

CABINET

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held in the Council Chamber, Prestatyn on Monday 3 November 2003 at 5.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillors P A Dobb, Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing; M A German, Lead Member for Sustainable Development and Environment; D M Morris, Lead Member for Communications; E A Owens, Lead Member for Finance, J A Smith, Lead Member for Social Inclusion; W R Webb, Lead Member for Property and Asset Management and E W Williams, Lead Member for Economic Wellbeing.

Observers: Councillors I M German.

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive, Corporate Director: Resources / Deputy Chief Executive; Financial Controller and the County Clerk.

APOLOGIES

Councillors E C Edwards, Lead Member for Safeguarding our Communities; G M Kensler, Lead Member for Promoting Denbighshire and R W Hughes, Lead Member for Lifelong Learning.

620 URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent matters.

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 paragraph 8 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

PART II

621 OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

The Chief Executive presented the report seeking a decision on whether to rent additional space at the former Zurich building in Prestatyn for the education department, in order to meet the short and medium-term accommodation problems facing the Council; or to retain the education department at Cledfryn whilst recognising that this is not a sustainable solution for the long term because of overcrowding. (Throughout the report, "Education Department" was used as shorthand for the Education Services and Education Strategy and Resources Departments). The County Landlord also circulated an extract by the Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning of the PFI Full Business Case.

The Chief Executive informed Members that recent bids for the number of staff to be housed in the Ruthin PFI building totalled 375, which was greater than the previous figure. This would increase removal costs and the unitary charge payable to the Private Sector Partner. Options included moving the Education Department to the former Zurich building in Prestatyn, or leaving them in Cledfryn, Denbigh, which was not sustainable. The figure of 375 would not allow for any subsequent growth in staff numbers.

Councillor E W Williams suggested the cost of moving the Education Department outlined in paragraph 2.3 of the report could be higher than the costs of relocating the Department to Ruthin. The Financial Controller said that whilst discussions are required with the Private Sector Partner / developer of the PFI building about staff numbers, it was expected that it would also charge for any changes to the internal layout and that energy and cleaning costs could also rise.

The County Landlord said that whilst Social Services had forecasted growth in staff numbers over three consecutive years, no other Service had historically been able to forecast growth.

In response to a query from Councillor E A Owens, the Corporate Director: Resources said approximately 65 staff would move from Russell House which would enable the disposal of Morfa Hall.

In response to a query from Councillor W R Webb, it was agreed that Culture and Leisure staff currently based at Russell House would move to the Children's Village although a reception facility was required in the Children's Village to facilitate the move.

The Financial Controller confirmed that the Fire Service certificate for the PFI building was for over 400 persons.

Councillor E W Williams suggested that the number of staff to be located in the PFI building should now remain at 343. The Education Department should limit their staff numbers to be located in the building to 44. It was uncertain at this stage whether 10 Animal Licensing staff and the Housing staff would need to be housed in this building.

Councillor D M Morris reminded Members and officers that the staff were the Authority's most important resource and fire safety in particular was of paramount importance.

Councillor E A Owens suggested that the allocation of space per person in the PFI building should be re-examined. The County Landlord confirmed that an average figure of 10 sq m per person including interview / meeting rooms etc was used in reviewing capacity levels elsewhere in the County's offices. Councillor Owens considered this to be generous.

Councillor Owens suggested moving the senior Education Department staff to the PFI building. In response, the Chief Executive said a split of moving 33 staff to Ruthin and 10 remaining at Caledfryn could hinder joint working. However, the Head of Strategy & Resources - Lifelong Learning agreed there was potential to compromise on the split of staff numbers.

In response to a query from Councillor E A Owens, the Chief Executive confirmed that he viewed it as essential that the Legal and Personnel Departments were located in the new PFI building, as outlined in the report.

Members discussed the possibility of homeworking or hotdesking. The Chief Executive confirmed this had already been taken on board. It was agreed that Environmental Health Officers and Social Workers for example spent much of their working day out of the office. However, the Head of Personnel confirmed that there would be Health and Safety issues around any staff working from home and a pilot study was currently being undertaken by 3 members of Social Services staff.

The County Landlord reminded Members that Social Services had previously agreed to the concept of addressing an element of growth by the adoption of flexible working.

Councillor E W Williams agreed that the deployment of staff was the ultimate responsibility of the Head of Paid Service. He also suggested 343 staff should be located in the PFI building and the option to rent additional space at the Zurich building should not be pursued.

In response to a query from the Financial Controller, Members were not minded to pursue an option of an extension to the PFI building.

Members noted that it had previously been agreed to investigate the provision of a new permanent building in Rhyl.

The Chief Executive agreed to provide Members with details of the space allocation per member of staff that would result from accommodating 343 staff in the building.

After further discussion, it was:-

RESOLVED that Cabinet:-

- (a) *agree to accommodate 343 staff in the PFI building at Ruthin, including a maximum of 44 staff from the Education Department at Caledfryn;*
- (b) *agree to progress moving the Animal Licensing staff to alternative accommodation, and*
- (c) *if the Housing Stock is transferred in due course, ask the Housing Association to vacate the PFI building.*

The meeting concluded at 6.05 p.m.
