

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held in video conference on Thursday, 13 May 2021 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Brian Blakeley, Rachel Flynn, Merfyn Parry, Anton Sampson, Peter Scott, Glenn Swingler, Graham Timms (Vice-Chair), Cheryl Williams and Huw Williams (Chair).

Cabinet Members – The Leader Councillor Hugh Evans, Lead Member for the Economy and Corporate Governance, Councillor Mark Young Lead Member for Planning, Public Protection and Safer Communities and Councillor Brian Jones Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment.

Observers - Councillors Meirick Lloyd Davies, Alan James and Gwyneth Kensler.

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Economy and Public Realm (GB), Head of Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services (EJ) Strategic Planning and Housing Manager (AL), Head of Highways & Environmental Services (TW), Waste & Recycling Manager (TD), Scrutiny Coordinator (RE) and Committee Administrators (SJ and SLW).

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mabon ap Gwynfor and Tina Jones.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters were raised.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11 March 2021 were submitted.

No matters were raised in relation to the minutes.

It was:

Resolved: - that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2021 be received and approved as a correct record.

The Chair advised that in response to a request from the Leader, and with the agreement of all relevant Lead Members and officers, the order of business on the agenda would be varied. Business item number 6, 'Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment – Proposal to Establish a Task and Finish Group' would therefore be presented ahead of business item number 5, 'New Waste and Recycling Operating Model Progress Update'.

5 GYPSY & TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT - PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A TASK & FINISH GROUP

The Leader thanked the Chair and committee members for adjusting the agenda order.

The Leader, Lead member for Planning, Public Protection and Safer Communities, Head of Planning and Public Protection and the Planning and Public Protection Manager guided members through a power point presentation.

Members were reminded that a number of reports on the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation had been presented to scrutiny on numerous occasions. It was noted that the Lead members and officers had addressed a number of the concerns that had been raised by councillors. A project board had been established between Lead members and officers to engage with members at the earliest opportunity. It was explained that the focus of the discussion had been to establish a balanced Task and Finish group to assist with the accommodation assessment needs. The board would create a clear process to ensure Scrutiny members had a clear understanding of the process prior to any decisions made.

A brief background was presented to members. The last accommodation assessment had been completed in 2017, confirmation that it was due to be undertaken again.

The Head of Planning and Public Protection stressed the accommodation assessment was a duty of the authority to be completed every 5 years. The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was a housing needs assessment. Welsh Government had observed a number of Gypsy and Travellers that required a culturally appropriate accommodation. The GTAA would assess the need for Denbighshire families and would assess the need for families traveling through the authority. Welsh Government had set the methodology process to complete the GTAA.

Members were reminded that the current Local Development Plan (LDP) had been adopted in 2013. Significant changes within the authority had been observed causing the current LDP to become outdated. Research and work to update and create a new LDP had begun to include the new GTAA. Emphasis was made, that the GTAA was a legal document required for the new LDP.

Members were provided with a breakdown of the work that had begun in line with member's requests and suggestions.

The Lead Member guided members through the information provided on the proposed role for the Task and Finish group and Communities Scrutiny. The purpose of the Committee would be to support Cabinet and the GTAA project board with the development of a new GTAA. The importance on the objectives of the

group and proposed work was presented. The findings conclusions and any proposed recommendations would be reported to Communities Scrutiny for debate.

The Leader thanked the officers and Lead member for previous work and continued work to develop the GTAA.

The Chair thanked the Leader, Lead Member and officers for adopting the concerns of the Scrutiny feedback and providing further information to those concerns. During the discussions, officers and Lead Members expanded on the following:

- The legislation to include the GTAA within the LDP did create pressure for officers. It was stressed the GTAA was an important element of progressing the LDP.
- The timescale to present the GTAA to Welsh Government was February 2020. The current LDP would remain in place until a new agreed LDP was formed.
- The current assessment had identified a residential site was needed. That assessment remained in place. The new assessment would provide up to date information of what was needed in Denbighshire. Clarity was provided that any individual within the authority could approach the authority for support.
- The process proposed by officers was a positive method. Members agreed it was a more professional position to progress forward.
- The GTAA would be presented to Cabinet once the process had been completed with the support from Communities Scrutiny and the Task and Finish group.
- The GTAA was required to advance the LDP process. It was felt the first stage would be to create the GTAA and present it to Cabinet and Welsh Government. Following that process further discussion of the GTAA and LDP would be required.

