

CABINET

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held in Awelon, School Road, Ruthin on Tuesday 17 February 2004 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillors P A Dobb, Lead Member for Health & Wellbeing; E C Edwards, Lead Member for Safeguarding our Communities; M A German, Lead Member for Sustainable Development and Environment; G M Kensler, Lead Member for Promoting Denbighshire; R W Hughes, Lead Member for Lifelong Learning; 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 J Butterfield, M LI Davies, S Drew, D Jones, N Hugh Jones, M M Jones, R J R Jones, K N Hawkins and D M Holder.

ALSO PRESENT

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

975 URGENT MATTERS

[i] Item 1A - Prudential Indicators 2004/2005 to 2006/2007

976 MINUTES OF THE CABINET

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 27 January 2004 were submitted.

Typographical error: Observers should read Councillor M LI Davies.

Item 7 Revenue Budget 2004/2005: The School Transport Task and Finish Group had been established and was due to meet in the near future.

Item No 8 Sport and Recreation Services Best Value Review: Councillor G M Kensler asked that the last sentence in the penultimate paragraph be amended to read "....agreements are currently being drawn up".

Item 11 Accommodation for the Registrar in North Wales: Councillor R W Hughes asked that the second paragraph be amended to read "whilst accepting the representations made by Rhyl residents, she thought the Botanical Gardens was by far the best site ..."

Item 12 Customer Service Centre / Customer Relation Management System:
Councillor R W Hughes asked that the second paragraph be amended to read "staff from the One Stop Shops, including Libraries, be involved with ...".

The Chief Executive reported that the presentation on Contact Centres to be held on 25.02.2004 had been cancelled although the presentation on Customer Relationship Management would still go ahead on the same day. A visit to a Contact Centre would be arranged for any Members who wished to take part.

Item 17 Minutes of the Cabinet Item 4 TAITH Constitution: The Chief Executive confirmed that the contract was due to be signed shortly.

Item 18 3 Year Capital Plan:

In response to a query from Councillor G M Kensler, the Chief Executive said he, Councillor R W Hughes and Councillor E W Williams had met with officers from ELWa. ELWa were looking at different funding avenues for the community learning resource centres and they hoped to issue a further statement shortly.

Members agreed with Councillor E C Edwards' suggestion that the Task Group working on the community learning resource centres be reconvened as soon as possible.

RESOLVED that subject to the above, the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 27 January 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Deputy Leader.

977 PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2004/2005 TO 2006/2007

Councillor E A Owens presented the report seeking Cabinet's recommendation to Council for the setting of prudential indicators for 2004/05, 2005/06 and 2006/07. Councillor Owens thanked the Corporate Director: Resources and staff for their hard work in producing the report.

The Corporate Director: Resources also thanked the Financial Controller and Principal Management Accountant for the quality of work carried out on prudential indicators to date. He said prudential indicators would be considered in detail by Full Council. The Authority would need to look in particular at the 3 year framework around the financing implications of the capital plan. He indicated that in addition to the report, he would be required to issue a statement on the adequacy of reserves and robustness of the financial estimates.

The Principal Management Accountant outlined in detail the purpose and background information in respect of prudential indicators and answered questions from Members.

Councillor W R Webb queried the £10m difference between 2003/04 and 2006/07 in the authorised limit for external debt. The Corporate Director: Resources said the reduction was due to the assumption that housing stock transfer would take place.

In response to queries from Councillor P A Dobb, the Corporate Director: Resources suggested Councillor Dobb meet the Principal Management Accountant to discuss treasury management functions in general.

In response to a query from Councillor E W Williams regarding hypothecation of Welsh Assembly Government grants, the Chief Executive confirmed that only if capital grants were converted to revenue grants would there be a potential benefit for prudential borrowing.

The Financial Controller outlined the revenue budget requirements for 2004/05 to 2006/07 as detailed in Appendices 1 and 1(a). The figures in the first column were the latest estimates for 2004/05 whilst the figures in second column assumed inflation of 3%, including the various estimated pressures. The likely impact resulting from Housing Stock Transfer, the likely increase in employer's pension contributions for non teaching staff and single status pay grading negotiations had also been included along with the full year impact of the unitary charge for the new PFI building and the capital programme impact on the provision for capital financing costs.

The Chief Executive informed Members that he would lead the work to identify, within the next 6 months, options for reducing costs and/or increasing income across the Council.

With regard to the membership of the Pension Fund Panel, Members agreed that Denbighshire should press for representation on the Panel and it was agreed this should again be pursued.

