

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held in the Assembly Rooms Ruthin on Thursday, 22nd March, 2001 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Councillors E.C. Edwards (Leader), 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, K. Hawkins, G. Jones, R.J.R. Jones, M. Jones, R.E. Jones, D.A. Thomas and W.G. Thomas.

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive, County Clerk and Corporate Directors.

Apologies:- Councillor I.M. German

PERSONAL STATEMENT

The Chief Executive announced with regret that he was giving notice of his desire to take early retirement on the grounds of ill health. He outlined the background to this decision which had been forced on him, and added that his successor would discover a Council with a strong new management structure and a clear political direction for what he felt would be a prosperous future.

1222. 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) Foot and Mouth Disease- latest guidance from the National Assembly;
- (ii) Objective 1 European Funding, and
- (iii) Rhyl Sun Centre.

1223. MINUTES OF THE CABINET

The Minutes of the Cabinet held on 6 March, 2001 (previously circulated) were submitted.

Matters arising:-

Appointment of Head of Personnel :- The Chief Executive reported that Mrs. Linda Atkins had been appointed to succeed the present Head of Personnel, Mr. Ken Stephens, who was taking early retirement.

Foot and Mouth Disease:- The Corporate Director Environment reported that new guidelines issued by the National Assembly on partial re-opening of areas of the countryside reflected concerns about the impact of the current crisis on small businesses and tourism. Individual local authorities would conduct their own risk assessment in this regard. Currently there were no outbreaks in Denbighshire and the Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services reported that warning signs were posted all through the county alerting the public and he paid tribute to the level of co-operation so far. The control room would remain operational and he was providing daily up-dates for the Leader and Chief Executive.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 6th March 2001 be approved as a correct record and agreed by the Leader.

1224. REVENUE BUDGET 2000-2001

Councillor E.A. Owens, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance submitted the report (previously circulated) and sought Members' approval to note the current position on the latest projections for the final out-turn as outlined in the appendix to the report and to instruct officers to take all necessary steps to minimise the final deficit. She then answered questions of detail from Members.

RESOLVED that *Lead Cabinet Members continue to liaise with Heads of Service to ensure the final deficit for 2000/01 is as low as possible and that current pressures do not recur in 2001/02.*

1225. COUNCIL REPRESENTATION ON LEISURE CENTRE USER FORUMS

Councillor R.W. Hughes, Lead Cabinet Member for Culture Leisure and Tourism presented the report (previously circulated) and referred Members to the Appendices which outlined the working arrangements and constitution of these new forums.

RESOLVED:-

(a) *to approve the Constitution, Working Arrangements and Membership Arrangements for the new Leisure Centre User Forums at Corwen, Denbigh, Llangollen, Prestatyn, Rhyl and Ruthin Leisure Centres as detailed in the report, and*

(b) *that Member nominations be sought and referred back to Cabinet if over subscribed.*

1226. RECRUITMENT

The Leader of the Council submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking approval for external advertisement:-

Arts Manager, Royal International Pavilion PO 1 - Lifelong Learning Directorate: Culture and Leisure
Clerical Assistant Sc 2 - Resources Directorate: Revenues
Revenues Assistants (Rents) Sc 4 Resources Directorate - Revenues

RESOLVED that *the external advertisements of the above posts be approved.*

1227. FORMER STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SCHEME REVENUE GRANT

The Leader of the Council submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking agreement for the basis for allocating former SDS Revenue Grants. In particular, with reference to the Cabinet's previously agreed strategy, these funds would encourage new projects but in order not to prejudice established projects by the sudden withdrawal of funding, a tapering arrangement would be introduced for a gradual withdrawal. It was also agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting on the background to how grants were made.

RESOLVED that *the arrangements for allocating former SDS Revenue Grants be approved as set out in the report.*

1228. DENBIGHSHIRE LEISURE CARD AND LEISURE CHARGES 2001-2002

The Lead Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism, Councillor R.W. Hughes submitted a report (previously circulated) and circulated a revised Appendix 2 and sought Members' approval to the introduction of a new Leisure Card to replace the former Passport to Leisure scheme, and to set new charges for leisure facilities for 2001-2002. She outlined the background to the recommendations contained in the report and the detail as set out in the appendices.

