

## CABINET

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held in the Town Hall, Rhyl on Tuesday 28 September 2004 at 10.00 a.m.

### PRESENT

Councillors S A Davies, Lead Member for Business & Communications; P A Dobb, Lead Member for Health & Wellbeing; E C Edwards, Lead Member for Communities; M A German, Lead Member for Children and Young People; R W Hughes, Leader and Lead Member for Regeneration; P J Marfleet, Lead Member for Finance and Personnel; D Owens, Lead Member for Lifelong Learning; S Roberts, Lead Member for Promoting Denbighshire; J Thompson Hill, Lead Member for Property and Asset Management and E W Williams, Lead Member for Environment.

Observers: Councillors R E Barton; J Butterfield; P C Duffy; M LI Davies; K N Hawkins, N Hugh Jones, D Jones and G M Kensler.

### ALSO PRESENT

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

#### 217 URGENT MATTERS

[i] Closure of Benefits Offices

#### 218 MINUTES OF THE CABINET

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 14 September 2004 were submitted.

Item 7 Approval of SPG Parking Requirements in New Developments: Para 2 delete "at residential institutions".

Item 10 Meeting with Rhodri Morgan AM, First Minister: The Leader said it would be possible to devolve some of the funding and relevant work of the WTB, ELWa and WDA to Local Authorities rather than the Welsh Assembly Government but WAG had decided not to pursue this avenue at this time.

**RESOLVED** that subject to the above, the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 14 September 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

#### 219 LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report seeking Cabinet recommendation to Council that the Denbighshire Local Housing Strategy be adopted. Councillor Dobb said an enormous amount of work had been carried out over the last two years to ensure an appropriate Strategy would be adopted for Denbighshire. The demography of the County had altered and the percentage of older persons was also higher. It was essential to find efficient ways of funding accommodation, leading to affordable, sustainable neighbourhoods.

The County Clerk confirmed that it was a Cabinet, rather than a Council, decision whether to adopt the Denbighshire Local Housing Strategy at this time. Although in agreement with the County Clerk, Councillor R W Hughes said it was important for all Councillors to have been involved in producing the Strategy.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet adopt the Denbighshire Local Housing Strategy.

#### 220 IMPROVING THE COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK: UPDATE

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report seeking Members' agreement to receive a detailed report on Housing Stock Transfer at Cabinet in October 2004, in light of the points raised in the report. She said

the report would include information on prudential borrowing. Councillor Dobb also expressed her disappointment in the consultants who had not provided information in a timely manner, which could present difficulties for some of the Authority's tenants. However, following on from a recent meeting of the WLGA, it had been agreed that the Welsh Assembly Government would meet with all Local Authorities to discuss ways of moving housing stock transfer forward. Further discussions would also follow on pension back-funding.

Councillor P J Marfleet agreed with the points made by Councillor Dobb and reminded Members that although Denbighshire had many new Councillors this was of no relevance to decisions being made. Circumstances had altered, there was a general lack of information from the Welsh Assembly Government and any decisions taken would have significant financial implications for the Authority.

Councillor R W Hughes said she had spoken with Mr J Patterson, Chair of the Denbighshire Tenants' and Residents' Federation and had explained the current situation. In the circumstances he had agreed it would not have been helpful to have a further meeting at this time.

Councillor J Butterfield asked that consideration be given to a member of the Tenants' Federation attending any meeting, or attending as observers, with the Welsh Assembly Government and the Leader and Lead Members for Health and Wellbeing and Finance and Personnel. Councillor M A German said all Cabinet Members should be informed of the outcome of any discussions before a meeting was held with the Tenants. Members agreed to give the matter consideration.

**RESOLVED** that Members agree to receive a detailed report on Housing Stock Transfer at the Cabinet meeting in October 2004.

## 221 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor R W Hughes presented the report seeking Members' agreement to revoke the previous delegation to Cabinet Members to make appointments to outside bodies subject to the exceptions listed in paragraph 2.4 of the report. She said a number of further amendments had been made since the report had been despatched to Members and circulated an addendum for Members' consideration. Councillor P A Dobb would be the Member on the Denbighshire Voluntary Sector Liaison Group and not Councillor S Frobisher. Councillor D Hannam would be the Member on the Rhyl and District Benefit Advice Shop along with Councillor D Jones.

