

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin on Monday, 25 November 2013 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors James Davies, Peter Evans, Carys Guy, Rhys Hughes, Bob Murray, Cefyn Williams and Huw Williams

Observers: Councillors Bill Cowie, Meirick Lloyd Davies, Gwyneth Kensler and Arwel Roberts.

Lead Members: Councillors Huw Jones, David Smith and Julian Thompson-Hill attended at the Committee's request.

ALSO PRESENT

Head of Environment (SP), Section Manager: Traffic and Transportation (MJ), Tourism, Marketing and Events Officer – Coastal (VS-M), Corporate Communications and Marketing Manager (GW), Senior Engineer - Flood Risk Management (WH), Valuation and Estates Team Manager (DM), Property Manager (DL), Head of Planning and Public Protection (GB), Senior Community Safety Enforcement Officer (TW-E), Scrutiny Co-ordinator (RE) and Committee Administrator (SLW).

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Win Mullen-James, Joe Welch and Cheryl Williams

In the Chair's absence the Vice-Chair chaired the meeting and extended the Committee's congratulations to Councillor James Davies and his wife on the recent birth of their baby son, Wilfred.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No personal or prejudicial interests were declared.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters were raised.

4 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 17 October, 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October, 2013 be received and approved as a correct record.

5 PARKING ENFORCEMENT

The Lead Member for Public Realm, Councillor David Smith, introduced the parking enforcement report (previously circulated) for Members to consider and examine the Council's Parking Enforcement Strategy and its impact on the economic development.

The Council's Parking Policy had been written in 1996. Parking enforcement was decriminalised in Denbighshire in 2004. Prior to 2004, the Police carried out the task of enforcement.

Denbighshire County Council currently employs 7 full time Civil Enforcement Officers plus 2 relief staff, 2 full time members of staff to collect cash from the Pay & Display machines and one part time employee to count and process all the cash collected.

The fines issued by Civil Enforcement Officers are known as Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs).

A review of the Parking Enforcement team would be taking place as part of the wider restructuring exercise which had been ongoing in Highways and Environmental Services.

The following was discussed during the debate:

- There was an intention in the future to introduce the wearing of body cameras amongst Civil Enforcement Officers for both security benefits but also to assist in providing vital evidence in instances where the Civil Enforcement Officer was alleged to have been rude or discourteous.
- Ruthin Member Area Group had used its members' financial allocations to supplement the parking costs within Ruthin to keep the cost of parking low.
- Signage directing people to "long stay" or "short stay" car parks were requested.
- Network Rail/Arriva were looking to devise a mechanism for the station railway car park in Prestatyn that would enable train users to park free and others who use the car park to pay and display.
- A review of parking policy and parking in general was to take place and a study to be carried out to ensure the pricing policy of car parks was adequate to encourage local economic growth.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) *Communities Scrutiny Committee support the development of a new Parking Policy jointly between Highways and Economic & Business Development, and that the review of the policy includes exploring the provision of clear and appropriate parking signage across the county.*
- (ii) *Communities Scrutiny Committee endorse the proposal to carry out a scoping exercise to fully evaluate the detailed requirements for parking and traffic reviews in all towns, which will enable reasonably accurate cost estimates to be produced, and*

- (iii) *The draft new parking policy and the results of the scoping exercise for the parking and traffic reviews in towns be presented to the Committee for consideration at its meeting on 6 March 2014.*

6 ANTI FOULING STRATEGY

The Lead Member for Public Realm, Councillor David Smith, introduced the Anti Fouling Strategy report (previously circulated) to enable Members to review the campaign's progress to date and plans going forward over the coming months.

The scheme had been created approximately 9 months ago with the intention of increasing awareness of dog fouling in Denbighshire and also to encourage people to clear up after their dogs.

The Tourism, Marketing and Events Officer – Coastal, gave Members an update regarding monitoring impact of the campaign to date.

