report To:** Communities Scrutiny Committee  
**Date of Meeting:** 27<sup>th</sup> October 2011  
**Lead Member / Officer:** Corporate Director Learning & Communities  
**Report Author:** Business Transformation Project Co-ordinator  
**Title:** Getting Closer to the Community

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**1. What is the report about?**

The report is intended to provide the Communities Scrutiny Committee with information on the progress of work undertaken by the Closer to the Communities Board.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

To provide information, and to seek the Committee's views, on the way forward in order to achieve the Council's strategic aim of a *"high performing Council closer to the community"*. Defining what is meant by 'a high performing Council' is relatively straight forward by using relevant indicators to chart progress. The second element to this aim, of being 'close to the community' is more challenging to both define and to measure success. However, this is essential if the strategic aim that the Council has set itself is to be fully achieved.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

That the Committee discusses the contents of the report, provides observations and continues to support the on-going work with respect to 'Getting Closer to the Community' action plan and the priority areas of:

1. Representation and Engagement – How we engage with communities
2. Service Delivery – Develop the right culture and attitudes
3. Community Development – Community, Enrichment and Empowerment.

**4. Report details.**

- 4.1 In May 2011 a revised draft of the 'Getting Closer to the Community' Key Principles' document and a brief self-evaluation audit similar to that used for Estyn was circulated to SLT to disseminate to services for completion in order to establish a current baseline in securing community engagement and to identify how we can secure further improvements focussed on the needs of communities, groups, and

ultimately, individuals. Details of why defining and strengthening our approach to communities can be seen in Appendix 1

- 4.2 In order to increase pace over the next 12 months the Closer to the Communities Board has been set up to facilitate and strengthen our approach to community engagement. The Board will meet bi-monthly.
- 4.3 Each Service completed a brief self evaluation audit in order to complete a framework document and detailed stakeholder analysis on citizen and community engagement to be conducted; identify gaps, disparity and deficiencies.
- 4.4 In order to progress this significant area of work further an Action Plan has been drafted setting out the three priority areas, the actions within them, how they will be measured, responsible officer and date when this should be achieved by (Appendix 2)
- 4.5 Communities and Partnerships have drafted an Engagement Framework and tool kit to disseminate efficient and effective ways of working and the intention is to submit to Scrutiny for further consideration at the meeting in April 2012.
- 4.6 A good start has been made in relation to services assessing their base line community engagement position. It is important that the Council understands its strengths and weaknesses in relation to community engagement. Experience has shown that new corporate activities are more successful if they can be integrated within processes that are already well established. The Corporate Improvement Team is to consider how to integrate 'Getting Closer to the Community' into the existing business planning and performance management processes and will provide a report to the Bringing the Council Closer to the Community Project Board on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2011 outlining how this can be achieved.

## **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

Through ensuring that the Closer to the Communities Board activities and initiatives underpin the Council's Statement of Intent 2009, and Vision, that by 2012 'Denbighshire will be an excellent Authority providing high quality and efficient services to all its citizens and communities'.

## **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

The Closer to the Community Board will have access to some additional financial resources to carry out its role as part of the priority funding agreed by Members for 2011/12. In addition, many work streams identified in the Action Plan are supported by current service budgets and by Community Revenue and Capital funding. Funding assigned to Member Area Groups can also support this work.

**7. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

7.1 There is a corporate risk that a failure to consult and engage effectively with communities and work with partners to tackle key priorities will adversely affect the Council's Corporate Plan and result in lower resident satisfaction levels.

7.2 Unstructured engagement may result in inefficient service delivery as services are shaped to meet the needs of local people, this can potentially harm the reputation of the Council.

7.3 That the Council identify the correct needs and wants of the community before establishing the measurable outcome and incorporating into the business planning and performance management processes.

**8. Power to make the Decision**

N/A



**‘GETTING CLOSER TO THE COMMUNITY’  
KEY PRINCIPLES**

**1. CONTEXT**

In April 2009, Denbighshire County Council adopted its Statement of Intent which sets out the way in which the organisation intends to deliver services. The Statement includes the vision that by 2012 *“Denbighshire will be an excellent Authority providing high quality and efficient services to all its citizens, communities and effective leadership to the Local Service Board and other partners in the County”*.