RESOLVED:-

(a) *that a Leisure Card Scheme be introduced in 2001- 2002 to replace the former Passport to Leisure (as set out in Appendix 1 to the report), and*

(b) *to approve the Proposed Leisure Charges as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.*

1229. SCALA CINEMA : POSITION STATEMENT

The Lead Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism, Councillor R.W. Hughes and the Lead Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor D.M. Morris submitted a joint report on the current position with regard to the Scala, and to endorse decisions made to make the building safe and to stabilise the structure. Councillor Hughes referred to the previous decision to close the Scala on public safety grounds in December 2000 and the strategy which had been adopted since. She referred to a public meeting held on 15 February 2001 the notes of which were circulated as Appendix 1 to the report. She said the steps taken so far as outlined in the report had met with a very positive response and she referred to the Terms of Reference and Constitution of the proposed Scala Advisory Group as set out in Appendix 2 to the Report which was submitted for approval. Councillor Morris referred to the survey carried out by W.S. Atkins, Consulting Engineers, St. Asaph. This confirmed that the building was unsafe and was showing daily signs of further deterioration and he called for Members' approval for expenditure as outlined in the report to make the building safe and to stabilise the structure.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *action taken so far in respect of the Scala be endorsed, and*
- (b) *authority be given to incur expenditure of £43,000 from the capital programme to pay for urgent necessary measures to make the Scala building safe and to stabilise the structure.*

1230. ICT BEST VALUE SERVICE REVUE

The Cabinet Lead Member for Life Long Learning Councillor K.E. Wells submitted a report (previously circulated) for Members' approval of the ICT Best Value Service Review methodology and ICT Action Plan for 2001-2004 noted in the Annex to the report.

It was important that an inspection should take place now so that the Action Plan resulting from the review could commence from 1 April 2001. The ICT Action Plan should significantly improve services in all areas.

RESOLVED that *Cabinet note and approve the ICT Service Review methodology and Action Plan to enable the service to be inspected.*

1231. OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING STOCK

The Lead Member for Personal Services Councillor A.E. Roberts submitted the report (previously circulated) asking Cabinet to note progress in the work of the Housing Options Working Party and confirm arrangements for establishing a Shadow Board of the Community Ownership Housing Organisation. A background summary was provided for Members and the name Dyffryn Community Housing was recommended as the official title given to the new body. In order to achieve a smooth transition to the new arrangements which would involve partnership with Tenants and the Independent sector, a Shadow Board should be established as soon as possible comprising of 15 members to take forward the work of the Housing Options Working Party. Detailed questions were asked about the balance of membership and the role of the council on the new body. It was explained that the membership of the shadow board would be 5 County Council; 5 Tenants' Associations and 5 Independent Sector. The Council's nominations would be submitted in due course for approval by County Council.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the Cabinet note the progress of the Housing Options Working Party in developing the consultation process and establishing a Shadow Board of Management for the prospective Community Ownership Housing Organisation "Dyffryn Community Housing", and*
- (b) *the Council be asked to nominate 5 Members to the Shadow Board.*

1232. BETTER HOMES FOR PEOPLE IN WALES

The Lead Cabinet Member for Personal Services, Councillor A.E. Roberts submitted the report (previously circulated) and asked Members to note the National Assembly Consultation Paper : "Better Homes for People in Wales" and to endorse the response of the Council. The Executive Summary and draft response were attached to the report and a detailed discussion ensued on the report and the enclosures.

RESOLVED that *Cabinet endorses the draft response to the consultation paper.*

1233. DRAFT SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN

The Lead Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning, Councillor K.E. Wells, submitted a report together with attached draft School Organisation Plan for Members' comments prior to detailed consideration at Scrutiny Panel and wider detailed consultation, as required under the 1998 Schools Standard and Framework Act 1998. Members were asked to comment in detail and several issues were raised including special education provision which was under constant review, Welsh medium education, post 16 provision and CCETs and the question of looking at this from a Denbighshire perspective.

RESOLVED That *Members comments be noted on the draft School Organisation Plan for subsequent referral to Scrutiny and to the County Council.*

1234. PROPOSED RENEWAL AREAS - SOUTH WEST RHYL & DENBIGH

The Lead Cabinet Member for Environment Councillor D.M. Morris submitted a report (previously circulated) on the draft Neighbourhood Renewal Assessments for South West Rhyl and Denbigh and asked for Members' approval. The appendix to the report set out the results of a detailed study conducted in accordance with government guidelines into the area's housing, social and economic conditions. Hopefully, completion and approval of the study would lead to Supplementary Credit Approvals to implement a ten year action plan.

RESOLVED that *approval be given to the draft Neighbourhood Renewal Assessments for:*

- (a) *South West Rhyl, and*
- (b) *Denbigh*

1235. INCREASED CEMETERY CHARGES

The Lead Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor D.M. Morris, submitted the report (previously circulated) and referred Members to Appendices 1 and 2 which set out details of increases in cemetery charges and in charges for other services, for which he sought approval. He issued a reminder that the proposed increases followed a previous decision to reduce, by £12,000, the Council's allocation for cemetery services in 2001/2002. During discussion, it was agreed to amend detail in the "non-exclusive rights" category (6 of Appendix 1), by deletion of the first line.

