

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held in COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, RUTHIN AND BY VIDEO CONFERENCE on Thursday, 4 May 2023 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors - Michelle Blakeley-Walker, Karen Edwards (Vice-Chair), Pauline Edwards, James Elson, Jon Harland, Alan James, Brian Jones, Delyth Jones, Merfyn Parry, Cheryl Williams and Huw Williams (Chair)

Observers – Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Councillor Bobby Feeley, Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Councillor Barry Mellor and Councillor Mark Young

Lead Member – Lead Member for Environment and Transport, Councillor Barry Mellor

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Governance and Business (GW), Head of Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services (EJ), Traffic, Parking and Road Safety Manager (MJ), Team Leader - Tourism, Marketing & Events (PM), Interim Head of Highways & Environmental Services (AC), Scrutiny Coordinators (KE and RE) Senior Committee Administrator (KJ) and Committee Administrator (SJ).

1 APOLOGIES

Lead Member for Local Development and Planning, Councillor Win Mullen-James sent her apologies for item 5 – Draft Tourism Signage Strategy for Denbighshire.

Corporate Director – Economy and Environment, Tony Ward sent his apologies for the meeting. Gary Williams Corporate Director – Governance and Business attended in his place.

The Chair stressed the importance and valued input Lead Members offered to Scrutiny discussions and urged Lead Members to attend if they could.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No interests of a personal or prejudicial nature were declared.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No matters of an urgent nature had been raised with the Chair or the Scrutiny Co-ordinator prior to the commencement of the meeting.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9 March 2023 were submitted. It was:

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 09 March 2023 be received and approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

5 DRAFT TOURISM SIGNAGE STRATEGY FOR DENBIGHSHIRE

The Traffic, Parking and Road Safety Manager informed the Committee, unfortunately that the Lead Member could not attend to present the report as Officers had not provided adequate time for the Member to make arrangements to attend.

Members were guided to the report (previously circulated) which provided an update on the Draft Tourism Signage Plan previously referred to as the Tourism Signage Strategy. It was an action within the Council's Tourism Strategy that had been previously presented to Scrutiny in March 2020.

The purpose of the paper was to provide members with an update on projects completed to date, including the Vale of Clwyd brown signage scheme. It also proposed a streamline list of brown sign projects which included:

- the A55 key tourist signs listing local attractions,
- a replacement of the existing Rhyl sign on the westbound carriageway in advance of junction 27,
- a new sign for Rhyl placed on the eastbound carriage at junction 23a and
- brown signage for Prestatyn on the eastbound carriageway of the A55 which would mirror the signage currently in place on the westbound.

Members heard that the strategy intended to develop brown signage for Llangollen and review the existing signage on the approaches to the area, along with a review of the existing trunk road signage in Ruthin and Corwen.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his detailed presentation of the report. He raised concern that elements of the report seemed to be blank. During the discussion the following points were debated in greater detail:

- Officers stressed that the comment in relation to satellite navigation and the use of devices was acknowledging the increased use of devices by individuals to navigate to areas of interest. Members stressed that not all individuals use technology and often rely on brown signage to navigate an area.
- Trunk roads were managed by Welsh Government. They hold a policy in relation to brown signage, which states any tourist attraction signed from trunk roads could only be signposted from the nearest trunk road. In the case of Ruthin, the closest trunk road was the A494. Thus brown signage relating to Ruthin attractions could not be placed along the A55. A separate condition stated you could only signpost an attraction within a 10-mile radius of a trunk road.