This is encapsulated in a strategic aim of a *“high performing Council closer to the community”*. Defining what is meant by ` a high performing Council` is relatively straight forward by using relevant indicators to chart progress. The second element to this aim, of being ` close to the community` is more challenging to both define and to measure success. However, this is essential if the strategic aim that the Council has set itself is to be fully achieved.

**2. WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO THE COUNCIL?**

The primary purpose of the Council is to provide high quality services and a pleasant environment to the residents, those who work and do business in Denbighshire and others who visit the area for leisure or business purposes. Delivering this will be dependent on engaging with residents to seek their views on the services and on broader issues affecting their daily lives. This is about being focussed on the needs of communities, groups, and ultimately, individuals.

Creating a vibrant democracy is more than just going to the polls every four years, listening to and engaging with people is something that should be happening on a continuous basis. To the local residents, businesses and volunteers, the fact that we are a caring, listening Council is as, or more important, than being a high performing Council. One does not go without the other.

The Welsh Assembly Government is now in the process of creating a document entitled ‘National Principles for Public Engagement’ and the Council will be expected to respond positively to this agenda.

**3. DEFINITION**

DCC will be able to demonstrate that the Council is closer to the community when it enables residents:

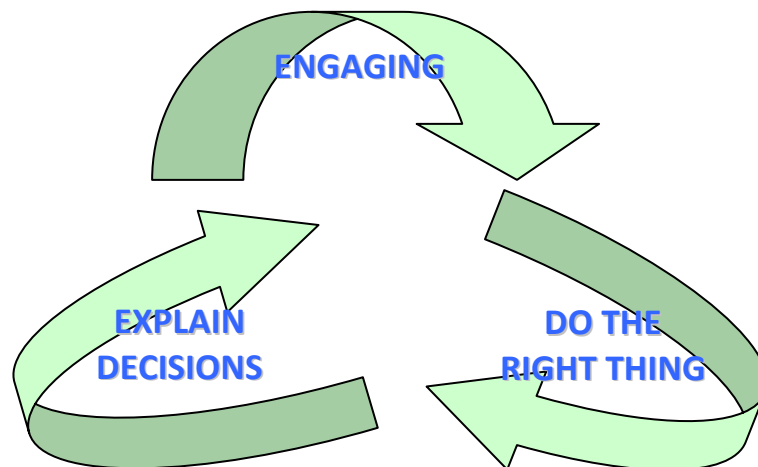
- to shape their own neighbourhoods;

- to be engaged in the design, delivery and evaluation of services;
- to develop and maintain projects that benefits communities;

and for those who visit Denbighshire, that they are left with a positive view of the place.

#### 4. THE APPROACH

The above definition should be used regularly to test whether or not the Council is making a serious attempt to keep close to the community – a simple test that is based on:



**Engaging** with communities will mean conducting effective consultations on proposed changes or improvements, and demonstrating that the views of users have shaped the proposals; that we have been receptive and responsive to ideas. The views of residents have been taken into account.

**Doing the right thing** is making a decision that is better for the residents, it provides value for money for the taxpayer, and it is a decision that improves the effectiveness and quality of the service. Where practically possible, it is a resident driven decision.

**Explaining decisions** is part of the ongoing dialogue with communities. We will never satisfy all views, and neither should we, but it is important to explain why a certain decision has been made outlining the facts that led to the decision.

#### 5. HOW 'CLOSE TO THE COMMUNITY' ARE WE?

Services, as a part of the Service Challenge process in future should consider this aspect during the preparation for the Challenge meetings and process. The aim is to begin this during the autumn meetings, following an initial assessment in June/July. The list below provides a set of basic questions for guidance and are included in the initial self assessment process.

### **Culturally:**

- a) Do we know how close we are?
- b) How do we know?
- c) Are we better than we were 2 years ago?
- d) What is different now if the answer to (c) is 'Yes'?
- e) Is the culture within the service one that respects the views of residents?
- f) What are the barriers that prevents the service from becoming more resident centred?

### **Crucially:**

- g) Do we respond well to complaints/feedback?
- h) What is the nature/standard of our response?
- i) How many ideas coming from residents/users of services have shaped the services we provide?
- j) If ideas are sensible, but impractical, have we explained why this is the case?
- k) How accessible are our services and how can we demonstrate that we will become more resident centred in the next 12 months?

Once the Service Challenge has taken place, a statement on how the services are going to respond to this aim will need to be produced and actions listed within the Business Plans, 121s and Appraisals.

