

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held in the Assembly Rooms, Town Hall, Ruthin on Monday, 23rd October, 2000 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Councillors E.C. Edwards (Leader), I.M. German, D.M. Holder, G.M. Kensler, D.M. Morris, E.A. Owens, A.E. Roberts, W.R. Webb and K.E. Wells.

Observers - Councillors P. Douglas, S. Drew, R.E. Jones and C.H. Williams.

ALSO PRESENT

Deputy Chief Executive, County Clerk, Financial Controller, Assistant Chief Executive (Strategy) and Administration Services Manager.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE WERE RECEIVED FROM

Councillors R.W. Hughes and E.W. Williams.

656. URGENT MATTER

The Leader gave notice of the following item which in his opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972:-

- (i) Relocation and Removal Expenses for Newly Appointed Staff.

657. RELOCATION AND REMOVAL EXPENSES FOR NEWLY APPOINTED STAFF IN DENBIGHSHIRE

(This item was considered as a matter of urgency, notice having been given by the Leader).

The Head of Personnel reported that a relocation package of up to £3,000 (plus removals) had been approved by this Authority in August 1996 and since that time the amount had been increased in line with the annual rise in the Retail Price Index. He felt that the current relocation package did not compare favourably with other unitary authorities in Wales and suggested that the relocation package be increased up to a maximum of £5,000.

Councillor E.A. Owens felt that the increase was reasonable and in line with the relocation packages offered by other local authorities in Wales. Councillor D.M. Holder suggested that the review of the relocation package should have been undertaken prior to the appointment of the new Corporate Directors. In response to a question from Councillor Holder, the Head of Personnel indicated that two newly appointed staff would make use of the relocation package.

RESOLVED that the relocation package for newly appointed staff be increased to a maximum of £5,000.

658. ANNOUNCEMENT

The Leader reported that over the past week there had been announcements of some 290 new jobs within the County. Denbighshire's job prospects had been boosted by the official opening of the area's first Japanese owned factory T.R.B. at the St. Asaph Business Park; the take-over at the former Kwik Save HQ at Prestatyn by W.T.J. (Holdings) Ltd. and the Hotpoint announcement of a major investment at its Bodelwyddan Plant.

In welcoming the news the Leader paid tribute to the efforts of the officers from the Economic Development and the Chief Executive's Departments who had been working in tandem with those Companies.

659. MINUTES OF THE CABINET

The Minutes of the Cabinet held on the 28th September, 2000 (previously distributed) were submitted.

Matters Arising:-

(i) Item 11 (Members Involvement in Best Value)

Councillor G.M. Kensler, on behalf of Councillor E.W. Williams, felt that the minute should have included a reference to the Protocol for Members on raising Best Value issues. Councillor Williams had indicated that Members should raise Best Value issues with himself as Lead Cabinet Member who would then approach relevant Lead Cabinet Members and officers to pursue any issues which needed scrutinising with regard to Best Value. The Leader indicated that a Protocol would be developed for all Cabinet Members.

(ii) Item 18 (Wales Charter for Councillors)

The County Clerk indicated that the media training costs for Members would be approximately £2,000 and all Members should receive that basic training. Councillor E.A. Owens sought information on how the media training would be financed. The County Clerk indicated that the funding within the Groups Budgets was now very limited and the Leader agreed to address the problem of funding for media training.

(iii) Item 27 (West Rhyl Renewal Area - Housing Regeneration Grant Funding)

Councillor D.M. Morris reported that the inaugural meeting of the Members/Officers Working Group would be held on the 10th November, 2000.

RESOLVED that subject to the above the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on the 28th September, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

660. REVENUE BUDGET 2000/01

Councillor E.A. Owens, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting Members to consider what action was necessary to keep the Council's Recovery Plan on target. Councillor Owens referred to the appendix attached to the report which analysed the pressures for 2000/01 and gave details of the unidentified cuts; the underachieved cuts; new pressures and any savings.