- A previous Task and Finish Group had been established to review the concept of the original signage strategy which looked at tourism signage trails to complement the North Wales Way. A number of factors had resulted in some projects not progressing as quick as hoped for.
- Trails had not been included in the revised strategy. Members heard that work done on trails previously had increased awareness of trails in the area. Leaflets promoting areas of interest through the North Wales Way and Discover Denbighshire by Trails were published. Members were reminded a vast amount of information was available online for residents to access.
- Renewing the Rhyl signage would enable officers to include some of the new visitor attractions along the coast.
- A higher presence on social media to promote attractions would coincide with the use of brown signs.
- A review of the gaps in the resources was being undertaken. Recruitment was a challenge. Officers were discussing the team pressures and the resources needed in the service area.
- The signage proposed on both the East and West signage along the A55 was intended to encourage tourists travelling in both directions to the area.
- The well-being assessment report would be developed further to include information that had been omitted.
- Officers stated that signs were made of composite materials but were open to the use of other forms of materials.
- There was a lot of merit to the suggestion of officer and member walks around towns and areas. It would allow members to highlight areas of need or concern to officers. Officers agreed to discuss outside the meeting if walk around could be resourced.
- Initial work commenced on the Llangollen review 12 months ago, due to capacity issues it had not developed. It was hoped as part of the revised strategy that work could recommence. An assurance that work with the Local Members was provided.
- Members suggested that an update be presented to each Member Area Group on the revised strategy and the implications it would have in each area.
- Funding for brown signs was traditionally sought on an ad hoc approach from the tourism operator to the highways authority. Discussions with the trunk road agency would also take place if the request was received for trunk road signage. Criteria would have to be met to be granted permission for a brown sign. Cost estimates would be generated and presented to the tourism operator to determine if they wished to proceed.
- Feedback from businesses regarding brown signage was received from a number of different sources and forums held regularly. It was felt that brown signage was one element of tourism in the area along with technology, social media and communication with local residents.
- Welsh Government had a nationwide engagement plan to inform people of the changes to Welsh Law with regards to the speed limits.
- Members highlighted the importance of brown signage within the authority.
- Detailed within the papers was information regarding the installation of the new brown signage along the A55. As an authority Denbighshire were

supported of brown signs. The proposal was for additional brown signs not the removal of existing signs.

- The C360 process was used for initial queries for officers to contact residents or members to begin a dialogue.
- A Ministerial Statement released 30th March confirmed that Welsh Government intended to bring forward draft legislation in relation to a visitor levy.

The Chair thanked officers and committee members for the detailed discussion and noted additional recommendations to add to those detailed in the report.

RESOLVED - *subject to the above observations*

- I. to confirm that, as part of its consideration, it had read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment and requested that as the Tourism Signage Plan progressed and evolved the Well-being Impact Assessment be regularly reviewed and updated;*
- II. requested that a progress report on the development and implementation of the Tourism Signage Plan for Denbighshire be presented to the Committee in six months' time. The report to include a detailed action plan for its implementation and delivery, the estimated costs associated with its delivery, details of proposed funding streams to support its delivery, along with a revised Well-being Impact Assessment and details of information available on the Council's website on how local businesses could access and capitalise on tourism signage opportunities;*
- III. requested that with a view to exploring how all areas, both urban and rural, could maximise the economic impact and benefits to be realised from the Tourism Signage Plan that the Tourism Signage Plan for Denbighshire be presented to each Member Area Group (MAG) for discussion;*
- IV. requested that, when available, information be presented to elected members on the proposed new Visitor Levy, including the potential economic advantages and disadvantages of introducing a visitor levy in Denbighshire on the county's economy and its communities; and*
- V. requested that enquiries be made with satellite navigation developers on how tourist attractions in Denbighshire could be included on future navigational system updates or upgrades.*

6 FLOOD RISK WORKING GROUP

Lead Member for Environment and Transport, Councillor Barry Mellor along with the Interim Head of Highways & Environmental Services, introduced the report (previously circulated). The report was about the requirement for Denbighshire Council to produce a new Flood Risk Management (FRM) Strategy by 2024. The report updated the Committee on the work that had taken place since the previous report from the multi-agency and riparian landowners information sharing working group presented to the Committee on 10th March 2022.

The Lead Member stressed the report also requested Committee support to re-establish a Denbighshire County Council Working Group to oversee the development of a new FRM Strategy.

In addition, the Interim Head of Highways and Environmental Services stated that the proposal was for a single representative from each Member Area Group along with Highways and Environment and Planning and Public Protection Service Officers to form the Working Group. It was proposed that a Chair be nominated at the initial meeting, which would preferably be an elected Member representative. It was stressed that the focus of the group would be to develop the Council's strategy in conjunction with relevant partners. The strategy would also inform the Authority's Strategic Flood Consequences Assessment which had last been reviewed in November 2022. The Assessment required updating to reflect the changes to Welsh Governments Technical Advice Note 15.