RESOLVED that *the proposed charges and rates as set out in Appendix 1 be approved for implementation from 1 April, 2001. Subject to the above deletion*

1236. DISTRICT AUDIT MANAGEMENT LETTER

The District Auditor, Mr. Ceri Stradling, presented a report on his conclusions on the County Council's financial management for the year 1999/2000. In presenting the report, he highlighted those areas of financial and performance management which were either showing progress or which required further work. Members were asked to note that in future there would be no financial statement regarding the inherited Rhuddlan debt and the impact of the financial recovery plan and the introduction of new political and senior management arrangements were having a positive impact. His staff continued to work with the Council in advising and commenting on value for money, Best Value and asset management. The Council were not alone in the need to further develop performance management corporately and there was perhaps need to work on re-vitalising Best Value and District Audit were planning a seminar for Officers in April.

Generally, the financial standing of the Council was improving with the reduced deficit appearing as an encouraging trend and he looked for positive identification of areas for savings. There were still issues to be resolved in the revenues system e.g. backlog in processing housing benefits, the need to reduce rent, Council Tax and NNDR arrears and to operate adequate controls in all revenues systems. Those areas which he was looking to review included :- progress on the S.11 qualification; a full audit of the case for the PFI; Best Value; Rehabilitation Services for Older People; and the impact of the new political management arrangements. Members asked detailed questions and the Cabinet Lead Member for Finance, Councillor E.A. Owens, on behalf of Cabinet Colleagues and Officers, thanked the District Auditor and his staff for the way in which they worked with the Council. She felt that his presentation was a fair reflection of the Council's current position. Whilst acknowledging that progress had been made, she was confident that the picture would be even better next year. The current overspend would be addressed as soon as the current year end figures were published and a "back to basics" philosophy would have to be adopted. The Leader also added his thanks and agreed that whereas matters had shown marked improvement, there was no room for complacency and he looked to future benefits from the positive impact of the Cabinet Action Plan .

RESOLVED that the District Auditor's presentation be noted and duly acknowledged.

1237. 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 they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 8, 9 and 10 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

1238. APPLICATIONS TO LEASE COMMERCIAL UNITS B AND C, RHYL RAILWAY STATION

The Leader submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking Cabinet approval for two applications to lease Units at Rhyl Railway Station and to seek approval for future applications to be determined by the Head of Economic Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member responsible for Economic Development in accordance with the policy previously agreed for other business properties.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the applications, details of which were provided in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report, be approved, and
- (b) in future applications be determined by the Head of Economic Regeneration in consultation with Cabinet Members responsible for Economic Development in accordance with the policy previously agreed for other business property.

1239. RECOVERY STRATEGY - REVENUES FUNCTION

The Lead Member for Finance, Councillor E.A. Owens, submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking approval for the proposed recovery strategy for the Revenues Section.

Councillor Owens summarised the current situation which had shown an improvement following the introduction of temporary agency staff in an effort to reduce the ever-increasing backlog in processing housing benefit claims, re-claiming debt owed to the Council etc. In view of the need to find a permanent solution, however, both she and the Corporate Director, Resources, favoured the option of appointing permanent staff, improving financial management controls and carrying out rigorous quality assurance checks - hence the package of measures recommended. Members agreed to the recommendations in the report and it was:-

RESOLVED that the recovery plan as outlined be approved and that delegated authority be given to the Corporate Director - Resources to spend a net amount of £370k in line with the plan to address the issues as reported. This authority to act included the ability to externally recruit additional permanent staff as considered necessary.

1240. RENOVATION GRANT AID: 45 / 48 EAST PARADE, RHYL

The Lead Member for the Environment, Councillor D.M. Morris, submitted a report (previously circulated) and sought approval for a grant to be made available for the improvement and conversion of the property formerly known as The Plas Tirion Hotel, Rhyl, to form 22 self-contained flats. The figure currently sought represented a £60k higher sum than was originally approved for this joint project details of which were contained in the report.

RESOLVED that the Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services be given the authority to approve an additional grant of £60,000 making a total amount of Renovation Grant approved for this development of £360,000.

1241. DENBIGHSHIRE CARE AND REPAIR FUNDING

The Lead Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor D.M. Morris, submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking Members' approval for £20k core funding for the Denbighshire Care and Repair Agency. Care and Repair had been formed in 1996 to assist older and/or disabled people to carry out repairs/ adaptations to enable them to continue to live independently in their own homes. The payment of a grant to core fund the Agency rather than payment of fees for their services was considered a positive way forward to enable Care and Repair to concentrate on their care functions and to assist with forward planning.

RESOLVED that the Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services be given the authority to core fund Denbighshire Care and Repair in the sum of £20k funded from Renovation Grant Agency Fees collected by the County Council.

