

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the County Council held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin LL15 1YN on Tuesday, 9 July 2013 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Raymond Bartley (Chair), Brian Blakeley (Vice-Chair), Joan Butterfield, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Bill Cowie, Ann Davies, James Davies, Meirick Davies, Richard Davies, Stuart Davies, Peter Evans, Bobby Feeley, Carys Guy, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Martyn Holland, Colin Hughes, Hugh Irving, Huw Jones, Pat Jones, Gwyneth Kensler, Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Margaret McCarroll, Jason McLellan, Barry Mellor, Win Mullen-James, Bob Murray, Dewi Owens, Merfyn Parry, Paul Penlington, Arwel Roberts, Gareth Sandilands, David Simmons, Barbara Smith, David Smith, Bill Tasker, Julian Thompson-Hill, Joe Welch, Cefyn Williams, Cheryl Williams, Eryl Williams and Huw Williams

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (MM), Corporate Directors: Economic and Community Ambition (RM); Customers (HW); Modernisation and Wellbeing (SE); Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer (RGW), Head of Finance and Assets (PM), Head of Children and Family Services (LR); Senior Engineer: Flood Risk Management (WH); Programme Manager: Business, Planning and Performance (MH); Children and Family Services (VA); Democratic Services Manager (SP); Natural Resources Wales Representative (KI) and Committee Administrator (CIW).

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors I.W. Armstrong, P.C. Duffy, H.H. Evans, T.R. Hughes, E.A. Jones and P.W. Owen.

The Chair welcomed Councillor D. Simmons back following recent medical treatment, and he and Members of the Council sent their best wishes to former Councillor Richard Jones who was currently unwell.

Members were informed that Councillor H.H. Evans was attending his daughter's graduation and would be unable to attend the meeting.

The Chair announced he would be leaving prior to the end of the meeting to attend the International Musical Eisteddfod at Llangollen and the Vice Chair, Councillor B. Blakeley, would assume the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

Members agreed that a letter be sent to the Rhyl Lifeguards Joshua Clough and Simon Casey, thanking them for their courage and bravery in assisting in the rescue of a member of the public.

The Chair and Members expressed their congratulations to Councillor M.LI. Davies on his appointment as Chair of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Members declared any personal or prejudicial interests in any business identified to be considered at the meeting.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No items were raised which in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

4 CHAIRMAN'S DIARY

A list of civic engagements undertaken for the Council by the Chair and Vice Chair, for the period the 30th May, 2013 to 24th June, 2013 had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The Chair provided a summary of the following events:-

31st May, 2013. North Wales International Music Festival – As Champion for Learning Disabilities, the Chair explained that a concert would be held at St Asaph Cathedral for persons with learning disabilities. He confirmed that a donation of £1,000 had been made towards the event from the Chairman's fund and a further £1,000 towards transportation costs.

14th June, 2013. The Chair attended Glan Clwyd Hospital, Bodelwyddan to start the Cyclathon and presented a cheque for £100 towards the provision of a robot for undertaking keyhole surgery.

20th June, 2013. The Chair thanked everyone involved in the Denbighshire Schools' Festival of Performing Arts, held over a period of four evenings, for providing an excellent event.

26th June, 2013. As Governors of Brondyffryn School and Gerddi Glasfryn Denbigh, the Chair and Councillor R.J. Davies, had visited the school to congratulate the staff on achieving an excellent school report following an unannounced visit by school inspectors.

RESOLVED – *that the list civic engagements undertaken for the Council by the Chair and Vice Chair be received and noted, and the comments of the Chair be noted.*

5 MINUTES

The minutes of the Council meeting held on the 4th June, 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED – *that the minutes of the Council meeting held on the 4th June, 2013, 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.*

6 INVESTIGATORS' REPORT ON THE FLOODS

A copy of a report by the Senior Engineer: Flood Risk Management, which provided details on the findings of the flood investigation, and an update on the progress with the investigation into the Glasdir flood event, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The report was introduced by Councillor D.I. Smith and the Corporate Director: Economic and Community Ambition (CDECA). It was confirmed that an investigation into the flooding events across Denbighshire in November, 2012 had been completed with the exception of Glasdir, where the complexity of the issues surrounding the flood event had meant that the investigation was ongoing.

Significant flooding had occurred at 12 locations across Denbighshire on the 26th and 27th November, 2012 with approximately 500 properties having been affected. Under the terms of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 the Council had undertaken an investigation into the causes of flooding and Natural Resources Wales had supported the investigation. The sources of flooding had been main rivers, for which Natural Resources Wales was the risk management Authority, and ordinary watercourses, for which Denbighshire was the risk management Authority.