Councillor W R Webb queried the staffing numbers at SO1 level and above as discussed at the recent Council meeting, and asked for a full list to be made available for the next Council meeting of those staff, the Department to which they have been appointed, how many staff and their full costs have been taken on by the Authority over the last 12 months. The Chief Executive agreed to circulate the information as requested but also including staffing numbers below SO1 in a letter to all Members. He said the vast majority of the increase in staff numbers was in Personal Services and that the staffing levels quoted at the recent Council meeting had not been placed in context or taken account of any job re-evaluation of grades. Councillor E C Edwards suggested that decisions on external recruitment should have remained with Cabinet rather than with the relevant Corporate Director and Lead Member thereby enabling Members to have a clearer indication of current staffing levels.

After further discussion it was:-

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommends to Council the setting of the Prudential Indicators for 2004/05, 2005/06 and 2006/07 [subject to any amendments which may be required arising from decisions affecting the Revenue Budget which may be made during the Cabinet meeting of 17.02.04].

At this juncture (3.15 p.m.) the meeting adjourned for 10 minutes to allow Members to participate in refreshments.

978 RESIDENTIAL HOMES

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report seeking Members' agreement to proposals for developing accommodation, support and care options for older people in Denbighshire, linked to resolving the future of the Authority's four residential homes. Councillor Dobb detailed the very sheltered accommodation which afforded the elderly as much or as little care as required with the residents purchasing the care in units whilst being able to live in the same accommodation throughout.

Members agreed with Councillor Dobb's suggestion that recommendation 8.10 should be a County-wide Member cross directorate officer working group.

Councillor E W Williams suggested the terms of reference of the working group should be considered by Cabinet.

Councillor W R Webb sought assurance from Members and officers that residential beds would be kept in Cysgod y Gaer and that there was no spare capacity in the home at present. He emphasised there were widely differing care requirements in the various parts of the County and that locality planning should be a major consideration by the working group. The Chief Executive assured Councillor Webb that any need for residential beds would emerge from consideration of local requirements. The Corporate Director: Personal Services agreed that the Corwen area could be included specifically when setting the terms of reference as to whether sheltered housing was required in the area.

In response to a query from Councillor G M Kensler regarding paragraph 6.3, Councillor P A Dobb said the Head of Housing had been involved because of the housing needs assessment and the report on the elderly by the Nuffield Institute.

Councillor E A Owens said the visit arranged by the Corporate Director: Personal Services to see very sheltered housing in Walsall had been most instructive and she had been particularly impressed with the concept of add-on packages. Councillor Owens suggested that similar fact finding visits should continue as the need arose.

Councillor E C Edwards asked whether the membership of the working group would be politically balanced and whether the working group would be selecting the pilot scheme. The Chief Executive said the Lead Member would make nominations to the working group and would take political balance into consideration. He also confirmed the working group would select the pilot scheme.

Councillor J Butterfield detailed the views from Personal Services Scrutiny Committee and reminded Members of the need to address best value issues. She expressed her thanks to the Lead Member and the staff for an excellent report.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:-

- (a) *endorse the findings of Member visits that, whilst it is possible to refurbish existing residential homes to a high standard, Very Sheltered Housing provides a popular and cost effective alternative to residential care and should represent a key component (with local variations) of Denbighshire's future developments for older people;*
- (b) *support the notion of developing a pilot scheme in one area of Denbighshire;*

- (c) *support a formal approach to health agencies and professionals to contribute to the development of a possible multi-purpose scheme to meet the needs of older people;*
- (ch) *support the similar involvement of Housing Services;*
- (d) *subject to the above, agree that local consultation is undertaken and detailed proposals and funding options are brought forward that demonstrate Best Value;*
- (dd) *agree that a consultation process is entered into with the Trades Unions;*
- (e) *once the detail of the pilot site is confirmed the Building Group Manager be asked to undertake a further review of the existing residential homes to determine the minimum work required to maintain them to a reasonable level until such times as the new model of service is agreed for each locality;*
- (f) *agree locality planning, as outlined in the November paper to Cabinet, is taken forward in the 3 other Area Partnership areas, apart from the pilot site, within 2004/05, to work up a detailed picture of needs and possibilities and bring forward detailed proposals and funding options;*
- (ff) *recommend to Council the allocation of additional earmarked revenue resources of £30k in 2004-05 to enable Prudential Borrowing in support of the initial design of the development programme, subject to Cabinet approval of detailed proposals, and*
- (g) *agree a County-wide Member / cross-directorate officer working group, linked to multi-agency planning structures for older people, is established to drive and oversee the development of the pilot and the locality planning process and reports in six months.*

979 CCTV - CAPITAL REQUIREMENTS

Councillor E C Edwards presented the report advising Members of the current condition of the CCTV system in Denbighshire and seeking consideration of options for the future of the network. Councillor Edwards emphasised the lack of maintenance carried out on the present system and the lack of technical expertise within the County to run the system satisfactorily. Councillor Edwards said the control room and equipment could possibly move to Rhyl Police Station.