Councillor Owens reported that:-

- savings would accrue within the Education Directorate through accommodation moves, the plans for which would be finalised fairly shortly and indicated that those accommodation moves might have an effect on other Directorates;
- a refund of £60k on rates had been received from the Llangollen International Pavilion but that no other substantial savings would be made in the Planning and Economic Development Budget;
- some savings had been made in the Technical Services Budget which had been appreciated but the officers could not identify any further cuts;
- a notable increase in the new pressures within the Social Services budget had taken place relating to the Children's and Adult (Provider) Services, and
- the process for identifying cuts within Directorates was nearing completion and a report thereon would be submitted to the District Auditor.

Councillor W.R. Webb, Lead Cabinet Member for the Property Portfolio raised concern that he had not been consulted on the proposed accommodation moves in the Education Directorate which might conflict with work already undertaken within his portfolio. Councillor E.A. Owens indicated that she would provide Councillor Webb with a report on the proposed accommodation plans when they were finalised.

In response to a request from Councillor G.M. Kensler, Councillor Owens agreed to arrange for dates to be inserted on the Appendix to the Revenue Budget.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the report be received and noted, and*
- (b) *the Lead Cabinet Members for Education, Leisure, Environment and Personal Services consider, as a matter of urgency, the unidentified and underachieved target budget reductions, together with the new budget pressures, with the intention of identifying necessary budget reductions and report back to the Cabinet thereon.*

661. HOUSING BENEFITS RECOVERY PLAN

The Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor E.A. Owens, submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking confirmation of the following recommendations from the Resources Scrutiny Committee on 11th October, 2000:-

- (i) that the Revenues Office in Russell House be open for a period of two days only each week for eight weeks and the adoption of a package of customer service improvements, and
- (ii) that agreement be given to engage both Academy Systems and Bull Information Systems in an effort to resolve outstanding I.T. issues recognising that additional costs would be incurred.

In presenting the report to Members Councillor Owens referred to the extreme pressures placed on staff working within the Housing Benefits Section and paid tribute to their efforts. Councillor Owens indicated that progress had been very slow in clearing the backlog of work and referred to the radical 8 Point Plan to reduce the backlog as detailed in the report. In recommending the action plan to Cabinet Councillor Owens indicated that she was seeking support from Members, Officers and Members of the public on the initiatives to be implemented to clear the backlog.

In response to the Members' questions Councillor Owens indicated that she would check to see if the action plan would be available on the Council's Web site and confirmed that the Benefits Advice Shop and the Citizens Advice Bureau would have direct access to Officers.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the Revenue Office at Russell House be open to all personal callers and telephone enquiries on Mondays and Fridays only between 9 am and 4 pm for a period of 8 weeks commencing at the earliest opportunity and the Department adopts other customer service improvements as detailed in the report;*
- (b) *both Academy and Bull be appointed on terms as outlined in the report and subject to further negotiation, and*
- (c) *additional costs involved in providing customer service improvements as detailed in the report be approved.*

662. CAPITAL RECEIPTS POLICY

The Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor E.A. Owens, submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking approval to amend the existing capital receipts policy to allow Cabinet to recommend to Council that receipts should be applied on a case by case basis, taking account of corporate objectives for capital investment. In view of the special accounting issues in respect of the Housing Revenue Account

and the joint arrangements relating to the Agricultural Estates receipts it was recommended that those areas should be ring fenced.

Councillor Owens referred to the current policy adopted in 1996 which was felt to be too rigid and did not assist in the determination of corporate objectives for capital investment by the Council in a flexible manner. The change in capital regulations had also increased the significance of capital receipts as a component of a capital financing strategy.

Councillor K.E. Wells referred to the previous Cabinet decision to ring fence money at Ysgol Tirionfa and received an assurance that that position would not be compromised.