### **RESOLVED:**

- [a] that Cabinet agrees to revoke the delegation to all Members "to make appointment to external bodies whose remit lies wholly within the Cabinet Member's portfolio."
- [b] that Cabinet agrees a new delegation to the Leader and Cabinet Members in respect of external bodies whose remit lies wholly within the Cabinet Members' portfolio, to make appointments to fill any vacancies that occur before the next ordinary election of Councillors.
- [c] that following attendance at meetings of outside bodies short reports should be produced by the nominated representative for the relevant Lead Members, outlining the key issues discussed and any implications for the Authority, enabling a review of the Council's membership of these bodies to be reviewed in 12 months' time.
- [ch] to agree appointments to the bodies detailed on the list at Appendix 1 attached to the report and the addendum circulated and revised at the meeting.

## 222 REVENUE BUDGET 2004-2005

Councillor P J Marfleet presented the report for Members, in the light of the budget performance figures for the current financial year as detailed in the appendices attached to the report, to consider any actions necessary to reduce the balance of overspending on services. He said improvements in performance were required each month otherwise a shortfall would occur by the year end.

Councillor Marfleet, in response to a query from Councillor E W Williams, said officers and Members were meeting to discuss policies and priorities for the next year. However, overspending on services needed to be addressed as savings were required.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet note the figures in the Appendices and agree the remedial actions to align projected spending levels with approved budgets.

## **223 ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT 2003/2004**

Councillor P J Marfleet presented the annual report on the performance of the treasury management function in accordance with the Authority's Treasury Policy Statement. The report detailed previous expectations of the economic climate, the resultant strategy agreed, the actual interest rate performance and the actions undertaken by Council in response. Members were asked to approve the treasury activities undertaken in 2003-2004 as detailed in the appendix to the report.

Councillor Marfleet detailed the positive improvements in collection of Council Tax and other debts and that the Council had drawn down more grant funding. However, some of the improvements had been due to slippage where funding had been allocated but not used. He said the Authority's cash flow appeared healthy on a daily basis.

Members discussed the impacts of the Council Tax property rebanding by the Inland Revenue and agreed residents should be kept informed. The Chief Executive confirmed that residents would have the opportunity of appeal next year but in the meantime would have to pay their Council Tax.

The Leader agreed with Members that a press release be issued detailing the Council Tax property rebanding and that it would also be included in the next issue of Cabinet Watch which was published in the local press.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet approve the Annual Treasury Report for 2003-2004. Members agree a press release be issued detailing the Council Tax property rebanding.

## **224 COLLABORATIVE PROCUREMENT - NETWORK MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT**

Councillor S A Davies presented the report seeking Members' authorisation for the Head of ICT to enter into collaborative procurement arrangements along with other North Wales Authorities (Wrexham County Borough Council and Flintshire County Council), to tender for the maintenance and support of the Denbighshire wide-area network, corporate local area network and supporting equipment. The process constituted a joint procurement arrangement as referred to in Section 7.1 of the Financial Regulations (CPRs). Flintshire County Council would be the lead Authority.

**RESOLVED** that Members authorise the Head of ICT to enter into negotiations with other North Wales Authorities (Wrexham County Borough Council and Flintshire County Council), with a view to enabling joint procurement arrangements in respect of Denbighshire's network maintenance, support and equipment.

## **225 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

Councillor S A Davies presented the report and asked officers to ensure that Lead Members were fully involved in developing the Cabinet Forward Work Programme and involving Members from the start. The Leader endorsed Councillor Davies' comments and said Members must 'own' their reports.

Councillor Davies reported on his recent meeting with the Chair of Resources and the Administration Services Manager and said a questionnaire would be sent to all Members seeking suggestions for efficiencies on production of papers for meetings. Ongoing research would continue. He agreed with Members that a cost efficient but effective way of delivering papers to Members was required.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet note the contents of the Forward Work Programme.

## 226 URGENT ITEMS

### [a] CLOSURE OF BENEFIT OFFICE, BRIGHTON ROAD, RHYL

Councillor S Roberts informed Members that the Department of Work and Pensions were to close the Benefit Office in Brighton Road, Rhyl along with other offices in North Wales. It would mean that only one Benefit Office would operate in Denbighshire, whilst there would be 3 in Flintshire, 2 in Conwy and 2 in Wrexham. It was proposed that a bilingual call centre would eventually be established in Bangor. Members agreed the Authority should oppose the closure of the office in Rhyl in the strongest terms as it operated in an area of deprivation and the closure of the office would inevitably make more difficulties for its clients. Members said the best possible service was required for the residents of Denbighshire.

