

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held in the Town Hall, Ruthin on Tuesday, 9th January 2001 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, S. Drew, N.H. Jones, R.J.R. Jones, W.G. Thomas and C.H. Williams.

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive, County Clerk, Financial Controller.

943. URGENT MATTERS

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:-

Boundary Commission

944. BOUNDARY COMMISSION

The Chief Executive informed Members that he and officers had met with the Boundary Commission officers. As a result it has been suggested a joint meeting be held with Denbighshire County Council Members and officers and the Commission. The meeting has been arranged for 2 February 2001 to be held at the Royal International Pavilion, Llangollen.

The Leader asked Members for approval for the following Members to attend the meeting:-

Leader;
Deputy Leader;
Group Leaders, and
Local Members - Councillors P. Tobin and R.J.R. Jones.

Councillor I.M. German requested that if a Group Leader was not available, a substitute should attend and this was agreed.

RESOLVED that the following Members attend the meeting with the Boundary Commission on 2 February 2001:-

Leader;
Deputy Leader;
Group Leaders, and
Local Members - Councillors P. Tobin and R.J.R. Jones.

945. 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.

946. DRAFT BUDGET 2001-2002

Councillor E.A. Owens, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance submitted the report and appendices [previously circulated]. Councillor Owens apologised that the paper had not been available at an earlier date but had wanted to appraise Members of the main framework for the financial settlement for

2001-2002 with sufficient detail to identify priorities and main structures. Members were asked to agree the budget strategy for 2001-2002 to be recommended to Council in the light of the progress to date and the provisional settlement from the Assembly.

Councillor Owens said extensive consultations had taken place with Service Scrutiny Committees, Lead Cabinet Members and Heads of Service. The figures took account of the Best Value Review and the County Council's priorities and Mission Statement.

Councillor Owens said a provisional settlement figure of 5.7% has been given by the National Assembly for Wales, which figure may vary by 0.1%. The final settlement figure would be available by the end of January 2001. New monies were incorporated in the 5.7%, amounting to 1% as shown in Appendix 3. This meant a 4.7% increase for Denbighshire. Appendix 3 showed details of the bids for increased funding and target reductions. The Flood Emergency would involve a considerable level of spending commitment over and above the costs to be recovered through the Bellwin formula.

The Capital account details were included in Appendix 4 and detailed priority areas for consideration.

The Lead Member for Finance pointed out a typographical error in the Conclusion to Appendix 1 - 'too soon' to be included on line 2, after the fourth word so that the sentence read "The uncertainty over special funding for the flooding reinstatement and flood defence works means that it is too soon to forecast the impact ..."

Councillor G.M. Kensler asked whether Denbighshire had to contribute to the Environment Agency. The Financial Controller said that the Environment Agency were responsible for the Dee and Clwyd Flood Defence Committee and levied a charge on Denbighshire and neighbouring authorities. They had wanted to increase the levy by 40% but after discussion this had been reduced to an increase of 13% this year to Denbighshire and the other Local Authorities.

On Appendix 2 the Financial Controller said that the success of the Recovery Plan had meant a reduction in top slicing for the contribution to balances for the coming year and approximately £1.5m would be going back into services. The third column of Appendix 2 showed provisional inflation figures at 3%. Pay awards for staff had been assumed at a level of 3%, with 3.5% pay award assumed for teachers. Insurances were due for re-negotiation. Other costs increases vary from 2% to 3%.

The Financial Controller said the guideline for expenditure in 2001-2002 was the current budget plus 5.7%, which would allow £4m for growth.

Councillor Owens said that the figures given had been calculated according to advice from the National Assembly, with no hypothecation permitted.

Councillor K.E. Wells said that the exception to this was the Leadership money for Lifelong Learning. Councillor Owens said that there were conditions attached to this block of new monies.

Turning to Personal Services, Councillor Owens referred to two new elements i.e. The Supporting People Initiative and the Ageing Carers. Cuts had been volunteered by the Directorate, most of which had been discussed and agreed in principle by the Scrutiny Committee.

The Financial Controller said that the wording of the Reduction Revise Eligibility criteria under Personal Services should read Transitional Housing Benefit. The Head of Strategic Planning for Personal Services explained that the bid for additional funds for Learning Difficulty - ageing carers was to provide respite care.

The Financial Controller said that the £1m allocated to the Supporting People Initiative would realise a provisional figure of £35k for Denbighshire.

Councillor E.W. Williams asked that a paper be prepared for Cabinet to include all the new monies available and the way the Directorates would include this in next year's budget which does not include the monies to be spent on "old" items. Councillor Owens said the new monies had been included in the financial framework paper on the basis of advice from WLGA figures. She agreed to provide a paper

showing where the new monies would be allocated once clarification had been received from the Assembly.