RESOLVED that the Council be recommended to amend the existing capital receipts policy to allow the application of capital receipts to be determined on a case by case basis in accordance with the corporate capital investment strategy, with the exception of the Housing Revenue Account and Agricultural Estates where receipts would be ring fenced.

663. CONFERENCES/SEMINARS ETC.

The Leader submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking nominations to attend at the Best Value Conference "Year 1 The Lessons" at the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff on Tuesday, 7th November, 2000 at a cost of £40 per delegate.

RESOLVED that the Lead Cabinet Member for Best Value (Councillor E.W. Williams) and the Chair of the Best Value Scrutiny Committee (Councillor A.E. Fletcher-Williams) be nominated to attend the above Conference and they be accompanied by the Business Planning and Information Officer and the Best Value Officer.

664. RECRUITMENT

The Leader indicated that no matters had been submitted for consideration.

665. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2000/2001

The Leader submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking approval of the Draft Economic Development Strategy for 2000/2001. The draft document outlined the County's economic development priorities and Councillor Edwards indicated that great opportunities existed for the County arising out of Objective One and the new Tier One Assisted Area Status which Denbighshire had gained. He emphasised that the opportunities of Objective One would require the County to work in close partnership with its communities and with other Authorities in North Wales and new strategies would need to be developed to ensure the County maximised its opportunities.

The Head of Economic Development took Members through the report and particularly referred to the main action points for the 2000/2001 Strategy. In response to Members questions the Head of Economic Development reported preliminary discussions had taken place with the Welsh Development Agency regarding the production of an overall Rhyl Strategy which would provide an access point for funding for all organisations in Rhyl.

The Leader also indicated that the new Area Partnerships would also bring together all the smaller organisations within communities.

RESOLVED that the draft Economic Development Strategy 2000/2001 be approved.

666. OBJECTIVE ONE FIRST ROUND PROGRAMME

The Leader submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking an endorsement of the list of First Round applications made by the Denbighshire Local Objective One Partnership which featured many County Council projects. The Partnership had produced a Local Action Plan (copy attached to the report) which detailed the overall strategic context in which Objective One applications had been drawn up.

The Head of Economic Development took Members through the report and particularly referred to the 15 County Council projects which sought a total of £5.4m European funding which if successful would produce a total of £13.1m investment in the County.

The overall requirement for County Council match funding was £1,900, 964 and all the applications had been made on the basis that all the County Council match funding was available within existing budget levels. In conclusion the Head of Economic Development indicated that the Local Action Plan would need to be revised as a result of the introduction of an all Wales format for Action Plans. He also paid tribute to the excellent work undertaken by his staff with regard to the applications.

Councillor E.A. Owens queried the use to which the unallocated population figures under Priority 3 would be put. The Head of Economic Development indicated that because of concerns regarding the robustness population statistics in the smaller geographical areas, some population had been withheld and would be redistributed with the Priority being given firstly to West Rhyl/South West Rhyl and then to East Rhyl.

The Leader thanked the Head of Economic Development and his staff, together with the staff from the Planning and Technical Services Directorates for the excellent work done in relation to the First Round applications. He anticipated that the First Secretary would make an announcement on the fast-track applications within the next two weeks.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the list of First Round applications made by the Denbighshire Local Objective One Partnership be endorsed, and*
- (b) *the establishment under the Leader of a cross cutting team of Officers within the Council to deepen the impact of the Objective One Programme on the services provided by the Council to its communities be approved.*

667. DENBIGHSHIRE ENTERPRISE GRANTS

The Leader submitted a report (previously circulated) informing Members of the review undertaken of the Denbighshire Enterprise Grant System and seeking approval of the new criteria appended to the report. The former Emergency Powers and Appointments Committee on 27 May 2000 had instructed the Officers to undertake a review of the Enterprise Grant criteria following a report on the administrative procedures undertaken in processing grant applications.

