

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, 27 March 2025 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Karen Edwards (Chair), James Elson, Hugh Evans, Jon Harland, Carol Holliday, Brian Jones, Delyth Jones and Merfyn Parry.

Lead Member for Environment and Transport, Councillor Barry Mellor for business contained under item 6 – Draft Local Toilet Strategy and Savings Proposals.
Leader/Lead Member for Economic Growth and Tackling Deprivation, Councillor Jason McLellan for business contained under item 7 – Rhyl Regeneration and Waterfront Masterplan

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Economy and Environment (TW), Principal Manager, Catering and Cleaning (HJ), Committee Administrator (RhT), Webcast Host (CM) and Scrutiny Coordinator (KE).

Before the meeting commenced the Scrutiny Coordinator (KE) advised the Committee that there had been a reorganisation of the Committee's membership.

Following the formation of a new independent group – Denbighshire Independent Alliance (DIA) – all committee memberships had been reviewed for political balance.

The former Chair, Councillor Huw Williams (DIA) had left the Committee and had been replaced with Councillor Hugh Evans (Independent Group).

Councillor Karen Edwards had been appointed Chair of Communities Scrutiny Committee by the Independent Group Leader.

Community Scrutiny Committee members wished to thank Councillor Hugh Williams for Chairing the Committee for many years.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Michelle Blakeley-Walker

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests to declare.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Before seeking nominations for the role of Vice-chair for the remainder of the 2025/25 municipal year, the Chair explained that there were no Communities Scrutiny Committee meetings scheduled before annual Council – after which

nominations for committee Vice-chair roles would be sought for the 2025/26 municipal year.

The Chair asked committee members whether they wished to appoint a Vice-chair at that time or defer the item to the next Communities Scrutiny Committee on 15th May, following annual Council.

Councillor Carol Holliday proposed that the appointment of Vice-chair be deferred until the Committee's next meeting. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Delyth Jones and agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED *that the appointment of Vice-chair of Communities Scrutiny Committee be deferred until their next meeting on 15th May 2025.*

4 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There were no urgent matters.

However, at the request of the Corporate Director: Economy & Environment to avoid duplication of work the two separate items on the Rhyl Regeneration & Governance Board and Rhyl Promenade Masterplan scheduled for the meeting had been amalgamated into one report - item 7 on the agenda.

5 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 6th February 2025 were submitted.

Matters arising:

Review Of Trollibocs Recycling Service and Associated Waste Collection Functions (page 10) – It was reported that there were still issues with communication around the resolution of issues with Trollibocs collections.

The Corporate Director: Economy and Environment reminded the Committee that the minutes were referring to the communications regarding End of Lane collections but he would liaise with the Member over that specific issue outside the meeting.

The Corporate Director was advised that local members had not received information relating to the number of End of Lane collections that were proposed in their wards.

RESOLVED *that the minutes of the meeting held on the 6th February 2025 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.*

6 DRAFT LOCAL TOILET STRATEGY & SAVINGS PROPOSAL

The Lead Member for Environment and Transport introduced the report (previously circulated). He informed the Committee that there were three reasons for presenting the report, to consider:

1. The Local Toilet Needs Assessment together with the public consultation that took place on the Interim Needs Assessment.
2. The draft Local Toilet Strategy and associated public consultation.
3. The options for each public convenience facility within Denbighshire.

The Lead Member assured the Committee that he understood the importance of public conveniences (PC) provision and had been working with the Service on a plan to keep PCs open where there was a clear need for them.

Referring to the report the Corporate Director: Economy and Environment highlighted important information within the report:

1. The Local Needs Assessment (appendix 1) which set out the needs for PCs in each town. It concluded that there was a need for PCs in Corwen, Denbigh, Llangollen, Prestatyn and Rhyl.
2. The Draft Local Toilet Needs Strategy (appendix 3) which set out the plan to achieve the overall aim for PC provision.
3. Current PC position and Requirements (appendix 5) applying the logic of the Draft Local Toilet Needs Strategy in tandem with the Authority's budgetary restraints.

The Strategy would compare the current level of provision across the County with the identified need in each town.

PCs in Towns with an identified need would be invested in upgraded facilities. Charges would be reviewed to contribute towards supporting those investments and operational costs. Operational processes and opening hours would be reviewed. The Council would also continue to explore options to transfer council run toilets to external organisations where possible, whilst continuing to look and expand the Community Toilet Scheme.