The investigation had been scheduled to report to Council in May but had been delayed due the complexity and scale of the investigation of the two larger flooding incidents at St Asaph and Glasdir. The investigation of the St Asaph event had been completed and summarised in Appendix 2. The full report of the Glasdir event would be delayed until September and the investigation Terms of Reference had been attached as Appendix 1.

The purpose of the investigation had been to clarify the reasons for the flooding, the likelihood of it recurring and what, if anything, could be done to manage flood risk appropriately in the future. The criteria for agreeing a location for investigation of the ten sites included:-

- One or more properties with internal flooding
- Disruption to critical infrastructure, e.g. roads or utilities
- A repeated 'near miss' of either of the above.

It had been decided not to include the general flooding of agricultural land as part of the investigation unless the flood event was unusual or unexpected. However, the impact of flooding on agricultural land would be discussed at national level.

The investigation of flooding for the majority of locations had been undertaken jointly by Denbighshire and Natural Resources Wales. Due to the complexity of the events at Glasdir, Independent investigators had been commissioned to carry out the investigation into the flooding at this location. The Independent Investigators had also been requested to review the Council and Natural Resources Wales' findings for all other flood locations and these included:-

- St Asaph, including Lower Denbigh Road

- Rhuddlan, including Sarn Lane
- Brookhouse, Denbigh
- Llanyynys
- Gellifor
- Glasdir, Ruthin
- Park Place/Mwrog Street/Maes Ffynnon, Ruthin
- Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd
- Loggerheads
- Corwen
- Glyndyfrdwy

A report covering the findings of the investigation had been included as Appendix 2. The flood investigation work had been co-ordinated by a Flood Investigation Working Group comprising officers from the Council, Natural Resources Wales and the Trunk Road Authority. To date, three Stakeholder briefings had been issued and these had been included for information in Appendix 3. Meetings had also been held with representatives of residents at the two larger flood locations at Glasdir and St Asaph.

Denbighshire had given consideration to interim measures to reduce flood risk pending the conclusion of the investigation. As the result, the following work had been carried out:-

- Fitting of anti-flood non return valves on surface water drains at Brookhouse, Denbigh.
- At Glasdir, the removal of the safety grilles on the 5 box culvert, the fitting of a temporary telemetry enabled water gauge in the culvert channel and the construction of a hardstanding above the culvert to enable access for the removal of debris during a flood.

The cost of implementing the recommendations with regard to ordinary watercourse flooding could be up to £1m, which could not be accommodated within the Council's existing budget. Natural Resources Wales had estimated that a scheme to reduce the risk of flooding in St Asaph to an acceptable level would cost in excess of £5 million. Members supported the view that Denbighshire seek assurance from Welsh Government that sufficient priority be given to the early funding of Natural Resources Wales' proposals with regard to St Asaph, and any other recommendations coming from the investigation with respect to flooding from main rivers. Councillor D.I. Smith explained Welsh Government had powers to award a grant under the Land Drainage Act and confirmed that the recommendations made would be pursued promptly. He informed Members that he had made representations to the Minister seeking Welsh Government funding.

The investigation had identified some small scale works which could be undertaken subject to the availability of funding. In areas where flood defenses were not warranted individual property protection could be considered. The CDECA outlined the general recommendations to address the wider issues of flood risk management which included working with individual property owners, landowners and, subject to approval, the establishment of a River Management Partnership, which was welcomed by Councillor T.M. Parry.

It was confirmed that three Stakeholder Briefings had been issued to share information with all interested parties, regular liaison meetings had taken place with representatives of the residents at Glasdir, two meetings had been convened with representatives of the residents at St Asaph and the interim findings of the investigation had been discussed by the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee.

In response to concerns expressed by Councillor W.L. Cowie, the CDECA explained that the investigation had identified that the bridge at Spring Gardens, St Asaph had not caused the flooding. However, it had been recognised that the bridge presented a restriction on the river and did have an impact. Details of the long and short term options being considered to resolve the issues identified were outlined by the Natural Resources Wales Representative (NRWR) and in the short term these included removal of trees and vegetation, temporary increases to the height of the flood embankment and the provision of a maintenance programme. Longer term solutions were currently being assessed but were likely to include more extensive hard engineering works. The CDECA confirmed that an open invitation had been extended to local residents to provide and submit any evidence which might assist with the flood investigation.

Councillor D. Owens emphasised the importance of obtaining a prompt response to the recommendations arising from the investigation, particular reference being made to the impact of the bridge at Spring Gardens. He also highlighted the need to provide assistance to local residents with regard to work undertaken at their respective properties.