RESOLVED *that the proposed new Enterprise Grant criteria as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.*

668. LAND ADJACENT TO BRYN COLLEN SCHOOL, LLANGOLLEN

Councillor W.R. Webb, Lead Cabinet Member for the Corporate Property Portfolio submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking approval to release land for Highway adoption which currently formed part of Bryn Collen School, Llangollen. Tai Clwyd in partnership with Lloyd Construction had received planning permission for the development of 22 houses on land adjacent to the Maes Pengwern Estate and required, as part of a planning condition, a strip of land for adoption for road widening purposes.

The Headmaster and Governors of the school had originally rejected the proposal on safety grounds but following discussions between the Headmaster and Councillor Webb an agreement had been reached on a way forward taking into account the requirements of the County Health/Safety Officer.

The Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services indicated that negotiations would take place with the School Governors regarding the road safety issues.

RESOLVED *that subject to the concerns of the Head and Governors of Bryn Collen School, Llangollen, being adequately addressed by the Health and Safety report and Tai Clwyd Housing Association agreeing to fund and undertake the works recommended, the release of the land for Highway adoption be approved.*

669. INTERAGENCY PROTOCOL DEALING WITH SEX OFFENDERS AND OTHER DANGEROUS OFFENDERS

Councillor A.E. Roberts, Lead Cabinet Member for Personal Services submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking approval for the adoption of the above protocol.

The Deputy Chief Executive indicated that the protocol had arisen from many months discussions between the North Wales Probation Service, North Wales Police and North Wales Local Authorities, in particular Social Services. The protocol had been designed to enable agencies to co-operate in respect of risk assessment and management and to exchange information with regard to individuals considered to be a risk to public safety.

Councillor E.A. Owens suggested that a user friendly guide should be produced for Members to enable them to deal with any issues raised by Members of the public and in particular who to contact with any information.

The Deputy Chief Executive felt that such a guide would be useful to all Agencies. In response to a question from Councillor G.M. Kensler the Deputy Chief Executive indicated that contact persons within Denbighshire County Council should be the Community Safety Officer, Head of Housing Services and himself.

***RESOLVED** that the Interagency Protocol dealing with Sex Offenders and other Dangerous Offenders be approved.*

670. SOCIAL SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN/SOCIAL CARE PLAN 2000-2003

Councillor A.E. Roberts, Lead Cabinet Member for Personal Services submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking approval for the Social Care Plan/Business Plan 2000 - 2003. The plan was a key document in setting out the strategic direction for the Social Services Directorate which was required under the NHS and Community Care Act 1990.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that the Plan had already been considered by the Scrutiny Committee and Denbighshire had been the first Local Authority in Wales to produce a joint Social Care Plan and Business Plan. He indicated that a Seminar for Members would be held on 22nd November 2000 and a user friendly summary of the Plan would be made available to all County Council Members.

Councillor G.M. Kensler congratulated the Deputy Chief Executive and his staff on the production of such a comprehensive Plan.

***RESOLVED** that the Social Services Business Plan/Social Care Plan 2000 - 2003 be recommended to Council for approval.*

At this juncture (11.05 a.m.) the meeting adjourned for 15 minutes to allow Members to participate in refreshments.

671. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

***RESOLVED** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 9 and 10 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.*

672. EXTENSION OF BANKING CONTRACT

Councillor E.A. Owens, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance submitted a confidential report (previously circulated) seeking approval to extend the current 5 year Banking Contract from 1st April 2001 to 31st December 2002 in accordance with Standing Order 9(b).

The Financial Controller outlined details of the current contract and the reasons for seeking an extension to that Contract.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the existing five year contract with the named Contractor in the report be extended from 1st April 2001 to 31st December 2002 in accordance with Standing Order 9(b), and*
- (b) *the Officers be authorised to investigate a benchmarking service for bank charges, with a view to providing information for negotiation and ensuring that Best Value was being obtained in that area.*

673. PROPERTY/LAND DISPOSALS

Councillor W.R. Webb, Lead Cabinet Member for the Corporate Property Portfolio, submitted a confidential report (previously circulated) updating Members on the progress made on the disposal of land and property as instructed by Cabinet. The report identified the property/land holdings of the County Council which were currently with the Council's appointed estate agents which were in the process of being marketed.

