

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Special Cabinet held in the Assembly Rooms, Town Hall, Ruthin on Wednesday 11th April, 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, A.E. Roberts, W.R. Webb, K.E. Wells and E.W. Williams.

Observers - Councillors P.A. Dobb and P.O. Williams.

ALSO PRESENT

Deputy Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive: Strategy, Corporate Director: Resources, Financial Controller.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor E.A. Owens.

1331. URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent matters.

1332. FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

Councillor D.M. Morris, the Lead Cabinet Member for the Environment presented the report which was circulated at the meeting and also supplementary guidance from the National Assembly providing information on the latest Assembly Order which enabled local authorities selectively to lift restrictions on access to land, footpaths and rights of way. Members were asked to consider identified areas within Denbighshire which could be opened up to the public if they met the criteria laid down in the risk assessments carried out by the Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services.

The Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services said he had discussed with the NFU, FUW, CCW and CLA the opening up of various areas within Denbighshire. He spoke of a CLA meeting he had attended at Caernarfon which was particularly concerned about the balance of tourism businesses and farming.

Councillor K.E. Wells said he wished to reiterate his views at the last Cabinet meeting, the County was free of disease and the objective was for the area to maintain its disease free status. If parts of the County were open a mixed message could be given to the public which could inadvertently change matters.

Councillor I.M. German said Denbighshire had been fortunate not to have an outbreak of Foot and Mouth within the County but this was mainly because of the precautions taken by the Council and community.

Councillor E.W. Williams asked whether any businesses had been monitored for losses sustained in the tourism industry. If there were only few losses, was there a need to change. The Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services said they were unable to provide figures for any losses which may have been sustained as a result of the national outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease.

Councillor D.M. Holder said he had not received many serious complaints regarding the closure of paths etc and he would prefer the restrictions to remain in force.

Councillor E.W. Williams and Councillor W.R. Webb raised the question as to whether they needed to formally declare an interest given that they are members of the farming community. It was agreed that their interests were not such that they should be excluded from the debate or the vote. The Deputy

Chief Executive said some Members may have agricultural interests but to deny their contribution would impoverish the debate.

The Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services gave a presentation on various sites within Denbighshire. In particular, two sites at Loggerheads were looked at in detail which were deemed to be low risk. Disinfected straw mats would be provided at the access points if the sites were to be opened to the public and an increase in warden numbers would be required. Flintshire County Council would open the site if Denbighshire had agreement to open.

Councillor W.R. Webb suggested if it was decided not to open Loggerheads Park there would be no need to look in detail at the other sites within the County.

Councillor I.M. German suggested that Cabinet should review the situation in two weeks. Councillor W.R. Webb suggested that to change the rules now would provide a bigger risk and the time to change would be when the number of new cases being reported nationally was decreasing.

Councillor E.W. Williams asked that the Foot and Mouth Disease issue be agendered at every Cabinet, to which Members agreed.

All Members agreed to defer the opening of any sites within Denbighshire.

The Financial Controller presented a supplementary WLGA Foot and Mouth: Support for Business paper (circulated at the meeting) regarding grant aid of £12m to Councils in Wales to help provide financial assistance to businesses adversely affected by the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease. The grant aid covered the period 1 April to 30 June 2001 and amounted to £880k for Denbighshire and could be used for giving assistance under any existing Council powers. Furthermore Section 2 of the new Local Government Act 2000 included a power to give financial assistance to any person (the well-being power). The Financial Controller said the impact of the new Section 2 Local Government Act 2000 needed to be investigated with a report back to the next Cabinet meeting.

Edwina Hart had agreed to trigger the Bellwin scheme in respect of the costs that Councils have incurred as a result of the outbreak e.g. in imposing and monitoring control on access, provision of disinfectant etc. Denbighshire have been registered for the scheme.

Councillor R.W. Hughes said tourism publicity is critical and asked whether the new money could be used to promote business. The Financial Controller said clarification would be required.

Councillor G.M. Kensler asked about the 30 June 2001 timescale and said it was a short time for individuals and businesses to provide any documentation which would be required for grant to be paid. The Financial Controller said criteria for demonstrating hardship is in place. He also said that the position will be reviewed in June 2001 and it was possible that any underspend of grants would be included in a further scheme.

A brief discussion on the rural rate relief followed.

RESOLVED that Members agreed:-

- (a) *that the restrictions within Denbighshire remain in place for the time being, although this would be reviewed at every Cabinet meeting, and*
- (b) *the Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services to provide a verbal report at the Cabinet meeting to be held on 19 April 2001 with a full report provided at the Cabinet meeting to be held on 1 May 2001.*

The meeting concluded at 11.00 a.m.