The following was being recommended:

1. Given that the provision of public conveniences was a discretionary service that the Council should cease to operate PCs where there was no identified need – Dyserth, Rhuddlan and St. Asaph.
2. Where Pod facilities were at their end of life, no longer serviceable, they should be decommissioned.
3. PCs in towns with an identified need should be invested in, in order to accept cashless payment and allow them to be unstaffed.

An application had been made to Welsh Government's Brilliant Basics Fund to contribute towards that investment with a decision expected in early April 2025. Further funding was being explored with conversations being held with City, Town and Community Councils regarding their ability to contribute towards the investment required and/or potentially reducing the cost of PC charges in their area.

Responding to members' questions Officer's advised:

- The main PC facility in each of the towns that had been identified as having a local need for PCs had been submitted for an application of Brilliant Basics grant funding. Where there was more than one PC facility in that town additional funding would need to be sourced. Next steps would depend on the outcome of the funding application.
- With the exception of Corwen Town Council there had been little appetite in the transference of PC facilities by other Town, City and Community Councils.
- Regarding forward planning over potential tourism growth in areas such as the AONB and other rural areas, the Needs Assessment followed a recognised methodology that concluded that it was a reasonable recommendation, that given PC provision was a non-statutory function with budgetary pressures, to cease providing that facility where there was no identified need.
- The alternative to a PC closure could be for the local TC&CC to increase their levy to support the financial burden of the PCs remaining open. Discussions with TC&CC were ongoing. It was important to note that TC&CC would be asked to provide financial support for the PC facilities in their community rather than the Service as a whole.
- If the Brilliant Basics funding did not materialise further conversations would be required with the TC&CC and Capital Scrutiny Group.
- A few Pod facilities were no longer working and parts for repair were obsolete or software no longer supported. They, along with the other Pods that were coming to their end of life would be decommissioned.
- The Authority's responsibility was to identify where there was a need for PCs and meet that need where possible. However, it did not have a duty to provide them.
- In some areas the need for PC facilities identified was greater than supplied. The Authority was trying to supplement further provision by promoting the Community Toilet Scheme, further work was needed in that area.
- The report going to Cabinet in April was seeking a decision on the Draft Local Toilet Strategy. Further work was required, dependent on the level of funding obtained and consultation with the various TC&CC, before a decision could be made on individual PC facilities.
- More work was needed on the financial modelling in terms of PC charges. As many of the PC's had not previously been chargeable there was no way of knowing what the potential level of income could be.

Members speculated that in areas where no need had been identified the probability would be that visitor numbers would fluctuate through the year. They asked whether TC&CC could be asked to contribute to seasonal opening costs for PCs?

It was suggested that the payment offered as part of the Community Toilet Scheme should be reviewed as the extra cost to a business for providing the service would not be covered by £500.

The Committee asked whether too much focus was being placed on visitors and not enough on residents' needs, particularly from a health, wellbeing and accessibility perspective. In rural areas access to PCs provide peace of mind for those with ill health, disabilities and mobility issues to have confidence in being able to live active local lives.

The Committee recommended that when engaging with TC&CC the economic benefit to their community from residents and visitors seeking a rest stop should be highlighted.

Members asked that when the report was presented to Cabinet for a decision information was included on the STEAM matrix used to calculate a town's visitor numbers and subsequent identified need requirement for PCs.

It was noted that the level of concern raised by members and residents during the consultations over proposals to potentially close some PCs was so great that it was felt that the provision of PCs, where there was an identified need, should be a statutory requirement – funded by Welsh Government. The Authority, via its local Councillors should lobby WG for a change in statutory obligation for the service. A lack of public conveniences raised significant public health issues.

Officers were thanked for the level of detail contained in the report.

RESOLVED:

- I. that the feedback and observations provided during the discussion be considered as part of the Local needs Assessment and Draft Local Toilet Strategy;***
- II. the current PC provision and the options being considered for each facility be noted, with recommendations that further talks be undertaken with TC&CCs to support those facilities in their communities; and***
- III. the Committee read, understood, and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment.***

7 RHYL REGENERATION PROGRAMME AND WATERFRONT MASTERPLAN

The Leader / Lead Member for Economic Growth and Tackling Deprivation introduced the report (previously circulated). He advised that Levelling Up Fund monies were coming through, together with those from Plans for Neighbourhoods (previously known as Long Term Plans For Towns).