The Committee:

Resolved: to agree –

- (i) to establish a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group to assist with and inform work on the new Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment; and***
- (ii) the draft Terms of Reference for the Group attached as Appendix 1 to the report.***

6 NEW WASTE & RECYCLING OPERATING MODEL PROGRESS UPDATE

The Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment introduced the report and appendices (previously circulated). He was accompanied by the Head of Highways and Environmental Services (HHES) and the Waste and Recycling Manager (WRM).

The HHES stated the last time the report was provided to the committee had been in October 2019. At that meeting, members requested a follow up report providing an update on pilot projects in the authority and to examine information on the

benefit realisation plan. The HHES explained the project was complex and had many elements.

The WRM summarised the benefits realisation plan update members had requested. The project had been launched initially to try and control increasing waste costs and prepare the move to the Welsh Government blueprint for recycling, with an aspiration to become the top recycling nation.

The project had observed two key benefits. The first key benefit illustrated had been the predicted recycling performance from the service had been 68% slightly below the statutory 70% target by 2024/25. Showing more work was needed. It was confirmed that approval to purchase new technology providing officers more data regarding collections had been obtained. It was stressed that the intention to microchip the residual bins that will be supplied as part of the service change in 2023. It was explained that work with Welsh Government on a new project for recycling absorbent hygiene waste had begun. It was explained that a tender had been advertised for a recycling facility of this nature in the authority.

Another key benefit of the scheme noted had been the extended producer responsibility scheme. The scheme's future aim was for manufacturers and producers to be responsible for funding the cost to collect recycling and waste from their products. An organisation would be established to provide local authorises the funding for the collection, education work, research and enforcement work. The quality of recyclable material collected would determine the amount of financial rebate Denbighshire received. By separating the recyclable material collected would maintain the quality of the waste.

The WRM confirmed two recycling projects had taken place one of the projects had been the trials of microchipping food waste caddies to assess resident's behaviours. The findings had found that media coverage of the project had impacted the amount of tonnes collected even after the pilot had concluded. The media surge had encouraged residents to request food caddies and become more aware of food waste recycling. The learning that had been observed would be adopted in future pilot schemes of microchipping bins.

The second project had been the 'Keeping up with the Joneses', unfortunately this project had to be stopped due to Covid-19 pandemic. This campaign had been aimed at encouraging residents to recycle material they were used to disposing of in the black bins. A 3 stage educational process was adopted. This campaign was intended to be run again in the West Rhyl area.

The Chair thanked the officers for the papers and updates. The Chair had received a question from a member of the public and addressed it to the officers. The resident had concerns that dog fouling bags would be disposed of in the black bins, and collected ever 4 weeks. The resident asked what would be the procedure for animal waste in the future.

The HHES acknowledged the concerns of residents, the position would continue that animal waste would be bagged and disposed of in the black bin waste. The HHES was not aware of any authority that offered a pet waste service. In his opinion it would not be a practical, it would be very difficult to employ individuals to collect pet waste. The HHES stated black bins do and smell. If residents cleaned the bins when needed it would reduce odours.

The Chair thanked the HHES and was grateful for the question from the member of the public. Following the introduction and discussions, officers and Lead Members expanded on the following:

- The outer casing of the reusable bags would be the only microchipped bag. It folds and gets put away, smaller bags are supplied for individual types of recycling. On the day of collection, the smaller bags would be placed in the outer casing to prevent birds getting the waste or it blowing away. The microchip would allow officers to offer support and educational information. A choice of bags or boxes would be offered. The HHES confirmed that different options would be offered to accommodate resident's needs. Members were informed properties that cannot store recycling or waste would also be on a different collection frequency to reduce build-up of waste in a limited space.
- It may be difficult to run a trial for Community Scrutiny members as it would be difficult to run two different models for collection at the same time. Further investigation to trial systems with Committee members in the future could be looked into. The Corporate Director confirmed discussions with officers and the Scrutiny Co-Ordinator to see how a trial for members could be arranged.
- Officers acknowledged vulnerable people may not understand the recycling and collection system. It was confirmed that exemption would be put in place if needed.
- Communication with residents would detail the service plan change. It provided members with the plan of change including the swapping of household bins. Ahead of the service change the launch of the absorbent hygiene product service would take place. Communication with residents would commence Spring 2023. Communal properties would be transferred over first.
- The preferred vehicle for collection are e-collect 26Tonne RCV. When the vehicles need updating all options including planned vehicles would be considered. Discussions with Welsh Government to aid the purchase of vehicles especially the kerbside collection vehicles. Trials of electric vehicles across North Wales was due to start. The data received from those trials would support the amount of electric vehicles Denbighshire ordered.
- The minimum cost reduction to the service of £500k included the cost of the prudential borrowing. Officers were hopeful the saving would be more. If members felt helpful a more detailed breakdown of the financial calculations could be provided.
- The market for recyclables will have an impact on the business model. The income calculated from selling recyclable waste within the report had been generated by market analysis, but could change. The impact would be at least as great if the collection model remained unchanged. Currently the authority paid for recyclable waste was taken to plant to be sorted. If the market value for recyclables changed, the cost to have the waste sorted was also likely to change. It was felt the new model would protect the service from market changes better than the existing service. Any savings observed had not been assumed, so had not been included in the future financial plan.
- The early roll out of trade and communal service included schools. The new model would be introduced to schools before the rollout to other residential groups. Support to set up recycling stations in schools to educate pupils so separate recycling would be offered to schools. The intention to work with