Councillor Webb indicated that he had received an objection regarding the sale of the land at Maes Derwen, St. Asaph from a local Member who wished part of the land to be retained for amenity purposes. The Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services felt that the sale should proceed and any objections could be raised at the planning application stage. Councillor E.A. Owens echoed those comments.

RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

674. WASTE DISPOSAL

Councillors D.M. Morris, Lead Cabinet Member for the Environment submitted a confidential report (previously circulated) seeking approval to the transfer of the Waste Disposal Contract in respect of Llanddulas Quarry. Waste Disposal arrangements at Llanddulas Quarry had been provided under a Contract made in 1992 between Colwyn, Aberconwy and Rhuddlan Borough Councils and a private Contractor. That Contract had continued with the successor Authorities in 1996 and the private Contractor now wished to transfer the waste management side of its business to another Company.

RESOLVED that consent be granted for the transfer of the Waste Disposal Contract in respect of Llanddulas Quarry.

675. NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD OF WALES DENBIGH 2001 - DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PAVILION

Councillor G.M. Kensler, Lead Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Authority's involvement in the National Eisteddfod of Wales 2001 submitted a confidential report (previously circulated) seeking agreement to the themes and activities to be promoted within the County's Pavilion at the Eisteddfod and to allocate a budget for the Officer Level Working Group to undertake the necessary preparations for and activities during the 8 days of the festival.

Councillor Kensler reported that a delegation of Officers had attended the Eisteddfod at Llanelli to view the organisational requirements and indicated that Mr Hywel Edwards, Eisteddfod Organiser, would be making a presentation to the County Council on 28 November 2000. She felt that the Eisteddfod would be a wonderful opportunity for the County to welcome and accommodate the large number of visitors expected to attend the Eisteddfod.

The Acting Director of Education, Culture and Information:-

- emphasised the need for the host Authority to have a significant presence on the field for the duration of the Festival;

- referred to the suggestions submitted by the Denbighshire County Council Pavilion Officer Working Group (Appendix A to the report) and the cost implications arising therefrom;
- indicated that officers had attended the Eisteddfods at Anglesey and Llanelli and re-emphasised the need for the Council presence at the Eisteddfod to be a major feature which would significantly raise Denbighshire's profile both locally, throughout Wales and further afield, and
- referred to the total cost of implementing the above suggestions which did not take into account potential sponsorship and grants as outlined to Members.

Members discussed the report and raised questions on budget issues and the suggestions put forward by the Officer Working Group.

In response to a question from Councillor E.A. Owens the Financial Controller referred to the monies already identified for the Eisteddfod which would form part of the normal budget process for 2001/2002. Any additional monies approved by Cabinet would be built into that budget setting exercise.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported upon the work undertaken by a separate Officer Working Group which had been addressing the technical issues for the Eisteddfod.

In conclusion the Acting Director of Education, Culture and Information suggested that in addition to the Chairman, Leader and the Chief Executive a lead Officer and a lead Member should be present each day during the Eisteddfod at the Denbighshire Pavilion to greet visitors and guests.

RESOLVED that a County Council presence on the Eisteddfod field as indicated in Appendix A to the report be approved and a bid of £75,000 be included in the budget setting exercise to provide a budget appropriate to finance the suggested purpose and level of activity.

676. OPEN SESSION

Upon completion of the foregoing the meeting resumed in open session.

677. CAPITAL RECEIPTS POLICY

Further to Minute No. 355 of 1st August 2000 the Leader reported that a meeting had been convened with Flintshire County Council on 13 November 2000 to discuss the capital receipts policy for the Joint Agricultural Estates and a report would be submitted to the County Council on 28th November, 2000 thereon.

The meeting concluded at 11.50 a.m.