The Senior Engineer: Flood Risk Management informed Councillor A. Roberts that the safety aspect of Rhuddlan bridge had not been an issue during the floods. Inspection work had been planned to assess the traffic load bearing capacity of the bridge, and this would include a scour inspection of the bridge foundations. He also explained that, with regard to the effect of the proposed housing development at Lon y Sarn on the drainage of water, the appropriate planning conditions would be imposed. Councillor J.A. Davies provided details of a report received from the Bridges and Structures Section in relation to Rhuddlan bridge, and highlighted the views included by CADW.

In response to a question from Councillor M.LI.Davies, the NRWR provided details of the individual property protection project, sponsored by the Welsh Government, which could include properties on the lower Denbigh Road, St Asaph.

In reply to a request from the Chair and concerns raised by Councillor R.J. Davies, the NRWR agreed that a drop in centre could be provided to receive the views of residents from the Brookhouse area of Denbigh. He also responded to concerns raised by Councillor S.A. Davies and confirmed that bunds would not be moved as part of the study into the management of the Dee River course.

The CDECA replied to a question from Councillor B.A. Smith and provided details of the budget implications. She explained that the main financial implications arising from the flooding investigation would impact mainly on Natural Resources Wales. The Senior Engineer: Flood Risk Management explained that the Welsh Government operated a scheme to support Local Authorities with the costs of

dealing with emergencies. However, if the threshold for eligibility was not reached, the costs must be borne by the Council. With predictions for increased frequency of flooding in future, the cost to the Council was likely to increase. The CDECA agreed with the suggestion that the Community Flood Plans could be linked to the Town Plans.

In reply to a question from Councillor H. Hilditch-Roberts regarding the implementation of preventative measures and the development of a flood prevention strategy, the CDECA explained that the Senior Engineer: Flood Risk Management was currently in the process of updating and developing the Council's Flood Risk Management Strategy which would be presented to Scrutiny for consideration prior to formal approval.

During the ensuing discussion, Members agreed that the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group monitor progress of the flood investigation proceedings on a regular basis.

A number of Councillors conveyed their appreciation, and the gratitude of local residents, for Denbighshire's response to the flooding event. Members thanked the staff of all the organisations and volunteers who provided help and assistance during and following the flooding events in the various areas of the County.

RESOLVED – *that Council agrees:-*

- (a) the implementation of the recommendations set out in Appendix 2.*
- (b) that a joint approach be made by Denbighshire and Natural Resources Wales to the Welsh Government for funding to implement the recommendations.*
- (c) that Denbighshire supports the establishment of a River Management Partnership, which would bring together all relevant partners to develop flood risk management plans.*
- (d) to receive Part 2 of the Investigation Report, relating to Glasdir, at the Full Council meeting on 10th September, 2013, and*
- (e) that the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group monitor progress on a regular basis.*

(RM, WH to action)

7 DRAFT ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY AMBITION STRATEGY

A copy of a report by the Corporate Director: Economic and Community Ambition (CDECA), on the development of Denbighshire's first Economic and Community Ambition Strategy, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

Councillor H.LI. Jones introduced the report on behalf of the Leader and explained that a Task and Finish Group (TFG) had developed Denbighshire's first Economic and Community Ambition Strategy, in line with the Corporate Plan priority of developing the local economy. Approval was being sought for the draft Strategy to be made available for public consultation as detailed in the report.

The Corporate Plan identified Developing the Local Economy as one of its 7 corporate priorities. Revitalising the local economy had been identified as a key

concern by residents during development of the Corporate Plan and seen as a means of achieving a sound base for all other developments. The Strategy aimed to explain how the Council would meet its corporate objective for developing the economy, and details of the TFG had been included in Appendix 3.

The draft Strategy had been developed with a focus on benefits and outcomes and the TFG had agreed that the overall benefit to be achieved by developing the local economy should ultimately be felt by local residents. The overall outcome behind the strategy had been defined as:-

“Denbighshire is a County with high levels of employment and good levels of income in all of its towns and communities”.