Discussion took place and the following points were raised:

- The Council had been approached by surrounding counties, including Community Councils in Conwy, who asked to use the image of the campaign as it was proving to be more effective than the one currently in use. Flintshire County Council had also made enquiries regarding the lamppost signs as they were looking to use the same format for their campaign. The use of signs had been a great success and used in many places to reinforce the prevention and reduction of fouling incidents.
- An education programme had been set up. This would be delivered by Youth Services. Schools were to be visited showing examples of the promotional material and interactive games etc. for pupils to take home.
- Consideration was required as to the longevity of the campaign and the resources available to support the delivery of this. The primary ongoing costs were the replacement of promotional material and the 0800 telephone number.
- Following investment over the past two years, Denbighshire now had almost 1000 litter bins across the county, all of which accepted bagged dog waste. These bins were also in addition to the dog bins placed in tourist areas. All new bins carried signs indicating they take bagged dog waste and similar signs/stickers were being placed on old bins. 120 bins had been purchased since the campaign began.
- The point was raised that people needed to be encouraged to report incidents otherwise the problem cannot be eradicated.
- A request was put forward by Councillor Peter Evans that Meliden be listed separately within future documentation and not included within Prestatyn, especially as there had been a major issue with dog fouling along the Prestatyn to Dyserth walkway.
- A report on Dog Control Orders was to be brought to Scrutiny in March 2014 and once approved at Scrutiny, it would go out for consultation. If Dog Control Orders were breached, fixed penalty notices would be served.

- A report about Kingdom was to be brought to Scrutiny also in March 2014. The report would give a full explanation of Kingdom's role and an update of the work carried out by them.
- A recurring problem had been monitored at Y Cilgant, Corwen and both Councillors Cefyn Williams and Huw Ll. Jones were to meet with the Senior Community Safety Enforcement Officer for an update as to what steps would be taken to deal with the problem.
- All vets and pet shops within Denbighshire had been offered postcards and posters to raise awareness of the campaign.

The Communities Scrutiny Committee offered their thanks to the Tourism, Marketing and Events Officer - Coastal and the Corporate Communications & Marketing Manager for all their hard work on the campaign.

RESOLVED that:

- Communities Scrutiny Committee note the progress to date, the impact and effectiveness of the approach to addressing the dog fouling issue in the county, and*
- Communities Scrutiny Committee recommend that every effort should be made to source the required resources to support the continued delivery of the strategy and provision of the 0800 telephone number for the future.*

**At this juncture (10.55 a.m.) there was a 20 minute break.
Meeting reconvened at 11.15 a.m.**

7 DRAFT FLOOD MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Lead Member for Public Realm, Councillor David Smith, introduced the Draft Flood Management Strategy (previously circulated) for members to consider the final draft version of the Strategy prior to public consultation.

The Senior Engineer, Flood Risk Management (SE:FRM) reported that the Flood and Water Management Act placed a requirement on the Council, as a Lead Local Flood Authority, to develop, maintain, apply and monitor a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. In 2011 the Welsh Government issued guidance to Welsh Authorities which suggested that Local Flood Risk Management Strategies be in place by 31st March 2013. The Council had been on course to meet the target until the widespread flooding in November 2012. The Welsh Government had agreed to the Council's request that it defer the finalisation of its Strategy until the conclusion of the flood investigation had been reported to the Welsh Government.

The SE:FRM reported on the actions which had taken place since the flooding in November 2012, and agreed to keep members informed of proposed work and work undertaken within their wards.

The draft Strategy document had been forwarded to all members but, as it had been such a substantial document, the SE:FRM confirmed that members email

their comments on the Strategy to him by 9 December 2013. The feedback received would then be forwarded to NRW.

Following intense discussion the SE:FRM agreed :

- To look into NRW's progress with the hydraulic modelling work which formed part of the feasibility study into possible engineering solutions to reduce the flood risk at Brookhouse.
- To enquire on the latest position with regards to the replacement of the culvert at Llanbedr DC.
- To source a comprehensive list of all properties along Lower Denbigh Road in St. Asaph that will be alerted in future by the NRW's Flood Alert Service for local county councillors.
- To ensure that local members are kept abreast of proposed flood alleviation work undertaken within their wards.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) *Subject to any additional observations on the draft Local Flood Management Strategy which should be submitted to the Senior Engineer: Flood Risk Management by 9 December 2013, the Committee support the proposal to proceed to public consultation with the proposed consultees listed in Appendix 1.*
- (ii) *Subject to the matters raised, to note the comments and actions taken by the Council and others in response to the recommendations of the investigation reports into the November 2012 floods.*
- (iii) *A follow-up report on the Strategy's implementation and other developments on flood related matters be presented to the Committee during the summer of 2014.*

8 DRAFT HIGHWAYS CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2014/15 AND PROGRESS ON DRAFT STRATEGY

The Lead Member for Public Realm, Councillor David Smith, introduced the draft Highways Capital Programme 2014/2015 and Progress on Draft Strategy (previously circulated) to update Members and to enable Members to debate the latest version of the Programme within the timescale necessary for submission of a business case to Welsh Government for consideration under the Local Government Borrowing Initiative (LGBI).