## **6. STRENGTHENING OUR APPROACH TO COMMUNITIES**

Whatever the current position within individual services, there is a need for a more coherent approach to this aspect of the business, albeit, this will vary from service to service, dependant on both the extent of current practice and the nature of the service provided. This also applies to corporate and political aspects which are beyond service specific issues. The list of actions will be formulated into an action plan with timescales and accountabilities identified.

The proposed actions for consideration are grouped into 3 categories, namely:

- (a) Representation and Engagement** – how do we engage and communicate with communities
  - (b) Service Delivery** – developing the right culture and attitudes
  - (c) Developing additional capacity and resilience** through a Community Development role
- a) **Representation and Engagement**

- ensure that good communication is at the heart of our business (linking to the corporate communication strategy)
- developing members as better ambassadors for their communities
- strengthening the role of the Area Member Groups
- review the structure and function of Community Forum (this is an LSB led function)
- develop the relationship with Town & Community Councils (T&CCs) in order to agree elements that can be delegated to T&CCs and, together, respond to the challenges ahead design and conduct the second Resident's Survey and act on the findings in a co-ordinated way
- evaluate the potential of the 'Customer Insight' software to gather further intelligence about our communities
- development of community engagement framework and toolkit
- develop a mechanism for engaging in a more structured way with local businesses, voluntary sector, and existing groups
- encourage staff to feed relevant information into the Council's systems as residents and as individuals working within the County
- consider further opportunities for using technology to communicate with residents in an interactive way e.g. website, i-phone apps, etc.

**b) Service Delivery – Shape – Focus - Attitudes**

- place a greater focus on the 'Customer Focus' strand of the Competency Framework during 1:2:1s and Performance Appraisals, emphasising the need to, as a minimum, reach the agreed standards
- ensure that we deal effectively with the complaints we receive from residents
- use the available data to understand how the community view our services, generally, and, wherever possible, within localities
- update and refine the area profiles and make better use of this information
- where it is relevant and practical e.g. Leisure, Libraries and Youth Services, make use of locally based staff to have a presence in a community
- make full use of the opportunities available for services to contribute to the development of Town Plans
- work closely with businesses and the voluntary sector to enhance our reputation and accessibility
- consult meaningfully on key changes to services, and other matters such as the Budget, aspects that directly affect residents

**c) Community Development Role – Enrichment and Empowerment**

- consider a locality based, payroll giving scheme (optional for officers and Members) to develop a modest budget to support community development activity

- define more specifically, the community development role of the Council (paper to follow)
- maintain and improve our links with the voluntary sector, generally, also linking in to the developments stemming from the BLF Community Voice Fund
- focus resources e.g. Community Revenue Fund, more so on a Participatory Budget (PB) schemes as a way of developing leadership and capacity within communities
- assist communities to make use of technology to promote community activity and well-being
- where appropriate, assist communities to plan for the future by using techniques such as Community Asset Profiling (CAP)

## **7. NEXT STEPS**

- a) SLT and Cabinet Briefing to adopt this approach to engaging with our communities
- b) Service Challenge process to include a `Communities Challenge` element from the autumn onwards. Initial assessment to be conducted in all services in June/July
- c) Business plans, 121s and Performance Appraisals to prioritise activities linked to this important aspect of work for 2011-12
- d) Share this approach with MAGs , Town and Community Councils, DVSC and the LSB in June/July
- e) Develop a further paper on the Community Development role of the Council

## ‘GETTING CLOSER TO THE COMMUNITY’ ACTION PLAN

PROPOSED ACTIONS				
PRIORITY 1: REPRESENTATION AND ENGAGEMENT		OBJECTIVE: Improve the Council's level of meaningful engagement and representation, leading to improving perceptions, understanding and service delivery		
How do we engage and communicate with communities?				
	ACTION	MEASURE	BY WHEN	BY WHOM
1.	Establish the new MAGs in the 6 areas with appropriate corporate leadership and support structure, with ToRs agreed	Effective MAG meeting arrangements in place from May 2011. Review one year on	May 2011 May 2012	HW/DD
2.	Continue with revised arrangements for Community Forum meetings in Autumn 2011	Meetings structured, scheduled and taking place	Sept 2011	DD
3.	Develop a Community Engagement Strategy which encompasses the approach by DCC in line with WG requirements	Strategy adopted by Council following appropriate consultation and scrutiny	Oct 2011	DD
4.	Develop a 'Charter' between DCC and T&CC to outline how improved relationships are to be developed further for the benefits of residents	Agreed 'Charter' in place by December 2011	Dec 2011	DD
5.	Conduct a pilot involving 2-3 T&CCs into how some services can be delegated to individual T&CCs in order to improve quality and delivery	Agreed services are transferred to pilot Councils. Agreement on how to extend opportunities to other T&CCs	Spring 2012	? (HB – up to Oct 2011)