1242. RENOVATION GRANTS - TOWN HERITAGE INITIATIVE SCHEMES (THI)

The Cabinet Lead Member for the Environment, Councillor D.M. Morris, submitted a report (previously circulated) which sought approval for a recommendation to the County Council to approve an amendment to the Council's Renovation Grant Aid Policy in order to target and prioritise schemes where THI Grant had been approved. The report detailed the reasons for seeking the change in policy.

RESOLVED that a recommendation be made to the County Council that the Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services be given authority to prioritise Renovation Grant applications where the scheme is situated in a Town Heritage Initiative Designated Area.

1243. LAND ADJACENT TO PEN Y LLAN, BISHOP'S WOOD ROAD, PRESTATYN

The Cabinet Lead Member, Property, Councillor W.R. Webb submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking approval to dispose of 275 sq. metres of land to the owner of Pen y Llan, Bishop's Wood Road, Prestatyn. The report detailed reasons for the disposal and the terms and conditions would be the subject of agreement.

RESOLVED That the disposal of the 375 sq. metres be approved on terms and conditions to be agreed with the Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services in consultation with the County Clerk. The purchaser would pay all the fees incurred, including the County Council's legal fees.

1244. PFI: PATHFINDER: CIVIC FACILITIES AT RUTHIN

The Lead Cabinet Member, Property, Councillor W.R. Webb submitted a report (previously circulated) which provided Members with an up-date on the latest position regarding the scheme and the progress achieved in moving towards the final stages. The report detailed the course of action which was now proposed together and an appendix outlined the position in relation to the non-Council organisations and discussions with them regarding the proposals. A full report would be submitted to County Council.

RESOLVED that Members note that it was now possible to proceed to:-

- (a) finalise negotiations with the Bidder and non-Council Organisations;

- (b) *prepare and submit the Final Business Case to the District Auditor, and*
- (c) *submit a report to the Council prior to submission of the Final Business Case to the National Assembly for Wales.*

1245. TOURISM NON-PROFIT DISTRIBUTING ORGANISATION (NPDO)

The Lead Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism, Councillor R.W. Hughes submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking to establish a “steer” for the County Council on several key areas in the development of the NPDO. The report, as presented, outlined the background in detail including the preference for a two- phased approach . Appendix 1 contained a list of NPDO Shadow Board Members and in addition there was a need to appoint a Staff Member and two elected Members to complete the membership. Appendix 2 to the report outlined the sites budgets for 2001/2002 and Appendix 3 contained financial details of the NPDO Business Plan. Progress was on schedule and within budget and the officers were congratulated on the work undertaken against tight deadlines. Members were invited to ask questions of detail and it was confirmed that a report would be submitted to full Council when the two elected member representatives would be appointed to serve on the Shadow Board.

RESOLVED *that it be recommended to the Council:-*

- (a) *to approve the establishment of the Tourism NPDO “ Clwyd Leisure Limited” (draft title) from 1st April 2001 and the implementation of the first phase of the transfer of responsibility of the initial four facilities; Sun Centre, Nova Centre, North Wales Bowls Centre and the Sky Tower;*
- (b) *to approve the grant of £350,970 for 2001/2002, as outlined in paragraph 3.1 and agree in principle grant levels of £351,275 in year 2 and £335, 415 in year 3 (Appendix 3) subject to the right to vary the amount depending on performance;*
- (c) *to agree in principle with continued implementation of the second phase of the transfer of amenities on the coast as outlined in the original report with a target date of April 2001 subject to negotiation between the Council and the NPDO the details of which will be reported back to Cabinet and Full Council;*
- (ch) *to elect two Members of the County Council to serve on the NPDO Board (Members to submit C.Vs to be considered by Council);*
- (d) *to agree in principle to support the 100% discretionary rate relief to the NPDO subject to formal application;*
- (dd) *to approve the grant of leases for a term of 21 years for the Sun Centre, Nova Centre and NWBC and 10 years for the Sky Tower, at a discounted rent of £1.00 per annum for the first five years, the market rent to be shown in the lease, otherwise in terms to be agreed by the Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services in consultation with the County Clerk;*
- (e) *to approve that the Council opts to tax in respect of the Sun Centre, the Sky Tower, the Nova and the North Wales Bowls Centre, and*
- (f) *to approve the formal transfer of 53 Denbighshire staff to the NPDO on the 1st May 2001 with full TUPE rights.*

1246 APPOINTMENT OF HEAD OF PERSONNEL

The Chief Executive reported that Linda Atkin had been appointed as Head of Personnel and had accepted the offer of appointment and would commence her duties on a date to be agreed. This appointment was made in the light of the impending retirement of Ken Stephens currently Head of Personnel.

The meeting terminated at 2.30 p.m.