From this, the TFG had created the following Vision Statement for Denbighshire’s Economic and Community Ambition:-

- Developing Opportunities, Creating Confidence
- Working together to make Denbighshire a place where:-
 - Businesses, established and new, grow and flourish
 - Our towns and communities are vibrant and prosper
 - Residents enjoy a good quality of life and can participate in the local economy

To achieve this core factors would need to be addressed and the following priority areas for action had been identified and formed the core structure of the Strategy:-

- The right Infrastructure for Growth
- Businesses that are Supported and Connected
- Maximised Economic Strengths/Opportunities
- A High Quality Skilled Workforce
- Vibrant Towns and Communities
- A Well Promoted Denbighshire

An initial 4 year indicative Delivery Plan had been developed which aligned with the timescale for delivery of the Corporate Plan. However, the Strategy itself had a longer timescale and covered the period 2013 to 2023. The TFG had concluded that the outcomes identified and the areas for action highlighted offer the best means of delivering the ambition of both the Strategy and the Corporate Plan. It recommended that these were tested through consultation with Denbighshire’s communities and businesses prior to the Strategy being presented for formal adoption by the Council.

It was explained by the CDECA that it had been proposed that the draft Strategy and Delivery Plan, Appendix 1, be made available for public consultation during July and August through a range of opportunities as detailed in Appendix 2. Details of the consultation process had been included in the report. Specific consultation events would explore in detail the Strategy in relation to Tourism, Priority Sectors for Growth, and Rural Economic Development. These would be complemented by more generic consultation events arranged on a geographic basis across the County.

The three key questions the consultation would seek to test opinion on included:-

- (a) Are the Vision, intended outcomes and underpinning principles broadly appropriate for Denbighshire?
- (b) Does the Strategy capture the important issues, challenges and opportunities affecting Denbighshire's local economy?
- (c) Will the headline actions in the Delivery Plan achieve the right impact?

The consultation results would be considered by the TFG before the final Economic and Community Ambition Strategy, Delivery Plan and Performance Framework were presented to Council for formal approval in October.

Following approval of the Strategy, oversight of delivery would be provided by the Economic and Community Ambition Programme Board. It would monitor progress and impact, help to resolve problems and barriers to delivery and would recommend changes as necessary during the lifetime of the Strategy to ensure the desired impact can be achieved. A key role for the Programme Board would be to ensure projects and activities deliver their intended benefits. Further information on the proposed composition and role of the Programme Board, and the overall accountability and governance arrangements, had been set out in the draft Strategy.

The CDECA explained that the Corporate Plan had identified £2m as an indicative allocation towards meeting the costs of implementing the Corporate Priority for the Economy, with £160k being allocated in the 2013/14 budget. The report and Appendix 2 set out proposals for formal consultation on the proposed Strategy and Delivery Plan and an Equality Impact Assessment would be undertaken during the summer.

The Chief Executive endorsed the excellent Strategy and its comprehensive approach which clarified Denbighshire's role and would enable the Authority to have a positive impact on the local economy. Denbighshire would now be in a position to offer leadership and encourage businesses and partners to commit and participate. He explained that the challenge of encouraging partners to sign up should not be underestimated and confirmed that the quality of delivery and level of success achieved would be measured by the number of partners secured. The Chief Executive stressed the importance of dramatically reducing the percentage of pupils leaving school without approved qualifications and who were not usefully engaged beyond school. He stressed that whilst he was pleased with the progress made overall there were still significant challenges ahead in terms of engagement.

The CDECA provided the following responses to issues raised and concerns expressed by Members:-

- It was explained that nominations had been sought, and Councillor H.L.I. Jones had been the sole representative from the Dee Valley Member Area Group at the Task and Finish Group. Confirmation was provided that the consultation process would be County wide and issues raised County wide would be noted.
- Denbighshire being an easy Council to deal with had been a key theme during discussion in the Task and Finish Group. At least four specific actions had been identified in the Delivery Plan which included issues around procurement, regulation, easy access to the provision of business support and the development of a business friendly culture.

- Governance of the strategy moving forward. The strategy had suggested an initial membership for an Economic and Community Ambition Board.
- Confirmation had been provided that a significant piece of work had been undertaken around metrics to support the strategy and the actions, and this detail would be included at a later stage.
- Details of work to improve the local impact of the Council's procurement process were provided, particular reference being made to the engagement of local businesses and the expansion of employment opportunities.
- The role of Taith was outlined in relation to the Transport strategy for the region and the County's transport infrastructure.
- In response to concern expressed regarding the timing and timescales of the consultation period during the summer period, the Programme Manager provided details of the consultation process to date and confirmed that the draft strategy had been circulated to interested parties.
- Members were informed that promotional material would be displayed at events such as the Eisteddfod and Denbigh and Flint Show. The CDECA confirmed the Federation of Small Businesses would have a stall at the Denbigh and Flint Show.

During the ensuing discussion, Councillor H.LI. Jones and the CDECA thanked the officers and Members for the hard work undertaken in producing the draft Economic and Community Ambition Strategy.