The Corporate Director: Environment detailed the options in paragraph 5.1 of the report and suggested the £600k total cost for the entire system could be phased in over a few years, dependent on capital availability.

The Chief Executive suggested that to do nothing to improve the system was not a viable option. He said the £600k total cost did not necessarily have to come from the 2004/05 budget but suggested taking £300k from 2004/05 followed by the balance in future years. The cost could be funded by a range of options, including displacing other items in the capital plan, funding from capital receipts or prudential borrowing.

Councillor D M Morris supported the need for CCTV and said it was an important part of policing. He agreed with the possible relocation of the CCTV control room to the existing Rhyl Police Station.

Councillor G M Kensler said she was pleased to see the report on CCTV and said the revenue and maintenance of cameras was very important. She suggested the consultant should be asked to do give a presentation to Cabinet.

Councillor E W Williams agreed that option 5.1(i) of the report was not viable and his preferred option was to await the generation of capital receipts from the sale of surplus assets and ensure that CCTV is prioritised for that funding.

Councillor E A Owens said that whilst the report had been helpful in detailing the current situation she suggested a further report be produced which could include the rest of the Vale and clearer detailed running costs.

In response to a question from Councillor W R Webb, the Chief Executive said the North Wales Police gave a grant of £19k annually towards the provision of CCTV facilities.

The Corporate Director: Environment detailed the ongoing revenue expenditure bids made along with staffing issues and said the bid for a full time control room manager had not been successful. He said it was also difficult to secure funding for any increase or expansion to the system and a higher level of cover could not be provided.

Councillor R J R Jones said the walkie talkie system used in Llangollen had proved of tremendous benefit and suggested this system could be used elsewhere in the County.

Councillor E C Edwards said a meeting was due to take place on 20.02.04 between Mr Don Touhig MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Wales Office, members of the North Wales Police and the CCTV consultant regarding provision of CCTV in Denbighshire.

After further discussion it was:-

RESOLVED that Members support in principle the option of investing in the development of the CCTV system through the creation of a new CCTV control room, and upgrading the current CCTV equipment in Rhyl and Prestatyn. Members note the new CCTV control room will provide opportunities for the further expansion of the CCTV network in Denbighshire, subject to appropriate funding being available. Members agree the consultant's report be circulated to Cabinet Members with any questions on the report to be presented to the Corporate Director: Environment before the Cabinet meeting.

980 REVENUE BUDGET 2004-2005

Councillor E A Owens presented the report to enable Members to review the revenue budget proposals for 2004-2005 in light of the debate at County Council on 03.02.2004. Councillor Owens detailed the amendments to the budget with regard to the reduction of £54k in the contribution to the Fire Authority and the inclusion in the ELWa funding for 16+ education of funding for teachers' threshold payments. Councillor Owens said Denbighshire currently was the most expensive Band D Council tax level in North Wales.

Councillor W R Webb expressed his concern at the 4.3% Council tax level for this year and said the funding of £1m from specific reserves in the next financial year plus the possible funding of £720k for the care grant could lead to the following year's Council Tax being between 16 and 19% unless drastic cuts in services were made. He suggested the Council Tax should be set at 6.1% as originally recommended to Full Council.

The Chief Executive said clarification on the detail was still awaited from the Welsh Assembly Government on the £720k for the care grant in relation to the elderly. He said there was no guarantee that the funding, this year used for growth, would be available the following year and even if awarded in future years its use could be limited.

Councillor E C Edwards asked that the Chief Executive again write to Sue Essex AM, Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services to clarify the grant rules relating to the £720k.

Councillor G M Kensler suggested a 0.2% increase on Council Tax should be made for music tuition in schools. Councillor E A Owens said only 2 out of 5 senior headteachers had supported the suggestion for an increase for music tuition.

Councillor P A Dobb suggested more funding should be ring fenced for the care of the elderly.

The Chief Executive said all Personal Services growth bids bar 3 had been met. The 3 bids not met totalled £156k and suggested these could be reconsidered, if Members wished.

Councillor E A Owens said adjustments to the budget would be made if required when the clarification from the Welsh Assembly Government on the care for the elderly grant was received. She said that if Councillor W R Webb's suggestion was agreed, putting £1m into general reserves would put a further 5.7% onto Council Tax to make a total Council Tax of 10.2%.

Members had earlier agreed £30k for residential care homes and £50k for housing strategy staffing costs which would make an increase of 4.6% in Council Tax.

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommends to Council:;

- (a) *the budget proposals as included in the paper first presented to Council on 03.02.2004 together with an additional £30k for prudential borrowing in respect of residential care homes and £50k for housing strategy staffing costs, and*
- (b) *a Council Tax increase of 4.6%.*

The meeting concluded at 5.00 p.m.
