

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held in the Town Hall, Ruthin on Thursday 23rd November 2000 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

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

Observers - Councillors P. Douglas, M.A. German, F.D. Jones, K.N. Hawkins, D.A. Thomas, W.G. Thomas, A.E. Fletcher-Williams and C.H. Williams.

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive, County Clerk, Financial Controller, Assistant Chief Executive [Strategy]. Also present was Miss Cathy Jones, a pupil at Brynhyfryd School on work experience in the County Council Public Relations Department.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 1 The Leader referred to the death of Gethin Cunnah, a member of the Revenue Services Department, tragically killed in a car accident at Gronant and asked Members to stand in tribute.
- 2 Councillor I.M. German referred to the death of Rosemary Walker, a former member of the Social Services Department. The Leader asked Members to stand in tribute.
- 3 Councillor K.E. Wells, Lead Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning / ICT reported the National Assembly for Wales had that morning agreed to the allocation of £2m to Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn, Denbigh to enable the school to become a Centre of Excellence. The partnership between the Headteacher, staff, governors and parents had been very successful.

The Leader thanked Councillor Wells for the information and thanked Members and officers who have been working alongside Jane Davidson Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning and the partnership.

768. URGENT MATTERS

The Leader gave notice of the following items 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) Item deferred from the last meeting - Llys Marchan;
- (ii) Appointment of 2 Revenue Officer posts, and
- (iii) Addendum to Best Value reports.

769. MINUTES OF THE CABINET

The Minutes of the Cabinet held on 14 November 2000 (previously circulated) were submitted. The Leader apologised for the lateness of the Cabinet minutes which was due to the flood situation.

Matters Arising:-

- (i) Item 4 [Flooding Incidents in Denbighshire] - the Corporate Director for the Environment to report;
- (ii) Item 3 [Budget] Councillor G M Kensler, Lead Cabinet Member for the Eisteddfod/Welsh Language referred to recent press reports on pensions and what effect this would have on budgets. Cllr E A Owens offered to discuss this with Councillor G M Kensler, and

- (iii) Councillor E W Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Best Value / Performance queried the nomination positions as recorded in Item 7 'Outcome of the County Clare Visit'. In reply it was stated that the County Clare delegation should comprise 2 Labour Members and 2 Independent Members and therefore the minute was accurate as written.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 14 November 2000 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

770. REVENUE BUDGET 2000-2001

Councillor E.A. Owens, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, submitted a report [previously circulated] seeking Cabinet approval for further action to keep the County Council recovery plan on target. Councillor E A Owens referred to the report's Appendix produced in a different format on this occasion with 3 new lists itemised. Councillor E.A. Owens referred to the 4 column format and in particular to the third column [items showing a penalty] where the cost would form a first charge on Directorate budgets in the new financial year. The fourth column shows the current state of savings achieved.

Councillor E.A. Owens requested Members to take particular notice of the footnote to the Appendix with regard to the recent flooding incidents. It is hoped that most of the costs in excess of the Bellwin threshold of £209k may be recovered from the National Assembly.

Councillor E.W. Williams commented that all Cabinet Members should have seen the synopsis sent to the Scrutiny Committees and would wish to see a concise account of the guidance given by Scrutiny Committees. Councillor E.A. Owens said that she and the Financial Controller have been working closely with the Scrutiny Chairs. The County Clerk reported that they will meet with Scrutiny Chairs next week and any recommendations made will be reported to the next Cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED that Lead Cabinet Members for Education, Leisure, Environment and Personal Services continue to consider as a matter of urgency the budget reductions to be identified and report findings to the Cabinet on a regular basis.

771. CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

Councillor R.W. Hughes, the Lead Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism and Leisure presented a report on a National Youth Service Conference organised by the Wales Youth Agency. The Conference dealt with the re-emerging youth service and the National Assembly's new youth policy initiative. Councillor R.W. Hughes emphasised her concern at the budget position in Denbighshire for Youth Services.

Councillor G.M. Kensler thanked Councillor R.W. Hughes for the report and said that a recent Newsnight programme had emphasised that teachers and youth workers should be available to listen to young people.

772. RECRUITMENT

The Leader submitted the following applications for approval:-

- (i) External advertisement for a Scale 1 / 2 Clerk/Typist in the County Clerk's Department
- (ii) External advertisement for 2 Scale 6 Revenues Officer posts in the Revenues Section [this item was considered as a matter of urgency, the Leader having given notice at the commencement of the meeting]

RESOLVED that the external advertisement of the above mentioned posts be approved.

