

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the County Council held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin LL15 1YN on Tuesday, 14 February 2017 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Brian Blakeley, Joan Butterfield, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Ann Davies (Chair), Meirick Davies, Stuart Davies, Peter Duffy, Hugh Evans, Peter Evans, Bobby Feeley, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Martyn Holland, Rhys Hughes, Hugh Irving, Alan James, Alice Jones, Huw Jones, Pat Jones, Gwyneth Kensler, Jason McLellan, Barry Mellor, Win Mullen-James (Vice-Chair), Bob Murray, Dewi Owens, Merfyn Parry, Paul Penlington, Arwel Roberts, Anton Sampson, Gareth Sandilands, Barbara Smith, Julian Thompson-Hill, Joe Welch, Cefyn Williams, David Williams, Eryl Williams, Huw Williams and Mark Young

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (MM), Corporate Director: Economic and Community Ambition (RM), Corporate Director: Communities (NS), Head of Legal, HR & Democratic Services (GW), Head of Finance (RW), Service Manager: Strategic Development (GG), Strategy & Development Officer (JW), and Committee Administrator (SLW)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bill Cowie, Carys Guy, Colin Hughes, Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Pete Prendergast, David Simmons, David Smith, Bill Tasker and Cheryl Williams

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent items.

At this juncture, Councillor Hugh Irving spoke in his capacity as the Armed Forces Champion, to ascertain whether Full Council were prepared to accept the resolution to request the Ministry of Defence to re-visit the decision to merge the 101 Regiment – whose Headquarters are in Wrexham and the Recovery Unit Company premises in Prestatyn - with the 103 Regiment based in the south west of England. The military footprint in North Wales was diminishing and having an impact on recruitment.

Councillor Dewi Owens seconded the resolution explaining he had recently written to the Brigadier to look again at possible ways of keeping the military in Wrexham and Prestatyn.

There was a unanimous show of hands in agreement to the proposal.

4 NORTH WALES POPULATION ASSESSMENT

The Lead Member for Social Care, Adult and Children's Services introduced the report (previously circulated) to provide general information regarding the draft Population Assessment for North Wales, which had been produced in partnership with the other five North Wales Local Authorities, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and Public Health Wales.

The Population Assessment had to be produced on a legal basis under Section 14 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Care and Support (Population Assessment) Wales Regulations 2015. It must be jointly produced by the six North Wales Local Authorities and the Local Health Board. Once completed, it had to be published on the Denbighshire website and submitted to the Welsh Government.

The Service Manager: Strategic Development gave an in-depth explanation to Members of the Population Assessment.

The Population Assessment would ensure services were planned and developed in an efficient and effective way by public sector partners to promote the well-being of people with care and support needs.

The Strategy and Development Officer (SDO) confirmed he had been involved in writing the chapter regarding children and young people.

The population of children and young people had remained fairly stable during the past five years. There had been an increase in the number of children on the child protection register and in the number of children looked-after in North Wales. There had also been an increase in cyber-crime and victimisation.

During in-depth discussions, the following main points were raised:

- The use of caravans as a residence by people who were registered outside the county. This added pressure on to existing services e.g. hospitals, doctors, schools etc. The precept was for the number of people registered within the county. The Service Manager: Strategic Development (SM:SD) ensured he would check the statistics with colleagues as to what the latest position was. At this point, the Corporate Director: Economic and Community Ambition confirmed there was a live piece of work taking place regarding people residing in caravans and she would ensure colleagues in Planning and Public Protection would keep Members informed. It was also raised that there were single caravans on pieces of land in which people resided and those would need to be included within the investigation.
- The work taking place between the six Local Authorities and the Local Health Board working required a strategy that action would be taken following this report. The SM:SD confirmed he would ensure the changes would be noted and the report be correct in that respect.
- Working with veterans would be required as they had specific needs and there were a large number who were homeless.

- Petty crimes committed by school aged children who were vulnerable between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. It had been requested research take place covering the end of the school day and the time parents returned home from work. The SDO confirmed the question would be fed back to the Steering Group and the response included in a further document.
- During the past 2 years, there had been a significant improvement in the wellbeing of young carers. Denbighshire had been working in partnership with social services, Wrexham and Conwy Council, together with the Health Board and the work was developing immensely.
- It was agreed that the Assessment needed to be more than a worded document. The Assessment would inform the North Wales area plan which had to be produced by 1st April 2018. Denbighshire would need to continue working with partner Authorities, the Local Health Board and the third sector in producing this plan. Members were also to be encouraged to be involved with the work on the area plan.
- North Wales had a high number of children from outside the region who were being looked after locally and the number had been increasing. This placed additional demand on local services. Information was being collated and it was to be part of the next phase and partnership key element.
- Denbighshire were increasing the provision of Extra Care Housing as an alternative to residential care (unless nursing or mental health care was required). Analysis in February 2016 suggested, with the exception of Elderly Mental Health Nursing, in most areas there were sufficient care home beds to meet demand and over-capacity in certain areas.
- People moving into care homes from outside the region – some of those placements would be self-funded. If people needed to be closer to their families, they could purchase a bed in a care home directly, likewise if anyone needed to move from Denbighshire to another area. This would need to be addressed in the future.
- The impact of Berwyn Prison, Wrexham would be addressed. A Homeless Strategy was currently being developed. Prisoners were referred to a housing officer to deal with their needs prior to discharge from prison. This would need to be addressed and consultation with colleagues with a possible report back to Council in 2-3 months' time.
- Welsh language was a key priority. 25% of the population of Denbighshire were Welsh speakers. There were some challenges to recruit Welsh speaking staff in some areas.
- There were four wards in Denbighshire which were in the top twenty most deprived areas in Wales (Welsh Government 2014). The figures were produced every three years with the next being produced in 2018.
- Reference was made to high rates of smoking and obesity levels in Denbighshire as compared to other North Wales authorities

The Corporate Director: Communities explained the North Wales Population Assessment had to be produced and published by 1 April 2017 but any chapters could be referred to Scrutiny. The statutory requirement was to have it published and agreed by 1 April 2017 but it was a living document, and this was one area of information which could shape and develop that.

