

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the County Council held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin LL15 1YN on Tuesday, 18 October 2016 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

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

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (MM), Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal, HR & Democratic Services (GW), Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation (AS), Strategic Planning Team Manager (VR), and Committee Administrator (SLW).

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Meirick Davies, Carys Guy, Rhys Hughes, Alice Jones, Barry Mellor, Bob Murray, Pete Prendergast, David Simmons and Cheryl Williams

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of Full Council and also extended a welcome to Charlotte Owen of the Wales Audit Office attending as an observer.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No Urgent Matters.

4 CHAIRMAN'S DIARY

A list of civic engagements undertaken by the Chair and Vice-Chair for the period 30.06.2016 to 30.09.2016 had been circulated prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED that the list of civic engagements undertaken by the Chair and Vice-Chair be received.

5 MINUTES

The minutes of Full Council held on 5 July 2016 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of Full Council held on 5 July 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Lead Member for Finance, Corporate Plan and Performance introduced the Annual Performance Report (previously circulated) for Members to approve the draft 2015/16 Annual Performance Review, subject to agreed changes to enable translation and publication prior to 31 October 2016.

The draft report contained a summary of progress for each corporate priority, highlighting key successes or challenges encountered during the year. It also summarised the performance of corporate projects, corporate risks, comparable indicators (National Strategic Indicators – NSIs), (Performance Accountability Measures - PAMs), and key findings from external regulators. In addition, the report contained summary information regarding work undertaken in relation to diversity and equality, the Welsh Language Standards, as well as partnership and collaborative activity.

The Head of Business Improvement & Modernisation explained that the Council's Corporate Plan 2012-17 set the strategic direction for the Council and its priorities for the five year period. Details of the Council's intention to deliver the priorities had been set out in the annual service plans and the Corporate Plan Annual Delivery document.

The draft report had been developed by the Strategic Planning Team, in consultation with other council services. The performance information contained within the document had been provided by services, and had been drawn from the Verto Performance Management system. Consultation had taken place with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Cabinet prior to being submitted to County Council for approval.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Low response to the Residents Survey. Approximately 750 responses were received which was less than 1% of the county's population. A report was to be presented at Scrutiny in January 2017, to look at how to address this.
- Affordable Housing – a report had been presented to Scrutiny to bring empty properties into the housing market, and buying back ex-council properties. The council were in the first year of a 5 year housing strategy plan. As part of the housing strategy the council did attend regular meetings with Registered Social Landlords. There were no plans for a full scale development of new build council houses. A report was to be presented to Council Briefing in the New Year.
- BT Broadband was an ongoing issue. As Members were aware, BT Broadband had been discussed at Scrutiny recently. BT had provided a list of "Not" spots but there was a concern by Members that businesses would

move out of areas where superfast Broadband was not available. An update from BT on the progress of installation of superfast Broadband was requested.

- Support for businesses - Communication with local businesses was raised, as notifications sent out by the council containing information of local events were not reaching all businesses. It was clarified that businesses need to be registered with the council in order to obtain information. Members were encouraged to speak to businesses to urge them to register.
- Rhyl had been raised as a regeneration priority. The funding made available for regeneration came from both the Welsh Government and the private sector.
- Mental Health patients requiring inpatient treatment could occasionally be transferred as far as Glasgow due to the bed shortage in Denbighshire. It was a nationwide problem and the Health Boards together with Social Services were working extremely hard to find a solution to this problem. It was also confirmed that there would be a report to Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on this issue in early spring 2017.
- Re-assurance was requested for items marked “red” to be improved and how this was to be attained.
- The rate of older people (aged 65 or over) supported in the community per 1,000 population and aged 65 or over at 31 March – performance remained in the bottom quartile. This indicator did not take into account Denbighshire’s ambition to meet people’s need through reablement and community services rather than managed care. Good performance should be low in this indicator. Denbighshire’s performance had, therefore, improved in relation to both our, and Wales’ ambition to reduce formal support to individuals and should, therefore, be seen as being in the top quartile.
- Condition of the roads within Denbighshire – it was confirmed that each Member Area Group were given the opportunity to feed into the Network Management system but unfortunately there were financial constraints which meant not all roads could be kept in an “excellent” condition.
- Communities First – Statement from the Welsh Government the day following Council would announce the financial settlement. Thereafter clarification regarding Communities First would be sought.

The Lead Member for Social Care, Adult & Children’s Services offered her gratitude to the work the Adults & Children’s Department carried out in constantly striving to improve safe guarding.