773. LOCAL MEMBERS NOMINATIONS FOR LEA GOVERNOR VACANCIES

The Leader presented the report [previously circulated] for LEA Governor vacancies from the Local Member(s) for the area in which the school(s) are located.

Councillor E.W. Williams queried the Prestatyn Ysgol Bodnant Infants CP school vacancies as the number of LEA Governors was set at 3 but there were no vacancies. The County Clerk said that these 'vacancies' had been included at this time as the new term of office commences in January 2001.

Councillor E.W. Williams nominated Mr. Dewi Jones, Ty'n Llanfair, Pentrecelyn as the second nominee for Ruthin Ysgol Brynhyfryd. The County Clerk said if nominations are not received for all vacancies the County Council through the Cabinet as the appointing body can fill such vacancies. It was agreed that Cabinet take the nomination.

RESOLVED that the LEA Governor appointment(s) be approved as listed, with the addition of Mr Dewi Jones, Ty'n Llanfair, Pentrecelyn as a nominee for Ruthin Ysgol Brynhyfryd.

774. DENBIGHSHIRE LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

Councillor R.W. Hughes, Lead Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism presented a report [previously circulated] on the Denbighshire Landscape Strategy as a draft for further consultation early next year over a 6 week period. The document forms part of the Council's current Statement of Priorities and is also a Countryside Services Strategy. A public open meeting will be held during the consultation period to promote awareness of the draft Strategy.

Councillor D.M. Morris congratulated the Countryside Services Department on the production of the document.

Councillor G.M. Kensler enquired about the location of the proposed public open meeting. The Head of Countryside Services reported that the meeting will be held on 24 January 2001 at Loggerheads Park at 7.00 p.m., the meeting to cover the whole of Denbighshire.

RESOLVED to approve the Draft Denbighshire Landscape Strategy for further consultations.

775. CHILDREN'S PROMISE CHARITY APPEAL

Councillor I.M. German, Lead Cabinet Member for Human Resources presented the report [previously circulated] seeking Cabinet approval for support for a further year to the Children's Promise Charity Appeal. Contributions from employees and Members are made via the payroll deduction service at a cost to the Authority of £100, raising a total of £5895 last year.

The Chief Executive informed Members that a number of applications for donations to worthy causes are received during the year.

RESOLVED to continue support for the Children's Promise Charity Appeal for a further year.

776. TRANSPORTATION STUDY FOR DENBIGH AND TRANSPORTATION STUDY FOR RHYL

Councillor D.M. Morris, Lead Cabinet Member for the Environment presented both reports [previously circulated] seeking Cabinet approval for the setting up of steering groups but noting that the policy will be formulated in due course. Councillor D.M. Morris said the reports would be sent to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

The reports of the transportation studies for Denbigh and Rhyl have been circulated to Cabinet Members.

Councillor E.A. Owens, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance emphasised the absence of funding to meet the cost implications for both reports.

After discussion, the Leader said no further steering groups would be formed until the Scrutiny Committee had considered the reports and that such groups would need to reflect the Area Partnerships the Council was intending to create.

RESOLVED that Members approve the Preferred Strategy outlined in the Transportation Studies for Denbigh and Rhyl and refer both reports to the Environment Scrutiny Committee.

777. REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WHO MISUSE DRUGS AND / OR ALCOHOL

Councillor A.E. Roberts, Lead Cabinet Member for Personal Services submitted the report and Appendix [previously circulated] seeking Cabinet approval for the Guidance on Eligibility for Rehabilitation Programmes for People who Misuse Drugs and / or Alcohol. Guidance on eligibility and priority for services is required as the Social Services Department provides services for people who misuse drugs and / or alcohol under the NHS Act 1977 and are also required under the Community Care legislation to ensure fair access to services and that services are targeted effectively.

Consultation has been carried out with Social Services staff, the Denbighshire Drug and Alcohol Local Action Team, CAIS, the Young Person's Substance Misuse Service and the Consultant Psychiatrist.

The report will be presented to full Council.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the Guidance on Eligibility for Rehabilitation Programmes for People who Misuse Drugs and / or Alcohol.

778. HOUSING OPTIONS

Councillor A.E. Roberts, Lead Cabinet Member for Personal Services presented a report [previously circulated] on Housing Options based on the recommendations of the Housing Options Working Party, with the report on the Agenda of Council on 28.11.2000.

Members had attended a Seminar in September 2000 which discussed the options for the future of Housing Stock.