RESOLVED – *that Council:-*

- (a) notes the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group to prepare the draft Economic and Community Ambition Strategy as attached at Appendix 1, and*
- (b) approves the Strategy for public consultation over the summer as set out in Appendix 2*

(RM, WH to action)

8 FINAL BUDGET POSITION AND REVENUE OUTTURN 2012/13

A copy of a report by the Chief Accountant, which provided an update of the final revenue position and the proposed treatment of balances, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The final outturn report had been accepted by Cabinet on the 25th June 2013. The report detailed the final position at financial year end for County Council to consider and approve the treatment of reserves and balances proposed. The first draft of the Annual Statement of Accounts for 2012/13 would be submitted to the external auditors on the 28th June, and the audited accounts presented to the Corporate Governance Committee in September for formal approval.

The overall financial outturn position for 2012/13 had been an under spend against the approved budget, which together with an increase in the yield from Council Tax strengthens the financial position of the Council. As a consequence it had been possible to make recommendations for the transfer of funds to specific reserves to assist the Council in addressing the severe financial pressures of the next few

years and begin to establish cash resources to deliver the Corporate Plan. The final Revenue Outturn figures had been detailed in Appendix 1. The final position on service and corporate budgets had been an under spend of £1.525m.

The outturn position for services and corporate budgets had been £530k higher than previously reported to Cabinet in March. The most significant movement had been within School Improvement & Inclusion (£223k). The final position for Legal and Democratic Services had improved by £76k and the position on corporate budgets had improved by £113k from the forecast reported in March. Services had continued to be proactive in planning for savings for future years, and the financial impact of some of those proposals began to take effect toward the end of 2012/13. Services reported commitments against balances of £849k in March. The majority of balances had been forecast because of timing issues and committed service balances now stood at £1.139m with further details provided in the report.

Expenditure on schools had been £1.069m below the delegated budget with Special schools having improved by £490k. The factors relating to the movement on Special Schools had been included in the report. School balances stood at £2.870m and details of the balances had been included in Appendix 4.

The Council budgeted to make a contribution to balances of £300k, which in keeping with previous reports, had been assumed in the final outturn position. The Council budgeted to make contributions to the funding of the Corporate Plan which required around £25m of cash and £52m of borrowing to deliver the Council's ambitions. The 2012/13 budget assumed £2.073m would be generated through priority funding allocated to services and budgeted provisions within corporate budgets.

Further information regarding final service outturn had been detailed in the report as follows:-

Business Planning & Performance – the final position was an under spend of £60k.

Finance & Assets - under spend of £16k.

Highways & Environment - position of £278k under, an improvement of £15k from the forecast in March.

Planning & Regulatory - proposed to be used to fund restructuring costs as part of delivering savings for 2013/14.

Adult & Business Service - shown as achieving the budget.

Children & Family Service – reported at £148k.

Housing & Community Development - arisen due to a review of external grant funding at the end of the year highlighted additional claimable costs.

Communications, Marketing & Leisure - the final outturn position was an under spend of £37.5k.

ICT/Business Transformation - budget under by £108k.

Customers and Education Support - an under spend of £245k.

School Improvement - an under spend of £349k.

Council Tax - impacted upon by the number of dwellings in the County, together with, a high level of tax collection of over 98%. The final level of Council Tax yield had been £315k higher than the original estimate.

Given the position overall within services, it had been proposed that departments carry forward any net under spends in full to help deliver the 2013/14 budget strategy and meet existing commitments. Services would be required to provide more detail, in the Finance Report to Cabinet in October, on how the balances brought forward had been used in 2013/14. The final position meant that the Council had £651k cash funding available. This was a significant achievement and the Council would need to ensure that the funding was used in the most effective way, and it had been proposed that this contribute to the cash reserves required to fund the Corporate Plan.

The Council's ambitious scheme of capital investment through the Corporate Plan required a significant amount of cash and a Corporate Plan Reserve of approximately £25m had been established for this purpose. A review of current funds to determine whether the current levels of balances and reserves were reasonable, and whether some reserves could be moved into the Corporate Plan Reserve, had been completed. The review had concluded that it would be appropriate to transfer £6.274m from existing reserves to the Corporate Plan Reserve.