The Lead Cabinet Member for Finance referring to the Environment said that an Asset Management Plan would be required. Community Services would be reviewed by Scrutiny Committees and new monies would be available for Concessionary Fares, Public Protection Meat Inspections and the Countryside Act. The Financial Controller said that Members would be aware of the condition surveys carried out by Denbighshire on many of its buildings and this accounted for the increase in the property maintenance figures.

The Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, referring to Lifelong Learning, highlighted the Teachers' Pay Restructuring. Both the National Assembly for Wales and the WLGA had given assurances that the sum allocated only represented two thirds of the year and the restructuring would be monitored. If any monies remained unused, these would be retained by the Authority but any shortfall could be claimed back from the Assembly.

The Class Size Reduction Scheme included an additional £163k expenditure and the Youth Services Review would result in a re-designation of spend.

Councillor R.W. Hughes said the Corwen Leisure Centre would be transferred from DSO to Leisure Services, bringing it in line with other Leisure Centres.

The Financial Controller explained the allocation for replacement of mobile classroom rentals as it was more feasible to rent fully maintained and fully serviced mobiles on an annual basis rather than purchase new mobile classrooms. The Acting Director of Education, Culture and Information explained that money may become available from the National Assembly for Wales which had allocated £80m for school building programmes specifically aimed at reducing the number of mobile classrooms in schools.

The Lead Cabinet Member for Finance referred to the Resources section, explained that the Accountancy function would be strengthened to meet with District Audit requirements and that a paper would be available on this before the end of March to reflect the amount of cross-cutting work between Directorates and the general strengthening of the Department. Councillor Owens informed Members that reduced income would be received from the Weekly Benefit Scheme. She reminded Members that ICT had been incorporated within the Resources Directorate from the 1 January 2001.

The Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, referring to the Chief Executive and Corporate section explained that some of the initiatives would produce revenue in years to come. In addition, she highlighted the joint Denbighshire-Conwy Youth Offending Team which now had a separate budget line so that the exact costs could be identified in discussions with the Home Office.

At 11.30 a.m the meeting adjourned for 15 minutes.

The Lead Cabinet Member for Finance submitted Appendix 4 which showed the Capital Resources 2001-2002 and Potential Allocation. The Flood Emergency figures were shown as estimates but the flood damage reinstatement and flood prevention schemes would not necessarily be carried out before any other capital programmes. The deadline for submission of the Bellwin figures was end of March 2001 and it was likely that the £9m figure would rise as more information was gained as water levels fell. The National Assembly for Wales had asked for revised figures by 16 January 2001. Two items were not included i.e. [a] replanting in and around Ty Nant, Prestatyn, and [b] the Asset Register. The £2m identified for Property and Highways Capital Works was to make a start on the backlog identified in the Council's Condition Surveys.

Councillor E.W. Williams asked what the general capital figure had been for the previous year and whether the flood damage figure included all roads affected in the County. He also asked whether there was any money available under the Objective 1 scheme.

The Financial Controller said there would be an increase of 3% for capital funding from current year and as Denbighshire had no repayment to make in relation to the inherited debt, this would allow a capital

programme. The National Assembly for Wales paid for repairs to Trunk roads whilst the County Council paid for the County roads. Councillor A E Owens agreed that a statement would be issued to the media regarding the repayment of the debt which would include information on a capital programme once details were available.

One or two flood defence schemes would possibly be eligible, for example Glasdir, Ruthin and an area in Denbigh and officers were exploring the possibility of funding from Objective 1.

Councillor G.M. Kensler asked about the Police Precept figure. Councillor E.A. Owens said that specific grants would enable the Police to increase their budgets by 5% but it was not envisaged that the Denbighshire figure would be increased by more than 3%.

RESOLVED that Members agreed the budget strategy 2001-2002 as outlined in the appendices to the report and the provisional settlement from the Assembly be recommended to Council.

Councillor W.R. Webb proposed a vote of thanks for the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance and the Financial Controller and his staff for all their work on the Council's budgets. Councillor D.M. Morris seconded the proposal.

The Leader, on behalf of the Cabinet, also thanked Councillor Owens and the Financial Controller.

PERSONAL

The Leader said Mr. W. Gwyn Williams, the Acting Director of Education, Culture and Information was retiring at the end of January 2001 and was attending his last Cabinet meeting. He paid tribute to Mr Williams' work as Head of Cultural Services and latterly as the Acting Director. The Acting Director of Education, Culture and Information responded and thanked Members and staff for their support over the years. He said that he had particularly enjoyed working for Denbighshire and wished the Authority well for the future.

The meeting concluded at 12.20 p.m.