The Lead Consultants' Options Appraisal report [previously circulated] and advice from other Consultants had agreed four amended Recommendations.

Councillor E.A. Owens, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance requested that reports be prepared at 2 monthly intervals for discussion at Cabinet showing the progress made on Housing Options.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Members accept the recommendations of the Housing Options Working Party, and
- (b) a 2 monthly progress report on Housing Options be produced for Cabinet.

779. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND STAFFING

Councillor A.E. Roberts, Lead Cabinet Member for Personal Services submitted a report [previously circulated] seeking Cabinet approval for a series of recommendations as outlined in the report.

RESOLVED that Members approve the recommendations as outlined in the report.

780. FLOODING INCIDENTS IN DENBIGHSHIRE

The Corporate Director for the Environment gave an update on the recent floods experienced within the County.

Horseshoe Pass Landslip:-

Pentredwr road was being cleared that day. A Geotechnical consultant has been appointed and a contractor has carried out emergency works to make the slip safe. Specialist contractors drilling boreholes - will be on site for 2-3 weeks. Hope to have a temporary bridge by Christmas, but a permanent solution was likely to take 6 months before completion.

Ruthin Floods/Mwrog Street:-

Consultants were appointed the day after the first flood (30/11/00) to design and supervise repair of the breach in the culvert. Design to be pre-cast concrete box units to allow quicker installation and installation in flowing water (within limits). DCC monitoring culvert. The Environment Agency looking at ways to improve prediction of water levels. Now looking for meeting with the EA and NAFW to discuss a long term solution.

Councillor E.A. Owens, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance requested that preventative action be taken to stop people using the old road to Pentredwr village.

The Leader reported that the Environmental Agency are holding a meeting on 27.11.2000 in Ruthin and officers from the Authority will be in attendance. The meeting is for all Denbighshire residents.

781. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

***RESOLVED** 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 8, 9 and 10 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.*

782. PURCHASING ORGANISATION

The Leader submitted a report on the Purchasing Organisation seeking Cabinet's approval to withdraw the Council's notice to quit from the Wirral and North Wales Purchasing Consortium with effect from 31 March 2001 and to give notice to quit as from 31 March 2002 in order to protect the Council's position.

The Financial Controller detailed the current improved position and explained the costs involved in being part of the organisation. He explained that if a significant number of partners i.e. 2 or more or Wirral Purchasing pull out of the organisation at this stage, the organisation would collapse.

Councillor W.R. Webb, the County Council's Board Member on the Organisation said the way the organisation was run was unacceptable. Each Authority has one member with Wirral Purchasing having 4 members on the Board. Councillor Webb expressed his concerns that 2 Authorities may pull out of the organisation.

The Financial Controller said if any of the Authorities pull out of the organisation the rescue plan for the organisation would need to be revised.

Councillor W.R. Webb said the next meeting of the organisation will be held on 4 December 2000 and asked the Financial Controller to attend the board meetings.

The Financial Controller said he attends Board meetings and is represented by a colleague at the lead officer group meetings.

***RESOLVED** that Members, having considered the progress report, withdraw the notice to quit the consortium as of 31 March 2001 and recommend to Council to give notice to quit as from 31 March 2002.*

783. PROPERTY / LAND DISPOSALS

Councillor W.R. Webb, Lead Cabinet Member for Property submitted the report [previously circulated] updating Members on the progress made on capital receipts gained arising from the sale or potential sale of Council owned property and land as listed in the report.

***RESOLVED** that Members note the information contained in the report.*

784. PAVILION THEATRE AND SUN CENTRE SEWAGE PUMPING STATION

Councillor D.M. Morris, Lead Cabinet Member for the Environment submitted the report [previously circulated] seeking Members' approval to undertake urgent works to the Pavilion Theatre / Sun Centre Pumping Station.

Councillor D.M. Morris also reported that the swimming pool at Corwen closed earlier this week and required remedial works to be put in hand or the swimming pool would remain closed.

Councillor E.A. Owens, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance said these are both non statutory items and the decision should be deferred until the complete picture is available. Approving this expenditure will endanger the Council's recovery plan and the Council is able to fund relief work rather than fund the complete remedial works.

Councillor E.W. Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Best Value stated that Corwen swimming pool is a statutory provision for children in rural areas to learn to swim. Corwen Leisure Centre has shown a profit and the closure of the facility will increase pressures on the Leisure Services budget.