Members heard that a review of the flood risk strategy had been commissioned. External consultants had been sought to assist, partly due to recruitment and retention issues.

The Chair thanked the Lead Member and Interim Head of Highways and Environmental Services for the detailed introduction to the report. It was confirmed that it would be each Member Area Group's decision to appoint a representative to attend the Working Group meetings.

Responding to members' questions, the Chair, Lead Member and officer advised that:

- They were aware of some outstanding actions from the previous group, those actions would figure heavily in the initial focus of the new group.
- Communication with stakeholders was currently underway to ensure the strategy complimented the work of stakeholders.
- Members stressed the importance of communication between stakeholders the authority and the group was vital.
- The previous working group had achieved greater dialogue and understanding of issues via meetings including various stakeholders, such as NRW, Welsh Water and Farming Unions. The establishment of the new working group would build on the foundations previously set.

Members requested that all stakeholders requested to be involved in the group to be notified of the group and encouraged to attend the meetings.

It was,

Following an in-depth discussion, the Committee:

RESOLVED *subject to the above comments,*

I. to support the proposal to re-establish a Denbighshire County Council Working Group to oversee the development of a new Flood Risk Management Strategy.

II. that a representative be sought from each Member Area Group to serve on the Working Group; and

III. that all stakeholders be made aware of the Working Group, invited and given sufficient notice of proposed meeting dates to ensure maximum attendance and engagement.

7 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Coordinator guided Members through the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme report (previously circulated).

The next meeting was scheduled for the 29 June 2023, proposed for that meeting was three agenda items. Further information had been sought with regards to the Llangollen carpark tariffs prior to the meeting. Members heard there had been a slight amendment to the Waste Strategy, the purpose of the Waste Strategy for the next meeting was the communication plan around absorbent hygiene products and the Waste Service changes for non-standard households. All Members were happy with the amendment.

Councillor Brian Jones asked if Members could request information on the financial impacts be included with the waste report as it was not connected to the Communication Strategy being presented. The Scrutiny Co-ordinator suggested members request a separate report on the finance aspects of the Strategy. The Chair suggested it may be the remit of the Performance Scrutiny Committee to debate that aspect of the Strategy.

Appendix 2 contained a copy of the Member Proposal form, the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group (SCVCG) were next due to meet on the 25 July 2023. Members were encouraged to complete the form with any items they thought merited consideration.

Appendix 3 to the report was the Cabinet's forward work should the Committee like to scrutinise forthcoming issues.

Appendix 4 – informed members of the recommendations made at the previous Scrutiny meeting and the progress made with their implementation.

Appendix 5 to the report was a request for expressions of interest to serve as committee representatives on the Service Challenge groups. Attached was a list of the expressions received to date. There were three Service groups that required a representative from Communities Scrutiny Members those were:

- Housing and Communities
- Corporate Support Service: Performance, Digital and Assets
- Corporate Support Service: People

The Chair asked members for any expressions of interest. It was explained each Service Group would hold a virtual meeting annually. It followed that:

- Councillor Cheryl Williams nominated herself to attend the Housing and Communities Service Challenge Group.
- Councillor Brian Jones nominated himself to attend the Corporate Support Service: Performance, Digital and Assets and
- Councillor Karen Edwards put her name forward to attend the Corporate Support Service: People.

The Chair thanked all members for representing the Committee on the Service Challenge Groups. He stressed to members if they were unable to attend a meeting to contact him and he would endeavour to attend.

Resolved:

(i) subject to the inclusion of the reports requested during the course of the meeting along with the additions and amendments outlined above, to confirm the Committee's Forward Work Programme as set out in Appendix 1; and

(ii) to appoint the members named below to serve as the Committee's representatives on the following Service Challenge Groups:

- Housing and Communities – Councillor Cheryl Williams***
- Corporate Support Service: Performance, Digital and Assets – Councillor Brian Jones***
- Corporate Support Service: People – Councillor Karen Edwards.***

8 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

None.

Councillor James Elson stated he would report back on the new Capital Scrutiny Group at the next Committee meeting.

The Chair thanked Officers, Lead Members and Members for attending the meeting. Thanks were also offered to the Scrutiny Co-ordinator for her support during and before the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 11.20 a.m.