Details of all earmarked reserves had been included as Appendix 2, and a summary of the transfers proposed as reported to the Corporate Governance Committee included as Appendix 3. A number of other contributions to and from Reserves and Provisions had been allowed for within the accounts and these had been detailed in Appendix 2 and would require Council approval. Major movements to reserves not already highlighted had been included in the report and related to:-

- £562k earmarked to fund protection for schools adversely impacted by the recent formula funding changes.
- £185k added to the Insurance Reserve to cover ongoing liabilities in respect of MMI, former insurer of Denbighshire's predecessor authorities, and other potential claims. The Head of Finance and Assets (HFA) responded to a question from Councillor Hugh Irving and explained that the potential liability and number of claims could increase in the future.
- Funding had moved from the Single Status reserve to a provision to fund equal pay claims

In reply to a question from Councillor S.A. Davies regarding the Yellow Bus reserve of £101,000, the HFA provided an explanation for the acquisition of the bus and agreed to provide a further report in respect of the contingency fund for the possible provision of a replacement at a future date. **(PM to action)**

The HFA responded to a question from Councillor M.LI. Davies and provided an explanation in respect of the figures included in Appendices 2 and 3 to the report.

RESOLVED – that Council approve the final revenue outturn position for 2012/13 and the treatment of reserves and balances detailed in the report.

A copy of a report by the Early Intervention, Strategy and Support Services Manager, which provided a self-assessment of social care in Denbighshire and identified improvement priorities for 2013/2014, had been circulated with the agenda.

The Corporate Director: Modernisation and Wellbeing (CDMW) provided an in depth summary of the report and explained that every Director of Social Services in Wales would be required to produce an Annual Report summarising their view of the effectiveness of the Authority's Social Care Services and Priorities for Improvement. A draft Annual Report for 2012/2013 had been included as Appendix 1. The report provided the public with an honest picture of services in Denbighshire and demonstrated a clear understanding of the strengths and challenges faced.

The CDMW referred to Children's Services and emphasised the importance of the report in the light of recent media coverage, particular reference being made to the Jillings and Waterhouse Reports which related to child abuse in children's homes, and she provided details in respect of:-

- The many legislative and regulatory changes affecting Children's Services.
- Waterhouse recommendations having become part of the legislative framework for Wales, and instigating the creation of the Children's Commissioner for Wales.
- Improvements relating to the delivery of Children's Services.
- Early intervention to address problems and the importance of listening to children.
- Intensive Family Support Services.
- Consultation undertaken with Care Workers with regard to the Leadership and Management Strategy.
- Intensive training provided for foster carers.
- The importance of safeguarding children.
- Achieving stable placements for children, through the provision of stable and caring homes.
- The top priorities for Children's Services for 2013-14 had been included on pages 18 and 19 of the Annual Report.

The CDMW provided details in respect of Adult Services and the following areas were highlighted:-

- Progress with regard to the Social Service and Well-being Bill. The main implications of the Bill, which related to Wales, correlated mainly to Adult Services, but also encompassed Children's Services.
- A need for change in the method of provision of Adult Services, emanating from the expectations of the public who now required more choice and control through the promotion of independence.
- An increase in the number of people with learning disabilities and in carers.
- Positive feedback received regarding the provision of Intervention Services, reablement, extra care and work undertaken in the community.
- Progress made with citizen directed support.
- The planned utilisation of ring fenced funding within Social Services.

- Improvements required around the area of sickness absence in Children and Adult Services.
- The need to further develop the delivery of services through the medium of Welsh being a high and increasing priority.
- Problems emanating from the demographic backdrop and an aging population.

A summary of the following four components within the Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF) was provided for Members:-

- (i) A detailed self-assessment and analysis of effectiveness
- (ii) Evidence trail
- (iii) Integration with business planning
- (iv) Publication of an annual report

In line with the guidance governing the ACRF process the Annual Report had been produced for the public and would be published by the 31st July, 2013. The overall assessment demonstrated that Denbighshire Social Services had succeeded in making real improvements in respect of the following areas in terms of both performance and quality over the past year:-

- supported families successfully at an early stage to help prevent problems escalating
- provided early support and helped people to regain their confidence and ability to care for themselves e.g. after a fall.
- supported people to live independently in the community and reduced the number of people admitted into Care Homes
- provided looked after children with stable and caring homes
- safeguarded children and vulnerable adults effectively
- worked in partnership with other authorities and agencies
- a stable workforce who are supported with their professional development
- strong leadership driving forward the agenda
- improved quality assurance processes
- robust financial management which has delivered services within budget

There had been some real challenges for both Adult and Business and Children's Services and Appendix 2 provided an overview of the challenges and the responses provided. The improvement priorities contained within the Annual Report recognised the need to continue to adapt and modernise services in order to respond to the expectations and requirements of the Welsh Government's Social Services and Wellbeing Bill.

