

## **PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held in via WebEx on Thursday, 1 October 2020 at 10.00 am.

### **PRESENT**

Councillors Ellie Chard, Ann Davies, Hugh Irving (Vice-Chair), Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Bob Murray, Paul Penlington, Pete Prendergast, Arwel Roberts (Chair) and Peter Scott

Cabinet Members Councillor Mark Young and Richard Mainon attended at the committee's invitation for agenda items relating to their portfolios.

Observers – Councillors Meirick Lloyd Davies and Tony Thomas

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Chief Executive (JG), Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation (AS), Head of Planning and Public Protection (EJ), Traffic, Parking and Road Safety Manager (MJ), Team Leader – Tourism, Marketing and Events (PMcD), Democratic Services Manager (SP), Scrutiny Co-ordinator (RE), Host of WebEx (KJ), and Committee Administrator (SLW)

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Martyn Holland

At the beginning of the meeting a tribute was paid to the late Councillor Huw Jones, who had been the Committee's Chair since 2017. Denbighshire had lost a hard worker who was considerate and his sense of humour will be missed. He was always conscientious and a true friend. Thanks were extended to Councillor Hugh Irving for stepping into the Chair during Councillor Jones' illness.

The Chair welcomed Councillors Paul Penlington and Peter Prendergast to their first meeting of Performance Scrutiny as Members of the Committee.

#### **2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

No declarations of interest were made.

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

No urgent items had been raised with the Chair ahead of the meeting.

#### **4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held on 30 January 2020 were submitted.

Page 5 – Councillor Ann Davies, corrected the declaration of interest as her grandson was a pupil at Ysgol Glan Clwyd

Councillor Arwel Roberts also corrected the declaration of interest as he clarified he was no longer a Governor of Ysgol Dewi Sant

### **Matters Arising –**

Page 6 – members questioned whether any further information was available regarding Meifod Wood and other work opportunities services currently being reviewed. The Scrutiny Co-ordinator confirmed enquiries had been made with the Service Manager, Client Services who had advised that COVID had caused a delay as a number of services had closed temporarily due to the pandemic. Progress had been made regarding Popty and Y Bont.

Page 7 – The funding of £120k - £150k for the refurbishment work to accommodate the relocation of services to both County Hall and Denbigh was not yet confirmed and the Scrutiny Co-ordinator would make further enquiries.

Page 10 – Welsh Street naming and number – Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies asked whether Cabinet accepted the recommendation. The Scrutiny Co-ordinator confirmed she was waiting for a reply from Officers.

Page 11 – Members enquired whether Rhyl Library was proposed to be relocated to the Queens Market site. The Chief Executive confirmed there were different phases to the redevelopment of the Queens Market site which had not yet been progressed.

Agreement on the recommendation was by consensus. No formal vote was taken. All members indicated they were in favour of the recommendation, no one indicated they were against it and no one indicated they wanted to abstain.

***Resolved: - subject to the above corrections, that the minutes of the Performance Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 30 January 2020 be approved as a true and correct record.***

## **5 POST COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN FOR THE BUSINESS SUPPORT RECOVERY PRIORITY**

The Lead Member for Planning, Public Protection and Safer Communities, Councillor Mark Young, introduced the Examination of the Post Covid 19 recovery plan for the business support recovery priority report (previously circulated).

The recovery plan was in relation to business support and for members to understand the progress made to date and the interaction with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) Programme office on economic recovery.

Coronavirus was a public health crisis but the impact on the economy and businesses was also crucially important. Following the shutdown of town centres,

businesses struggled to recover in the medium and long term. It was also possible some businesses may never recover.

The Business Support Recovery Theme had four sub themes and each sub theme had a lead officer who would produce a recovery plan for each sub theme:

- Town Centre – Lead Officer Mike Jones
- Business Contact – Lead Officer Gareth Roberts
- Tourism – Lead Officer Peter McDermott
- Procurement – Lead Officer Helen Makin

The plans for each sub theme were at various stages of development, however, there was a great deal of “business as usual” support work which was going on.