There was a high level of activity around:

- Queen's Market
- Expressions of interest for Vue Cinema
- The Waterfront Masterplan.

The Corporate Director: Economy and Environment gave an update on the Rhyl Regeneration Programme which largely focussed on capital projects – physical and environmental issues - which was intended to lead to economic growth and job creation. The programme linked to other issues associated with homelessness; long term inactivity; crime and anti-social behaviour.

The Council had been successful in securing grant funding to deliver significant capital schemes with over £200m of capital investment being delivered over the past decade.

There was a further £12m to be invested in four additional projects to improve the town centre and promenade over the next three years. The £20m grant from the Plans for Neighbourhoods Fund would allow a long term, community led regeneration strategy to be delivered over the next 10 years.

The pillar of the programme was the Rhyl Town Centre Vision. The plan was developed six years ago, some projects had been delivered whilst others had not. Society had changed over those years – mainly due to the global pandemic – and the Vision needed to be reviewed to ensure it was compatible with the next 10 year plan.

Similarly, the Rhyl Waterfront Masterplan had been produced several years ago. It was an ambitious concept with all the elements subject to securing funding to deliver them along with some private investment. The proposal was to develop four distinct zones along the waterfront (appendix a).

A draft 3D model of the waterfront and town centre had been included in the report (appendix b). The plan had been commissioned for marketing purposes, as a showcase to highlight how the waterfront had been developed over the past decade and could be used to model future developments and encourage private investments within Rhyl. The aspiration was that Rhyl would reach the position where public sector intervention was no required, and the private market took over.

Responding to the Committee's questions the Leader and Director advised that:

- The Department for Communities (previously Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) was committed to making value for money permanent change to communities (The Terms of Reference for long term plans for the Department would be shared with the Committee).
- A public engagement programme would commence shortly to establish how the Vision fit in with the communities' needs.
- The success of the regeneration of Rhyl would benefit the whole county/region.
- The biggest challenge for Rhyl was its reputation due to negative media coverage that it had attracted over recent years. There was a media campaign being launched to promote positive aspects.
- The newly established Rhyl Neighbourhood Board was comprised of independent representatives from the community rather than councillors.
- Community and youth services groups would be involved in the Vision consultation.
- There was a role for social media to play in Rhyl's Vision engagement process with the local community. Whilst local Facebook pages could be used to seek the view of local residents', Facebook was not the social media platform of choice for the younger demographic.
- There was confidence that the Queen's Market facility would be open by the summer (2025).

Members expressed the view that public engagement needed to be undertaken across the county to promote Rhyl's regeneration. Rhyl and its waterfront had historically been the seaside destination for Denbighshire residents. There was a need to publicise the benefit of its regeneration to all residents.

Members also encouraged liaising with neighbouring towns, Kinmel Bay and Towyn as part of the Tourism Strategy. The Leader agreed and advised that work around the Marina would facilitate that.

There was an invitation to all Denbighshire's County Councillors to visit the site of the new Queen's Market on 10th April. The Committee welcomed the invitation and suggested all members would be interested in receiving updates on the Regeneration progress rather than communication to the Rhyl Member Area Group.

The Committee requested that an update report be provided once the engagement process had completed and the Rhyl Vision Plan established.

RESOLVED that:

- I. ***the feedback and observations provided during the discussion be considered as part of the delivery of the Rhyl Regeneration Programme and the Rhyl Waterfront Masterplan; and***
- II. ***an update report be presented to Communities Scrutiny Committee following completion of the consultation process and establishment of Rhyl Town Centre Vision Plan.***

8 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator (KE) introduced the forward work programme that could be seen in appendix 1.a.

The next meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for the 15th May 2025. There were three items on the agenda:

1. Update on the Tourism Signage Strategy;
2. Waste Recycling Service – a comparison of the income generated from the recycling service against that predicted plus an update on the proposed End of Lane Collection service; and
3. Emergency Heating Provision.

The update on the Rhyl Regeneration and Waterfront Masterplan discussed earlier would be added to the 'future' items on the forward work programme pending the conclusion of the public consultation and establishment of the Rhyl Town Centre Vision Plan.

The next meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-chairs Group would be 28th April. Scrutiny Proposal forms could be found in appendix 2 for members to submit any items for consideration of scrutiny.

9 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

None.

Meeting concluded at 11:45am