6.	Develop members as better ambassadors for their communities (current and new members from May 2012)	Agree training schedule to include: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engaging the community <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> informing the community <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> developing the community	May 2012	JW
7.	Conduct the second resident survey and agree relevant actions	Completion of survey Completion of Action Plan	Oct 2011	EW
8.	Develop customer 'Insight' information as a means of understanding our communities better	Conduct pilot information trial and decide how to proceed	Pilot information Sept 2011	CW
9.	Make better use of our staff as residents and users of Council services	(Actions/Measures to be developed – Draft Action)	?	?
10.	Improve the accessibility of the Council to residents through Technology and Information points to include: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Web <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> One Stop Shops <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information points/screens/apps <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Service Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develop a more interactive website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review location/purpose of one stop shops <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consider the development of information points at venues such as Leisure Centres <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trial the use of mobile Apps	May 2012	CW/JG
11.	Improve engagement with the Business community	(Actions/measures to be developed)	?	?
12.	Continue to develop the Council's links with the voluntary sector	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continue to support the DVSC liaison group and involve DVSC in various meeting arrangements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> More to follow (SE/GG)	Review in July 2012	SE/Leader

## PROPOSED ACTIONS

<b>PRIORITY 2: SERVICE DELIVERY</b> Develop the right culture and attitudes		<b>OBJECTIVE:</b> Ensure that services respond effectively to the needs of residents by becoming increasingly more resident focussed		
	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>MEASURE</b>	<b>BY WHEN</b>	<b>BY WHOM</b>

1.	Conduct an initial audit of current actions that assist bringing services closer to the community and future plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Conduct survey on all services</li> <li>■ Report key findings</li> <li>■ Engage with services to ensure further improvements</li> </ul>	June 2011	HoS/ER ?
2.	Improve the Council's responses to complaints on targeted basis (Highways initially?)	Improvements to complaints handling become apparent through regular monitoring	Jan 2012	CW/HoS
3.	Ensure meaningful consultations with communities on service change and future plans.	(To be developed further)	?	?
4.	Develop Town Plans to outline how communities will be developed involving Council services and services from other public bodies	Town Plans in place for all the major towns and surrounding areas in DCC	May 2012	GB
5.	Place greater emphasis on 'customer focus' competence within the Performance Appraisal process	Managers to check that this 'focus' is being considered during performance appraisal processes. Customer focus becoming increasingly more prominent during Business Planning and Challenge process	Oct 2011 - May 2012	LA/HR
6.	Review and decide on the future shape of 'Area Profiles' and how these can be used to inform service improvements (Add service specific issues if relevant)	[This is likely to be superseded by Insight data]	Jan 2012?	CW/HoS



## PROPOSED ACTIONS

**PRIORITY 3: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ROLE**  
Community, Enrichment and Empowerment

**OBJECTIVE:** To provide an improved infrastructure to enable community development and enrichment to take place coherently within DCC

	ACTION	MEASURE	BY WHEN	BY WHOM
1.	Ensure that appropriate funding is in place to support community development over the next 2-3 years	The level of funding available for 'community development' in 2012/13 and 2013/14 (Funding secured for 2011/12)	In place 2011/12 Annual thereafter	PMcG / Members
2.	Continue to support the development of the principles of Participatory Budgeting wherever possible in order to support community development and build capacity locally	Conduct another 1 or 2 PB Schemes in the current financial year, possibly in the Prestatyn area. Increase awareness about the benefits of PB within and outside the Council	2011/12	DD
3.	Consider a payroll giving scheme to further support community activity	[To be considered further]	?	PMcG
4.	Explore the establishment of a Community Development Fund to deal effectively with redundant charities and trusts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Agree an approach to dealing with existing redundant funds involving an external partner</li> <li>■ Release additional funds for community development</li> </ul>	Autumn 2011	PMcG
5.	Explore the creation of "Community Assistance Schemes" to assist residents to deal with e.g. energy costs (PMcG) and Broadband Access (CW), Community Communication (CW)	[To be confirmed following further discussions]	2011/12 2011/12	CW PMcG
6.	Make use of 'Insight' data and Community Capacity Profiling (CCP) to better understand and plan developmental activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Available data and intelligence is used effectively to inform the planning of services</li> <li>■ Insight data available for all 6 areas and at ward level</li> <li>■ Agreement on where CCP can be used effectively</li> </ul>	May 2012	TW  CW JG/RE
7.	Promote the use of volunteers across Council services where appropriate by working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Conduct a baseline analysis of how much use is made of volunteers</li> </ul>	?	SE