The draft programme had previously been taken to the Prestatyn, Dee Valley and Ruthin Member Area Groups (MAGs) for their comments. The Draft Programme would also be taken to the remaining MAGs for their comments. The feedback from the MAGs to date had been positive with only minor amendments made to the Draft Programme.

The second part of the report related to the strategy going forward. A meeting had been scheduled to take place on 3 December with Members to debate how to take the strategy forward. It would be a matter of addressing risk and Denbighshire being open to challenge.

The Code of Practice needed to be refined, whereupon it would be submitted to Cabinet for approval.

Members requested to be provided with a complete list of identified highways maintenance work across the county (including those projects not prioritised for 2014/15 together with reasons why they were not a priority).

An information report was requested on the Council's Policy on roadside signs (and Welsh Government with respect to Trunk roads). Members expressed concern that signs advertising events, sponsorship and businesses were being placed along the roads and on roundabouts across the county. A number of the signs did not comply with the council's Welsh Language Policy and some could even pose a danger to drivers and pedestrians alike, particularly at junctions, roundabouts etc., as they impaired visibility.

RESOLVED that Communities Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) Agree the latest draft of the Highways Maintenance Capital Programme, subject to further changes at Member Area Groups, and*
- (ii) Note the Policy document and review the output from the Highways Strategy Working Group and the draft Highways Asset Management Strategy in late spring/early summer 2014.*

9 GRANTING OF LEASES

The Lead Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, introduced the report regarding Granting of Leases of Council Land and Buildings to Community Groups and the Policies and Processes associated with the same (previously circulated). The report would provide information regarding the Council's Policy on granting leases in particular to community groups, the number of existing leases, the frequency of their review and the processes for granting, managing and determining any reduction in the charges levied.

The county owned a variety of non-operational assets and many of the properties were occupied under a variety of leases to a broad mix of tenants.

Leases could vary from relatively short term to longer periods which impacted on the value of the asset to the Council and reflected, to a degree, the level of investment made by the Tenant.

The Council had a standard policy for non-operational property assets and a separate one for Lifelong Learning properties. Generally, when a property would be deemed to be surplus to a service's requirements, a report would be presented to the Asset Management Group (AMG). In the event that no other Service required the asset, a further report would be submitted to AMG.

Full Member and service consultation would be undertaken to declare an asset surplus.

Each application for a Lease would be considered on its own individual merits.

The Council applied standard criteria to assess the strength of any undervalue request. The maximum undervalue the Council was willing to grant was 90% of the market rent and this would be for a fixed period usually linked to the rent review cycle. Any undervalue in the rent would be recorded by a side letter to the Lease.

At this juncture it was proposed and seconded that the meeting move into Part 2 and general discussion took place, which included a request for information on a number of individual assets. The Committee:

RESOLVED that, subject to the observations made and the provision of the requested information, the contents of the report be noted.

10 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A report by the Scrutiny Co-ordinator was submitted (previously circulated) seeking Members' review of the Committee's Forward Work Programme and providing an update on relevant issues, a draft Forward Work Programme (Appendix 1), Cabinet Forward Work Programme (Appendix 2) and Progress with Committee Resolutions (Appendix 3).

Members agreed to the following revisions to the Forward Work Programme:

- (i) **6 March 2014**
 - a. Parking Policy and Parking & Traffic Review Scoping Exercise
 - b. Dog Control Orders
 - c. Kingdom
- (ii) **May/ June 2014**
 - a. Highways Asset Management Strategy
- (iii) **June/ July 2014**
 - a. Flood Management Strategy and Flood Related Matters

RESOLVED that subject to the above amendments, the Communities Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme be approved.

11 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

None.

Meeting concluded at 12.40 p.m.