The Leader expressed his gratitude to the Lead Member for Finance, Corporate Plan and Performance for presenting the report. He stated it was imperative that a robust Corporate Plan was in place.

The Leader also offered congratulations to everyone with the Council for being one of the highest performing councils in Wales.

RESOLVED that subject to any agreed changes, Members approve the draft 2015/16 Annual Performance Report to enable translation and publication before 31 October 2016.

At this juncture (11.35 a.m.) there was a 20 minute break.

The meeting reconvened at 11.55 a.m.

7 ANNUAL REPORT OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Councillor Jason McLellan presented the Annual Report of the Corporate Governance Committee (previously circulated) for the financial year 2015/16.

The Council was statutorily required, under the provisions of the Local Government Wales Measure 2011, to have an Audit Committee. The Corporate Governance Committee was the Council's designated Committee for that purpose.

The main areas of work the Committee oversees were as follows:

- An audit role in scrutinising the outcomes from internal audit reports and considering the findings and recommendations of external audits. To review and approve the internal audit strategy.
- Risk Management.
- Financial Management
- To scrutinise and recommend to Council and Cabinet policy on areas such as fraud, corruption and whistleblowing.
- Information Management, Freedom of Information requests and Data Protection.
- Monitor and review the operation of the Councils Constitution.
- Monitor and update the Governance Improvement Plan.
- Review complaints and complaint policy and consider Customer feedback.
- Review the operation of the Council's Whistleblowing arrangements.

Councillor Jason McLellan expressed his gratitude to all Members of the Corporate Governance Committee, together with the Lay Member, Paul Whitham, Lead Members who attend, especially Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill who attended most of the meetings, Officers and the Wales Audit Office representatives for all their hard work during the past year.

RESOLVED that Members note the content of the Annual Report of the Corporate Governance Committee.

8 STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING SCRUTINY IN DENBIGHSHIRE

Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts introduced the Scrutiny report (previously circulated) to update Council on progress to date with implementation of the Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan, and the key findings of the recent scrutiny self-evaluation exercise.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator presented a presentation and explained that following the publication in May 2014 of the Wales Audit Office's (WAOs) Improvement Study on Scrutiny in Local Government in Wales "Good Scrutiny? Good Question", a Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan had been agreed by the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) with a view to moving scrutiny forward in Denbighshire.

The national study stipulated that local authorities across Wales should undertake regular self-evaluation of scrutiny utilising the outcomes and characteristics of effective local government overview and scrutiny.

A set of national outcomes and characteristics for effective scrutiny were agreed. They were to focus on:

- Better outcomes
- Better decisions, and
- Better engagement.

Following the self-evaluation exercise, the main conclusions from analysing the responses were:

Strengths:

- Members and Officers feel scrutiny has a clear and valued role in the Council's governance
- Scrutiny generally operates on a non-political basis and is councillor led
- Cabinet Members attendance at Scrutiny worked well
- Generally, a high level of mutual trust existed between scrutiny members and internal/external officers who attend scrutiny meetings

Areas identified for improvement:

- More training on scrutiny specific skills
- Members attendance at committee meetings
- Communication with the public encouraging public attendance and engagement
- Explore potential of webcasting scrutiny meetings.

There was a need to improve:

- Members' attendance at Committee meetings, and
- Communication with the public, encouraging public attendance and engagement.

Councillors could request items to be put before Scrutiny by completing a "Member Proposal Form" and submitting it to the SCVCG.

Members of the public could request an item to be put before Scrutiny by completing a "Scrutiny Request Form".

The SCVCG considered each request and if it passed the PAPER test, the SCVCG would then decide how to examine the matter in detail.

The PAPER test was as follows:

- **P**ublic Interest – was the matter of concern to residents?
- **A**bility to have an impact – could Scrutiny influence and change things?
- **P**erformance – was it an underperforming area or service?
- **E**xtent – did it affect a large number of residents or a large geographic area?
- **R**eplication – was anyone else looking at it?

If the request did not pass the PAPER test, the SCVCG may:

- Refer it elsewhere i.e. a Member Area Group
- Request an information report to determine whether any further work is required and by whom
- Respond with reason(s) for the issue not being pursued.

During discussion, an issue was raised in relation to the North Wales Ambulance Service and it agreed to refer to the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group.

RESOLVED that Members of Council note the content of the report.

9 COUNTY COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal, HR & Democratic Services introduced the Council's Forward Work Programme (previously circulated)

Members were reminded that there would be Budget Workshops held on 1 November and 18 November.

RESOLVED that subject to the above, the Council Forward Work Programme be approved and noted.

The meeting concluded at 1.00 p.m.