	closely with DVSC/partners	■ Consider actions to promote their use further		
<b>8.</b>	Work closely with partners to ensure that the Council's approach is supported and complemented by partner organisations	Share the approach adopted by the Council with the LSB, DVSC Liaison Group, Business Liaison Group and other partnership structures	By Dec 2011	HW

## PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

NEXT STEPS

	ACTION	MEASURE	BY WHEN	BY WHOM
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

**Report To:** Communities Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 27<sup>th</sup> October 2011

**Lead Officer:** Head of Planning, Regeneration & Regulatory Services

**Report Author:** Strategic Regeneration Manager

**Title:** Denbigh Town Plan

---

**1. What is the report about?**

The report is about town plans which are being prepared for the seven main settlements in the county except Rhyl (which has its own Strategic Regeneration Framework).

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

Using the draft town plan for Denbigh as an example, a decision is required on whether the structure and contents of the draft plan meet the Council's requirements for town plans.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

To support the structure and contents for draft town plans

**4. Report details.**

The town plans will set out the current situation in the towns, the key challenges and opportunities which they will face over the next decade, a vision for each town which will provide it with a sustainable future, and realistic and achievable actions which will deliver that vision.

The draft town plan for Denbigh is attached as an annex to this report. The draft plan document is currently exempt from public disclosure by virtue of paragraphs 14 & 17(a) of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972

**5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

Preparing town plans will assist the County Council achieve its strategic objective of "bringing the Council closer to the community".

**6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

There are no costs arising from considering whether the structure and contents of the draft plan meet the Council's requirements from town plans, nor are there any consequences for other services.

**7. What consultations have been carried out?**

A workshop for members took place on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2011 about the purpose and structure of the town plans and this was also an agenda item at the Cabinet briefing on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011 and at the Senior Leadership Team meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

All Heads of Service were invited to participate in the development of the draft plan and it has also been considered by the Denbigh Member Area Group and at a joint meeting between the county councillors from the Denbigh Area and members of Denbigh Town Council.

**8. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

Not applicable

**9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

The risk of not adopting the town plans before the next County Council election has been reduced by including them in the Cabinet forward work programme for the meetings between November 2011 and March 2012.

**10. Power to make the Decision**

Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 gives the Council the power to do anything which it considers is likely to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.

**Contact Officer:**

Strategic Regeneration Manager (Planning, Regeneration and Regulatory Services)

Tel: 01824 706860

**Report To:** Communities Scrutiny Committee  
**Date of Meeting:** 27 October 2011  
**Report Author:** Scrutiny Coordinator  
**Title:** Scrutiny Work Programme

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**1. What is the report about?**

The report presents the Communities Scrutiny Committee with its draft forward work programme for members' consideration.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

To seek the Committee to review and agree on its programme of future work, and to update members on relevant issues.

**3. What are the recommendations?**

That the Committee:

- 3.1 considers the information provided and approves, revises or amends its forward work programme as it deems appropriate;
- 3.2 considers the request to recommend that the Chair of the Committee is appointed as Denbighshire's scrutiny representative on the Board of TAITH; and
- 3.3 confirms whether the Chair or the Vice-Chair of the Committee will be its representative on the Local Development Plan (LDP) Steering Group.