Mike Jones, Traffic, Parking and Road Safety Manager and Peter McDermott, Team Leader – Tourism, Marketing and Events gave a brief update to members regarding Town Centre and Tourism sub-themes.

During discussions, the following points were raised:

- Officers confirmed that parking charges had been a Lead Member delegated decision following discussions with Cabinet. Initially at the beginning of lockdown parking was free to aid key workers and volunteers. Charges were re-introduced to all car parks on 3 August 2020. A small number of car parks continued to have free parking for up to 2 hours which would continue to 31 December 2020. To date, no decisions had been made to extend the period.
- How often public toilets were cleaned was information which Mike Jones confirmed he would look into and circulate to members.
- Councillor Paul Penlington expressed his disagreement with the information given by Mike Jones as he stated that regarding High Street management, he saw no signs of this in Prestatyn. He also questioned the hands free facility for parking payment machines. Officers responded to clarify, firstly that there were notification stickers on all car park machines notifying customers of an app which could be applied to all car parks throughout the county. Secondly, it was also confirmed that there were signs throughout Prestatyn High Street and officers could provide Councillor Penlington with plans of where signage had been placed. Ed Parry had contacted the relevant ward members who covered Prestatyn High Street to set up a site meeting to discuss the proposed work for Prestatyn High Street. Councillor Hugh Irving confirmed he had received an email and would be happy to attend a site meeting. Members confirmed that ward members should be consulted about works taking place in their wards together with Member Area Groups. Businesses and Business groups should also be consulted in the future.

At this juncture, the Chief Executive, confirmed that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had confirmed members and business groups should be consulted as it was an essential part of their role.

- Issues were raised regarding Caravan sites during the current lockdown changes. It was questioned how caravan owners would be able to close and secure their caravans for the winter. Officers confirmed the Welsh Government had released frequently asked questions about health

protection zones and clarification of the restrictions. The wording within the guidance was “reasonable excuse”. Denbighshire County Council (DCC) needed to contact North Wales Police about this for clarity and would then communicate it to all caravan site owners. Officers were also to contact other LAs to enable consistency.

- Information about support to businesses following the Welsh Government announcement and more grant support for businesses which fall within zones were available from the DCC website. The Service was working closely with Council’s Economic and Business Development Service and the Customers, Communication and Marketing Service to highlight what was available via press releases and social media. Mike Jones would work with town centre groups to give them direction as to where they can access information
- The Head of Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services undertook to check with the UK Government on schemes available for self-employed people and to publicise those that were available.

Agreement on the recommendation was by consensus. No formal vote was taken. All members indicated they were in favour of the recommendation, no one indicated they were against it and no one indicated they wanted to abstain.

***Resolved:*** - ***subject to the observations and suggestions made during the discussion, to support officers in the work undertaken in relation to supporting businesses within the County and also their continued contribution to the regional economic recovery work in partnership with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Programme Office and Welsh Government (WG)***

**At his juncture (11.15 a.m.) there was a 10 minute break.**

**The meeting re-convened at 11.25 a.m.**

## **6 EMBEDDING NEW WAYS OF WORKING**

The Lead Member for Corporate Services and Strategic Direction, Councillor Richard Mainon, introduced the Embedding New Ways of Working report (previously circulated).

Many of the Council’s functions had been delivered successfully through virtual working during the pandemic. Users accessing the Council’s systems virtually had risen during the pandemic from approximately 200 per day up to almost 1600. Most meetings, operational and democratic, were currently “virtual”.

Benefits of working this way had reduced the Council’s carbon impact due to business mileage and travel to meetings being reduced. Local traffic congestion and consequent pollution had reduced and working from home had improved the work life balance for many people, staff and Members alike.

For these reasons, it was proposed the model be maintained when social distancing was no longer required. Most routine meetings should be virtual and working from home full time/ part time should be the normal way of working.

All details were in full within the Appendix of the report.