Key features of Denbighshire's approach to proactively remodel, and develop new service patterns to improve local services included:-

- the development of enhanced family support services with a 7 day per week waking hour family support service;
- strengthened transition support to young people with disabilities who were moving from children services to adults services;

- implementation of the IFSS (Integrated Family Support Service) model;
- the development of additional Extra Care;
- developing a three-year plan to develop services to support carers;
- additional investment in reablement and approaches to support people to live independently without the need for ongoing social care;
- reduced sickness absence, a higher percentage of performance appraisals completed and improved response times for complaints.

The future of Denbighshire's services would need to look different and the commitment to modernisation would involve an increased investment in preventative and early intervention services to enable citizens to be independent, resilient and able. The approach would need to be underpinned by a range of services, activities and support networks which people could access in their own community. The delivery of the agenda would require cross-council/service and cross-sector solutions including community led initiatives.

It had been recognised that remodeling and developing new services and approaches would involve some unpopular adjustment. However, the financial climate would mean that tough decisions could not be avoided and there would be a need to focus on implementing changes which deliver cost effective, sustainable services that ensure vulnerable people were protected and receive high quality services which provide dignity in care and good outcomes.

Priorities detailed within the ACRF would contribute to priority 4: vulnerable people are protected and are able to live as independently as possible and examples had been included in the report, together with, details of the consultation process undertaken, how costs could affect other services, financial implications and the steps implemented to refract any risks.

The report would form an integral part of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) performance evaluation of Denbighshire Social Services, and the evaluation would inform the Wales Audit Offices assessment of Denbighshire County Council as part of the annual improvement report.

It was explained by Councillor J. Chamberlain-Jones that the Fostering and Adoption Service was performing well but the issue of diminished staffing levels would need to be addressed, particular reference being made to the need appoint a replacement for Education Liaison Officer in Children and Family Services. She expressed concern regarding the reference to cuts on page 127 of the report, and to the importance of retaining day care provision in the County. It was explained that with regard to sickness absence levels, staff surveys had produced positive outcomes with no real areas of concern in respect of stress levels. Confirmation was provided that cuts in funding for Adult Protection Services would not necessarily result in adult services and adult protection safeguards being compromised as the cost of providing extra care housing was less than residential care. Councillor Chamberlin- Jones explained that the number of persons attending Day Centres had declined as GP's were no longer in a position to make referrals, and the CDMW confirmed that there was a maximum charge of £50 per week for the provision of day care services

In response to concerns expressed by Councillor M.L. Holland, the CDMW confirmed that the future level of service provision for persons suffering from dementia and alzheimer's, which had increased dramatically, would be a matter for consideration by all agencies. The importance of highlighting the issue in the Annual Report was emphasised and reference was made to the regional strategy on dementia care.

Councillor J. Butterfield explained that the provision of sheltered accommodation was good but there were instances where some elderly persons were isolated and reference was made to alternative models of addressing service provision. Councillor Butterfield highlighted the need to monitor and appraise the situation and requested that a report on the review of reablement centres be presented to County Council for consideration. With regard to the Looked After Children Policy, the CDMW confirmed that vulnerable children would not be moved prior to the creation of a care plan.

In reply to concerns expressed by Councillor J.A. Davies regarding the importance of identifying hidden carers to ensure the provision of support, the CDMW explained there was a good network in place and that Denbighshire currently funded 6 organisations to provide support for carers, which included funding for NEWCIS. Reference was made to new carers measures, the development of a new regional contract monitoring framework and the need for improved Respite Care and discharge information.

The CDMW responded to questions from Councillor M. McCarrol and explained that the development of a strategy, with Leisure Services, for independent living, the 3 year plan to develop services to support carers and the implementation of Denbighshire's voluntary scheme to provide opportunities for residents to become active members of the community would be actions to be progressed during the next twelve months. In reply to a question from Councillor W. Mullen-James, the CDMW explained that the EDT service was a collaborative service based at Wrexham.

Councillor J.M. McLellan emphasised the importance of monitoring social work assessments and plans submitted to Court, and ensuring the development of a family focus which would ensure early intervention.

During the ensuing discussion Councillor R.L. Feeley commended the report which had been produced in difficult and challenging times, and explained that Denbighshire's had responded promptly and imaginatively whilst looking to the future. She informed Members that Denbighshire's CDMW was held in great esteem and respected throughout Wales.