**4. Report details.**

- 4.1 The Constitution of Denbighshire County Council requires scrutiny committees to prepare and keep under review a programme for their future work. By reviewing and prioritising issues, members are able to ensure that the work programme delivers a member-led agenda.
- 4.2 The Committee is therefore requested to consider its draft work programme for future meetings, as detailed in appendix 1, and approve, revise or amend it as it deems appropriate taking into consideration:
  - issues raised by members of the Committee
  - matters referred to it by the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group

- relevance to the Committee's/Council's/community priorities
  - the Council's Corporate Plan and the Director of Social Services' Annual Report
  - meeting workload
  - timeliness
  - outcomes
  - key issues and information to be included in reports
  - officers and/or lead Cabinet members who should be invited (having regard to whether their attendance is necessary or would add value)
  - questions to be put to officers/lead Cabinet members
- 4.3 When considering future items for inclusion on the forward work programme members may also find it helpful to have regard to the following questions when determining a subject's suitability for inclusion on the work programme:
- what is the issue?
  - who are the stakeholders?
  - what is being looked at elsewhere
  - what does scrutiny need to know? and
  - who may be able to assist?
- 4.4 As mentioned in paragraph 4.1 above the Constitution of Denbighshire County Council requires scrutiny committees to prepare and keep under review a programme for their future work. To assist the process of prioritising reports, if officers are of the view that a subject merits time for discussion on the Committee's business agenda they have to formally request the Committee to consider receiving a report on that topic. This is done via the submission of a 'proposal form' which clarifies the purpose, importance and potential outcomes of suggested issues. One such proposal form has been received for consideration at the current meeting.
- 4.5 This proposal form (appendix 2 attached) relates to the 'Day Services provision for older people in the north of the county', on which a preliminary report will be presented to the Committee at the current meeting. The Committee is asked to consider scheduling a follow-up report, detailing the preferred options for changing service provision in this area of the county, into its work programme for December.
- 4.6 The Committee will see from the attached work programme that nine items are currently scheduled into its work programme for consideration at its December meeting. Having regard to the scrutiny adopted practice of, wherever possible, not exceeding consideration of four reports and the Committee's forward work programme at any one meeting and the information in paragraphs 4.1 and 4.3 above, the Committee is asked to agree on the items it wishes to discuss at its December meeting.

- 4.7 At its last meeting the Committee agreed to consider the 'Supporting People Strategy Update and Operational Plan' during a training seminar on the Supporting People programme, which had been scheduled for mid October. However, the seminar was postponed and will now be held in February 2012. Consequently, consideration of the Strategy and Plan has been rescheduled into the Committee's work programme for its March meeting. The Committee is requested to confirm this arrangement.

Single Access Route to Housing

- 4.8 A report on the above topic had originally been scheduled into the Committee's work programme for the current meeting. Officers requested that the presentation of the report to the Committee be deferred as progress has been slower than anticipated. This delay is mainly due to the number of local authorities and housing associations involved and the complex issues to be addressed as part of the project. In permitting the deferment the Chair requested that Committee members be furnished with an information report on the project. That report has been circulated to members under separate cover.
- 4.9 The original request for deferment suggested that a full report would be submitted to the Committee in January 2012. However, as the recruitment of a Project Manager is currently underway, which will mean that the successful applicant may not be in post before January, it may therefore be more appropriate for the report to be presented to the Committee in April 2012. Members are asked to discuss this request and, having read the information report, determine whether the topic fits within this Committee's remit or is more suited to the remit of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee.

Foryd Harbour Mooring Fees and Charges

- 4.10 Another report originally scheduled for consideration at the current meeting was one on the mooring fees and charges for the Foryd Harbour. Following feedback received from interested parties officers now feel that more work is required before the proposals are ready for members' consideration, and consequently they asked for the report's presentation to be deferred until the next available meeting. As the Committee's agenda for December is already full the Chair has asked that this report now be submitted to the Committee in January 2012.
- 4.11 Members will see from the attached draft work programme that a number of items listed under the schedule of meetings and under 'Future Issues' require the Committee to scope the purpose of the reports and the desired outcomes to be achieved from scrutinising the topics. These topics/areas were identified at the training session held for Committee members ahead of the Committee's first meeting. To enable officers to start preparing the reports for presentation at future meetings the Committee is asked to determine why it wishes to receive reports on these subjects and what it expects to achieve from



scrutinising them. The five questions listed in paragraph 4.3 above may assist members with this task.

#### Cabinet Forward Work Programme

- 4.12 A copy of the Cabinet's forward work programme is attached at Appendix 3. The Committee may also find this document useful when considering items for inclusion on its programme of future work.