Members agreed the three Denbighshire MPs should be contacted as a matter of urgency regarding the closure, to ensure Denbighshire had at least an equal service as would be provided in other North Wales counties. Members agreed they also be requested to contact the Department of Work and Pensions regarding Rhyl being considered as a location for a call centre.

***RESOLVED** the Leader contact Denbighshire MPs and regarding the closure of the Rhyl Benefit Office.*

## 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 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.*

## PART II

### 227 SPECIALIST CARRIAGEWAY SURFACE TREATMENT

Councillor E W Williams presented the report seeking Members' approval to an exemption from Contract Procedure Rules [CPRs] in respect of the procurement of specialised remedial surface treatment in order to address low skid resistance values on principal roads - CPR 10.1 (a) refers.

***RESOLVED** that Cabinet agree to an exemption from Contract Procedure Rules in accordance with CPR 10.1(a) be granted to enable the Klaruw surface retexturing process to be utilised on areas of the principal road network where mechanical survey shows skid resistance to be below recognised intervention levels.*

### 228 THE NEXT PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT OF YSGOL PLAS BRONDYFFRYN AS A REGIONAL CENTRE FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Councillor D Owens presented the report seeking Members' agreement to the proposals for the development of Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn school [YPBD] as a regional centre for children with autism in North Wales and to fund the scheme within the 2004/07 capital plan, making use of an earmarked capital receipt from the sale of the current Brondyffryn Hall site and prudential borrowing.

Members were also asked to agree the transfer of the Gwynfryn site by gift from the Welsh Assembly Government to Denbighshire County Council. Agreement was sought to an exemption of the Contract Procedure Rules, 15 to 23 Quotation and Tendering. Members were asked to endorse the appointment of an existing Building Development Team.

Councillor Owens said Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn was an excellent centre with 112 pupils at 4 sites, 73 of whom came from outside the County.

Councillor P J Marfleet reminded Members the regional centre at Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn would be foremost amongst such provision in Wales. He supported the transfer of the Gwynfryn site by gift from the Welsh Assembly Government to the Authority as the only costs would be ongoing maintenance costs. Councillor Marfleet said the refurbishment of the Tyn y Fron site at Rhyl Road, Denbigh would be considered in further detail, in particular the provision of car parking facilities.

The Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources confirmed that the Brondyffryn Trust had originally agreed to gift the development plans to the Authority but had later sought to include a financial penalty clause in the deed of gift which would be imposed if the project was not completed as stated. The Council was not prepared to accept these imposed conditions.

Councillor E C Edwards said he was delighted to see the project going ahead as it was an unparalleled facility. It was essential to work closely with other Local Authorities to engage in service level agreements. He looked forward to seeing completion of the work.

Councillor E W Williams agreed with Councillor Edwards' remarks and said on completion Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn would become a national rather than a regional centre for children with autism.

In response to a query from Members, the Senior Management Accountant confirmed all revenue costs were in place for the scheme. The Senior Education Adviser confirmed that there was a demand for places at the school and figures showed that autism in children had increased over the last 10 years.

Councillor R W Hughes said she was delighted with the provision being made by the Authority for the young people of Denbighshire at Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn and also at Ysgol Tir Morfa.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet:

- [a] agree the proposals for the development of Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn school [YPBD] as a regional centre for children with autism in North Wales.*
- [b] agree to fund the scheme within the 2004/07 capital plan, making use of an earmarked capital receipt from the sale of the current Brondyffryn Hall site and prudential borrowing.*
- [c] agree the transfer of the Gwynfryn site by gift from the Welsh Assembly Government to Denbighshire County Council.*
- [ch] agree to an exemption of the Contract Procedure Rules, 15 to 23 Quotation and Tendering.*
- [d] to endorse the appointment of an existing Building Development Team.*

Councillor R W Hughes, Leader reminded all Members that questions had been allowed from non Cabinet Members at the meeting but it would not always be possible for non Cabinet Members to comment. Non Cabinet Members were encouraged to submit written questions to the Leader / Cabinet Office 5 days before the Cabinet meeting.

The meeting concluded at 11.25 a.m.

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