RESOLVED – that Council confirms the:-

- (a) Director's self-assessment of social care in Denbighshire.
- (b) Improvement priorities for 2013/2014, and
- (c) Draft report provides a clear account of performance

A copy of a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (HLDS), on the appointment of an Elected Member to the North Wales Police and Crime Panel for a minimum of one municipal year, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The report provided details of the membership of the Panel. The Terms of Reference of the North Wales Police and Crime Panel stipulated that each of the six Local Authorities in North Wales would nominate a Member or Members to sit on the Panel. The Panel consisted of 10 Elected Members and 2 Independent Co-opted Members, and the allocation of seats to each Authority had been based on the political balance and population distributions across North Wales as a whole. The *d'hondt* methodology had been used to identify the number of seats each Local Authority would be allocated and to which political group(s) they applied. As host Authority Conwy County Borough Council provided support services.

The Democratic services Manager explained that based on population Conwy, Flintshire, Gwynedd and Wrexham had appointed 2 Members each whilst Denbighshire and Anglesey had appointed 1 Member each. The size of the main political groupings across the Councils in North Wales determined how many seats each group or grouping would be entitled to take. In determining which Authority appointed individual seats the Panel examined how many seats a political party or grouping had in all the Authorities combined and then assessed which Council or Councils had the best claim to take the available seats.

Last year Independent Group Member, Councillor W.E. Cowie, had been Denbighshire's representative on the Panel. Following the May, 2013 elections in Anglesey, Denbighshire would be allocated 1 Labour Member seat. The Council could determine the period of time that the appointment was made, although this should not be less than 1 municipal year. As the proposed appointment was a ring-fenced position Denbighshire's Labour Group had been made aware of the issues raised.

Members agreed that Councillor W.N. Tasker be appointed as Denbighshire's representative on the Police and Crime Panel, and that the appointment period extends until any subsequent decision by Council was taken to appoint to the Panel.

Councillor Tasker paid tribute to the excellent work undertaken by Councillor W.L. Cowie during his term in office.

RESOLVED – *that Council:-*

- (a) appoints Councillor W.N. Tasker, Member of the Labour Group, to the Police and Crime Panel, and*
- (b) the appointment period extends until any subsequent decision by Council was taken to appoint to the Panel.*

A copy of a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (HLDS), on the potential for webcasting meetings of the Council, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The report sought approval in principle to the introduction of the webcasting of Council meetings. Welsh Government would make £1.2 million available by way of grant funding to Local Authorities to assist them with implementation costs. Each Authority would be eligible to a grant of £20k towards the cost of introducing webcasting.

The webcasting of meetings would involve the live streaming of sound and images of Council meetings and could be made available on the Council's website as archived material. Members of the public who were unable to attend meetings could view them live online or at a later date via the online archive. Viewers using the archived content would have the advantage of the use of timeline links allowing them to view content by item or speaker.

The WG and WLGA had facilitated meetings with officers to discuss webcasting and a demonstration of a system had been delivered for Members. A facility was provided on some systems to enable members of the public to participate in discussion forums via social media tools and to give their views on issues being discussed. The HLDS replied to concerns expressed by Councillor M.LI. Davies and expanded on the operation and provision of the translation facilities as included in the report.

There was no statutory obligation for the Council to webcast meetings but this was becoming a more common practice and all Local Authorities in Wales were actively considering its introduction. The Council was obliged by law to hold meetings in public, subject to the exclusion of the public for certain confidential matters. The public were entitled to attend meetings of the Council, Cabinet and other Committees but generally there was not a large attendance at meetings and the facilities available to accommodate large numbers of people were limited. Members of the public interested in hearing the debates may be unable to attend due to commitments or difficulties with transport, therefore webcasting meetings would make meetings accessible.

The WG grant would only be available for one year with no guarantee of future funding. In addition to software licensing fees there may be additional costs associated with integrating the system with existing cameras and microphones. It had been suggested that webcasting be limited initially to a duration which could be funded from the grant monies available, with a future review for continued use. Councillor J. Thompson-Hill replied to a question from Councillor W.L. Cowie and concurred that it would be important to ensure the sustainability of a system prior to its introduction.

CET had expressed the view that the question of webcasting be presented to Council for a decision on webcasting meetings, and the Corporate Governance Committee had agreed that a report be presented to the wider membership for consideration.

The HLDS responded to concerns expressed by Councillor R.L. Feeley and confirmed that the compatibility of new and current equipment would need to be assured, possibly through trial internally, prior to the introduction of webcasting.

RESOLVED – *that Council agrees in principle to the webcasting of Council meetings.*

(GW to action)

12 COUNTY COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the Council's Forward Work Programme, previously circulated, and Members agreed the following new items be included in the Forward Work Programme:-

RESOLVED - *that, subject to the above, the Council forward work programme be approved and noted.*

Meeting ended at 2.05 p.m.