#### Information Report

- 4.13 Members were advised at September's meeting that the information which the Committee had requested on the implications of Wrexham County Borough Council's decision to withdraw free school transport to pupils travelling from within its boundary to Ysgol Dinas Brân, Llangollen, would initially need to be reported to the Schools Budget Forum before being shared with members of the Committee. Therefore the information report which members had requested would not be available until after officers had met with the Schools Budget Forum in September. As this matter is linked to other finance issues which need to be discussed with secondary headteachers prior to being presented to the Schools Budget Forum, the report which the Committee has requested will not now be available until December. It will be forwarded to Committee members at that time.

#### 4.14 Progress on Committee Resolutions

At its meeting on 6 October the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group discussed a recommendation from the Committee that, for ease of reference and tracking purposes, a separate sheet be prepared listing committee recommendations and detailing the progress to date with their implementation. The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group accepted this suggestion and agreed to extend the practice across all scrutiny committees. The summary document can be found at Appendix 4 to this report. Members' comments on this document, or suggested improvements to it, will be appreciated.

### **5. Committee Representation on Boards and Groups**

- 5.1 At its meeting on 14 July the Committee nominated a number of members to represent it on the Authority's various boards and groups. A list of the Committee's representatives on the various Boards and Groups was circulated to members in the form of appendices to the Committee's work programme report for September's meeting.
- 5.2 Since the appointments to the Service Challenge Groups were made further information has been received with respect to the approach that will be taken with the service challenge process this autumn. It has now been confirmed that Performance Scrutiny Committee link members will have a more extensive role with the services than members from the other committees. Performance Scrutiny Committee representatives' role will include maintaining links with the services, as well as being involved with the development of the service

business plans and risk registers. The role of the link members from Communities and Partnerships Scrutiny Committees will be more limited and will include attending the twice yearly performance challenge meetings for 'their' service and report back to the parent committee if appropriate.

5.3 The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group has also asked that a template be developed to enable committee representatives on boards and groups to report back to their committees on the discussions, actions and outcomes of the meetings they attend. Once the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group have approved the template it will be circulated to all committee representatives on boards/groups with a request that they fill in the report template following each meeting they attend and send the completed form to the Scrutiny Coordinator, who will then arrange for the report to be shared with Committee members.

5.4 TAITH

The Chair of the former Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee served as Denbighshire County Council's scrutiny representative on TAITH, the joint board of all six North Wales local authorities tasked with delivering substantial and significant improvements to public transport across the region. Following the introduction of the new scrutiny committee structure it has been suggested that it would be appropriate for the Chair of Communities Scrutiny Committee to serve as scrutiny's representative on this Board in future. Members are asked to discuss this suggestion and if appropriate recommend that the Chair is appointed to the Board until the next local authority elections in 2012.

5.5 Local Development Plan Steering Group

Cabinet at its meeting on 27 September agreed to establish a Local Development Plan (LDP) Steering Group to replace the former LDP Working Group. At the same meeting Cabinet also approved the Steering Group's terms of reference and membership. For members' information a copy of the Steering Group's terms of reference is attached at Appendix 5 to this report.

5.6 Members will see from the attached terms of reference that the Chair or Vice-Chair of Communities Scrutiny will be a member of the LDP Steering Group. The Committee is therefore requested to nominate either the Chair or Vice-Chair to serve as its representative on the LDP Steering Group. Members may, if they deem it appropriate, nominate the 'office' of Chair or Vice-Chair to be the Committee's representative on the Steering Group, rather than a named individual. By adopting this approach the Committee would avoid the need to nominate a new representative every municipal year as the office holder, by virtue of his/her position, would automatically be the Committee's representative.

**6. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

Effective scrutiny will assist the Council to deliver its corporate priorities in line with community needs and residents' wishes. Continual development and review of a coordinated work programme will assist the Council in monitoring and reviewing policy issues.

**7. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

Services may need to allocate officer time to assist the Committee with the activities identified in the forward work programme, and with any actions that may result following consideration of those items.

**8. What consultations have been carried out?**

None required for this report. However, the report itself and the consideration of the forward work programme represents a consultation process with the Committee with respect to its programme of future work.

**9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

No risks have been identified with respect to the consideration of the Committee's forward work programme. However, by regularly reviewing its forward work programme the Committee can ensure that areas of risk are considered and examined as and when they are identified, and recommendations are made with a view to addressing those risks.

**10. Power to make the decision**

Article 6.3.7 of the Council's Constitution stipulates that the Council's scrutiny committees must prepare and keep under review a programme for their future work.

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