The Chief Executive stated that the leisure facilities are discretionary. The full review of the capital budget for the next financial year has not yet been completed. Any requests for funding of this nature need to be balanced against the capital programme.

RESOLVED to defer a decision at this stage as Members agreed that both items needed to be included in the capital programme discussion.

At this juncture (11.30 a.m) the meeting adjourned for 15 minutes to allow Members to participate in refreshments.

785. DISTRICT AUDITOR'S PRESENTATION ON BEST VALUE

The District Auditor submitted his report [circulated at the meeting] to Members on the Council's BVPP and was followed Nigel Griffiths of District Audit presenting the main points of the BVPP detailing the strengths and the areas for improvement.

Nigel Griffiths detailed the Performance Management findings and outlined recommendations to implement a corporate performance management system to establish clear corporate objectives, standards and priorities, setting service level targets compatible with budgets and supportive of corporate objectives, incorporating clear monitoring and reporting procedures, all with the involvement of Members. He went on to detail the Challenge, Compare, Consult and Compete findings and recommendations followed by the Development and Management of the Review Programme and then the Internal and External Challenge.

The District Auditor has requested comments on the report by 12.12.2000. He stressed that Best Value is a continuous process and that their recommendations should enable the Council to move forward as good progress has been achieved in a short space of time.

In response the Chief Executive welcomed the District Auditor's presentation and stressed that Best Value in Denbighshire has to be governed as a priority by the Council's recovery plan. The WLGA had expressed concerns about the volume of work generated by Best Value and the First Minister had that week announced his intention to streamline the process, but Best Value was a valuable tool and one which needed to be taken seriously, albeit that Denbighshire had not so far devoted as much resource to the initiatives as compared with other Authorities in Wales.

Councillor G.M. Kensler asked how many different figures are produced by the Authority for various organisations. The Financial Controller explained that moves are in hand to standardise information to enable it to be produced once only.

The Leader thanked the District Audit team for their report and presentation.

786. LLYS MARCHAN

Councillor A.E. Roberts, Lead Cabinet Member for Personal Services submitted a report on Llys Marchan seeking Members' approval to consult with the community in Ruthin, residents and staff on securing the future of Llys Marchan and also to enter into a new partnership agreement [subject to financial conditions being met], with the North Wales Health Authority, the Conwy and Denbighshire NHS Trust and Clwyd Alyn Housing Association.

RESOLVED that Members accept the recommendations to:-

- (a) consult with the local community in Ruthin, residents and staff on securing the future of Llys Marchan, and
- (b) enter into a new partnership agreement subject to financial conditions being met, with the North Wales Health Authority, the Conwy and Denbighshire NHS Trust and Clwyd Alyn Housing Association.

AT THIS POINT THE MEETING RESUMED IN OPEN SESSION

787. DISTRICT AUDITOR'S REPORT ON BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN

Councillor E.W. Williams presented a report [previously circulated] seeking Members approval of the proposed Action Plan to address the recommendations made in the Statutory Report of the District Audit on the Council's BVPP 2000-2001.

The District Auditor has given an opinion on 4 areas of the BVPP 2000-2001 and 48 recommendations for improvement and the Council's Action Plan seeks to address the improvements recommended by the District Auditor.

The Leader thanked Councillor E.W. Williams and Mrs. Ll. Jehu, Best Value Officer for their work on Best Value.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Members approve the proposed Action Plan, and
- (b) when presenting the Action Plan to District Audit further attention is drawn to the fact that much of the action had already been agreed as part of the Recovery Plan and that District Audit were aware of this.

788. BEST VALUE PROGRESS REPORT - YEAR 1 SERVICE REVIEWS

Councillor E.W. Williams presented the report [previously circulated] together with an Addendum circulated at the meeting as notified by the Leader, seeking Members approval for the programme of Year 1 Service Reviews for publication in the 2001-2002 Performance Plan.

The Chief Executive commented on the services to be reviewed and stressed the need for the choice of service reviews to be guided both by the Mission Statement adopted by the Council and the Recovery Plan. He suggested that the list put forward should be regarded as a provisional one, with a further report prepared for the next Cabinet to take on board as well as the issues arising from the District Auditor's presentation.

RESOLVED that with the addition of "Fast-track" reviews for Special education Needs and Elderly Persons homes Members approve the programme provisionally for the publication of Year 1 Best Value Service Reviews, but that a subsequent report to the Cabinet be submitted reflecting discussions with Management Team and providing further details on costs and resources of delivering the programme.

The meeting concluded at 1.05 p.m.