The Chief Executive confirmed her agreement with the Lead Member and also stated it had been a positive impact on most staff. Staff had received a questionnaire for their views on the ways of working during the pandemic. Feedback from staff had been that working from home was good for a majority of people's mental health, whereas a minority found it was not suitable for them. The Chief Executive also confirmed the way people work would not go back to how they were pre-pandemic. Home working was also making DCC more attractive as an employer due to the fact that future employees could be living outside the area as they would be working from home.

The Head of Business Improvement & Modernisation informed members that following the staff questionnaire 80% of staff stated they preferred to work from home. Staff also stated it was time to change the way of working. The results of the questionnaire was to be discussed during SLT that afternoon. Members had also been sent a questionnaire regarding the way forward of working. The consultation with members was due to end during the current week. Technology had improved immensely since the start of lockdown. The Lead Member, Councillor Richard Mainon, was to form a Working Group with members to assess the results of both staff and members' questionnaires.

During discussions, the following points were raised:

- The mental wellbeing of staff who live alone was raised. Officers confirmed that in the future there could be a hybrid way of working with possibly splitting the working week to part time at home and part in the office. Also it would be positive for all staff to meet in the office or other venues to network and to catch up with colleagues.
- As less staff were attending office buildings members questioned whether there was the prospect of selling any buildings. The Lead Member confirmed there would be a review of council buildings in the future but this was not imminent.
- The potential economic impact on the county's town centres and local businesses due to a reduction in footfall in town centres due to Council and other large employers' staff working more from home
- To assist staff there were two schemes with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) where staff could claim tax relief for working from home or put in a pro-rata claim for household bills.
- Members raised the fact that the translation facility needed to be in place during meetings and officers confirmed this was in the process of being organised and currently being tested. Bi-lingual public committee meetings would soon be taking place via Zoom.

The Chief Executive thanked members for their comments, especially regarding the welfare of staff. Managers were in regular contact with their staff whilst home working. A hybrid balance of future working seemed to be the most appropriate

way forward. Staff could attend at a council building or other facility for team building or networking but the buildings would require to be reconfigured. This was the way forward.

Agreement on the recommendation was by consensus. No formal vote was taken. All members indicated they were in favour of the recommendation, no one indicated they were against it and no one indicated they wanted to abstain.

**Resolved: - subject to the above observations:**

- (i) to receive the information provided in relation to the Council adopting new ways of working as part of the recovery process; and***
- (ii) support the potential opportunities for the Authority to embed new and more effective ways of working into future working practices.***

## **7 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator introduced the report (previously circulated) seeking Members' review of the Committee's work programme and providing an update on relevant issues. Members were reminded that the proposal form for scrutiny topics (appendix 2) should be completed for the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group to review and allocate items of business.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator explained that the report appeared different to the usual forward work programme as in June/July Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group met to look into how to restart Scrutiny going forward. A decision was taken to clear the forward work programme of the three Scrutiny Committees and put the items on to a holding list.

Items to be put forward to the 26 November meeting was as follows:

- Corporate Risk Register
- Corporate Plan Q2 2020/21
- with the remaining topics on the holding list been scheduled as and when appropriate

The late Councillor Huw Jones had been the Committee's representative on the Strategic Investment Group (SIG). As this was an important group which had powers to make decisions, a representative and a deputy were requested to be appointed. The Group met on a monthly basis following Cabinet. It was, therefore, proposed that the Chair and Vice-Chair of Performance Scrutiny Committee would be the representative and deputy representative.

Agreement on the recommendation was by consensus. No formal vote was taken. All members indicated they were in favour of the recommendation, no one indicated they were against it and no one indicated they wanted to abstain.

The Committee:

**Resolved: -**

- (i) subject to the above observations and the inclusion of the specified items on the forward work programme to confirm the Committee's Forward Work Programme; and***
- (ii) that the Chair be appointed to serve as the Committee's representative on the Strategic Investment Group (SIG), with the Vice-Chair acting as a substitute representative on the Group in the event of the Chair's absence***

**The meeting concluded at 12:30 p.m.**