schools to educate and support staff and pupils to optimise recycling in schools. DCC serviced the collection from the majority of schools in the authority.

- The frontline operatives have worked well with the public and have knowledge of how to control difficult situations. Conflict management training was also offered to staff. To support staff, leaflets and information was to be offered to the public to reduce conflict and aid residents understanding.
- Discussions with Conwy County Borough Council to learn from the experiences they occurred with the change of service.
- Welsh Government had not imposed the change on local authorities. Denbighshire had decided to change the model and had approached Welsh Government for support.
- Officers had attended the Landlord Forum to communicate plans and proposed changes. The new Model had been presented at the last meeting. Landlords of West Rhyl had been informed of the changes and trials due to take place in Rhyl. The responsibility to have in place the correct recycling equipment for tenants was with the landlord.
- The issues identified at the Denbigh depot planning site had now been resolved. The work was now able to proceed. There was no concern on the impact of traffic for the area.
- Previously the bags provided for dog waste had not been biodegradable. As a service the bags would not be issued to pet owners. It was the responsibility of the pet owner to purchase waste bags.
- Further research into Charities and the support the authority could offer would continue. The existing service was a household service, to introduce a policy to include Charity waste collection would be a cost to the authority. Communication with charities to discuss options would be offered.

The Chair requested that an update be provided to the local MS and MP to inform them of the impending changes in the authority. Members thanked the officers for the comprehensive and coherent report and detailed responses to members concerns.

The Committee:

Resolved: - having considered all the information provided and subject to the above observations –

- (i) ***to receive the information in relation to the progress made to date by the Project Team delivering the new Waste and Recycling Service to residents by the Summer of 2023;***
- (ii) ***to endorse the Benefits Realisation Plan (Appendix II) and request that the Head of Highways and Environmental Services track the achievement of the benefits through the Annual Service Plan from 2023/24 onwards;***
- (iii) ***that the Head of Highways and Environmental Services brings a future report to Communities Scrutiny Committee on the pilot project outcomes in West Rhyl (use of microchip in waste containers) and Bron y Crest (communal bin service change);***

- (iv) *that further detailed information on the financial implications for the Council of the service model change be circulated to members of the Committee; and*
- (v) *confirms that, as part of its consideration, it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix VII)*

7 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Coordinator submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking members' review of the Committee's work programme and provided an update on relevant issues.

Discussion focused on the following –

- The items listed on the forward work programme for the next meeting on 01 July 2021 were reaffirmed. The Scrutiny Co-Ordinator confirmed the two agenda items on flooding would be available for the July meeting.
- The Chair had agreed to defer the agenda item on 'Flood Management Responsibilities in relation to the Rhyl Cut and Prestatyn Gutter' to September 2021.
- The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs had met and agreed for two reports to be included in the committee's forward work programme. Those had been:
 - 1- Feedback Received in response to the Council Housing Tenants Survey
 - 2- Denbighshire County Council's Flood Investigation Report into the January 2021 floods in the county.
- A special meeting of the committee to receive the report from the Task and finish group for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation may be required for July. A meeting invitation and date would be issued closer to the date if needed.
- The Scrutiny Co-Ordinator agreed to speak to the Head of Highways, Facilities and Environmental Services and the Waste and Recycling Service Manager to review a follow up Waste and recycling model report.
- Members were asked to submit any proposal forms regarding topics for scrutiny.
- Members were informed on the current difficulty in administrating a pre-meeting briefing. If members felt, there was a need to hold a meeting before a meeting to contact the Chair and the Scrutiny Co-Ordinator to discuss.

Resolved: - subject to the amendments and inclusions outlined in the report, and referred to above, to confirm the Committee's forward work programme.

8 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

The Chair informed the Committee that he had attended the Flood Risk Management and Riparian Land Ownership Task and Finish Group inaugural meeting. It had been a constructive first meeting with all organisations invited in attendance and indicating their willingness to work together in a bid to find sustainable solutions to manage and reduce the risk of flooding.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 p.m.