The Lead Member for Social Care, Adult & Children's Services clarified that work had been taking place across North Wales with all six Local Authorities and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

She confirmed that the Berwyn Prison issue was being led by Wrexham County Council, and the Population Assessment was being led by Conwy County Borough Council.

At this juncture the Lead Member expressed gratitude to all the work which had been carried out over the years by Gwynfor Griffiths, the Service Manager: Strategic Development. He was retiring at the end of March 2017 and wished him well in his retirement.

RESOLVED that subject to the above, Members approved the draft Population Assessment pending the final versions being produced.

5 COUNCIL TAX 2017/18 AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS

The Lead Member for Finance, Corporate Plan and Performance, Julian Thompson-Hill, introduced the report (previously circulated).

Councillor Thompson-Hill particularly referred to:

- the main features of the budget had been approved on 31 January 2017
- observations of the Head of Finance on the robustness of the budget estimates
- a breakdown of the precepts from City, Town and Community Councils and the Police & Crime Commissioner for North Wales, and
- Recommendations for the levels of Council Tax for 2017/18.

A minority of Members expressed their disagreement to the rate of council tax set as they had the opinion that more cuts should be carried out to ensure that Denbighshire were a leaner and sharper Local Authority.

Following the discussion it was:

RESOLVED that Council unanimously:

- Note that it is necessary for the County Council, as the Billing Authority, to consider the precepts received from the Police & Crime Commissioner for North Wales and the Town/Community Councils and declare the Council Tax levels for the 2017/18 financial year*
- Approve the recommendation that the amounts calculated by the Council for the 2017/18 financial year, in accordance with Sections 32 to 34 (1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (the Act) and Alteration of Requisite Calculations (Wales) Regulations 2008 be as Appendix A section 3*
- Approve the recommendation that the amounts calculated by the Council for the 2017/18 financial year, in accordance with Sections 34 (2) to 36 (1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (the Act) be as Appendix A section 4*
- That the amounts of Council Tax for the 2017/18 financial year for each of the categories of dwellings be as shown in Appendix C*

- (v) *Approve the level of discount for Class A, B and C as prescribed under the Council Tax (Prescribed Class of Dwellings)(Wales) Regulations 2004 be set at zero for the financial year 2017/18 with the caveat that this is dependent on no changes to legislation or local conditions.*

At this juncture (12.10 p.m.) there was a 20 minute break.

The meeting reconvened at 12.30 p.m.

6 CAPITAL PLAN 2016/17 - 2019/20

The Lead Member for Finance, Corporate Plan and Performance, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, introduced the Capital Plan report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an updated Capital Plan including an update on major projects and the Corporate Plan.

The full Capital Plan had been last reported to Council in February 2016. Monthly updates had been presented to Cabinet. The estimated Capital Plan was now £38.9million. The Plan had been updated since being report to Cabinet on 24 January 2017.

Councillor Thompson-Hill guided Members through the report.

The Leader, Councillor Hugh Evans, clarified that during the term of the current council, a very ambitious Corporate Plan had been set. It had been Denbighshire's intention to deliver modern schools, good highways, leisure facilities and extra care housing. It had been an internally robust challenge. The Leader expressed thanks to the finance officers for all their work and confirmed he supported the recommendations within the report.

Councillor Thompson-Hill responded to questions raised regarding various aspects of the Capital Plan. Main areas of discussion focused on the following:

- Councillor Stuart Davies queried the money being spent in Rhyl particularly for the Rhyl Aquatic Centre. It was confirmed that Rhyl Town Council were supporting the project with a contribution of £2.3million towards the scheme in the same way Prestatyn Town Council had previously supported the Scala by contributing £1.1 million. Councillor Davies responded that the Town Council precepts should have been increased to fund the project further.
- Agricultural Estates – the council own a number of units and have a strategy whereby the tenants have the right to offer to buy all or part of the buildings, and some capital receipts were as a result of sales which had gone through.

Members expressed their gratitude to the Head of Finance, Richard Weigh and his team, together with the Lead Member, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill for all their hard work.

RESOLVED that:

- *Members note the latest position on the 2016/17 element of the Capital Plan and the update on major projects*

- *Members support the recommendation of the Strategic Investment Group as detailed in Appendix 5 and summarised in Appendix 6*
- *To approve the 2017/18 Capital Plan*

7 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2017/18 (TMSS) AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2017/18 - 2019/20

The Lead Member for Finance, Corporate Plan and Performance, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, introduced the report (previously circulated) seeking the approval of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2017/18 together with the Prudential Indicators 2017/18 to 2019/20.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice on Treasury Management required the Council to approve the TMSS and Prudential Indicators annually.

Council considered the report and following discussion, Members expressed their thanks to the Head of Finance, Richard Weigh and his team, together with Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill for all their hard work.

RESOLVED that Council approves:

- *The Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2017/18 detailed in Appendix 1 to the report*
- *The setting of Prudential Indicators for 2017/18, 2018/19, and 2019/20 detailed in Appendix 1 Annex A to the report*
- *The Minimum Revenue Provision Statement as detailed in Appendix 1 Section 6 to the report.*

8 COUNTY COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

The Head of Legal, HR & Democratic Services informed Members there was to be a Council Briefing on 6 March 2017.

The Full Council date of 4 April 2017 was to be kept free unless any urgent matters arose.

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

The meeting concluded at 1.40 p.m.