

CABINET

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held in the Town Hall, Llangollen on Tuesday 23 November 2004 at 11.00 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; D Hannam; T R Hughes; M M Jones and N J Hughes.

ALSO PRESENT

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

APOLOGIES

None.

388 URGENT MATTERS

There were no Urgent Matters.

389 MINUTES OF THE CABINET

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 26 October 2004 were submitted.

Item 10[a] Closure of Benefit Office, Brighton Road, Rhyl: Councillor R W Hughes reported that Chris Ruane MP had met with the Chief Executive of Job Centre Plus and she was willing to consider locating some of their services through the County's libraries, One Stop Shops and other Council buildings.

Item 9 Free Swimming for Older People: Councillor S Roberts reported that the working group had been set up and was to meet on 24.11.2004.

Item 17 Prestatyn: Ffrith Beach:

The County Clerk reported an amendment to the comment made by Councillor J M Davies to read: "Prestatyn Members were full of enthusiasm to find a successful outcome for the Ffrith, but that the proposed retail park development was completely unsuitable, and that any DIY type development ought to be located in the town centre rather than near the beach".

Councillor M A German said his comment should read "a canvass had revealed that development of the site and the provision of a roundabout with a supermarket or affordable housing would be welcomed by some residents".

RESOLVED that subject to the above, the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 26 October 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

390 CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT ASSESSMENT: APPROVAL OF ACTION PLAN

The Chief Executive presented the report seeking Cabinet approval to the Action Plan at Annex 1 to the report.

Councillor R W Hughes emphasised that parts of the report should be viewed in historic terms.

Councillor E C Edwards reminded Members that it was an important document and said the Council must act on its recommendations. Councillor R W Hughes agreed and said consideration was being given to holding more informal meetings where Cabinet Members could meet every fortnight.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the Action Plan at Annex 1 to the report.

391 PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT 2004-2005

The Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources presented the report, circulated at the meeting, seeking Cabinet approval to the response to the Provisional Local Government Revenue and Capital Settlement 2005-2006. He apologised for the lateness of the report but said that it had been held back in anticipation of further announcements from the Assembly. The previous day Sue Essex AM, Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services had announced that there would be a delay in the confirmation of the settlement until 12 January 2005 but every effort would be made to release the figures in December. The Chancellor's Pre-Budget statement would be made on 2 December 2004 and should hopefully be incorporated in the Settlement in January 2005.

The Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources confirmed that the provisional increase of 3.8% would reduce to approximately 2.3% after allowing for additional responsibilities within the settlement. He informed Members that the Corporate Director: Personal Services had worked closely with the Welsh Assembly Government and the Authority were pleased with the support shown by the Assembly in delaying the introduction of conversion of residential allowances to a formula basis.

He went on to emphasise the importance of making early progress with three year plans but recognised the complications involved in such financial planning.

Councillor R W Hughes thanked the Deputy Chief Executive for producing the report so promptly and also for detailing the implications of the delay in publishing the Settlement. She asked that any further comments be sent direct to the Deputy Chief Executive by 25.11.2004 at the latest.

Councillor P J Marfleet informed Members that the Welsh Assembly Government, MPs and the Secretary of State for Wales had been contacted regarding the settlement. He went on to thank all Members, particularly the leaders of the political groups on working and standing closely together on the matter.

Councillor E C Edwards asked whether the Queen's Speech would have an impact on the settlement. The Chief Executive agreed there would be an impact for Local Government.

The Chief Executive confirmed that based upon current information in the settlement, to achieve a standstill budget the Council Tax yield would need to increase by up to 16 - 17%.

Councillor E W Williams stressed the importance of informing the public what the Council Tax would have been and what it would be after the Valuation Office re-banding was applied. The re-banding increases were carried out as a result of Assembly directives. He suggested the Assembly be informed that the Authority would be highlighting this to the public.

Councillor R E Barton reminded Members that Denbighshire had Objective 1 status because of the deprived areas and suggested the demographic issues should be stressed.

Councillor E C Edwards said Objective 1 funding could be adversely affected with more countries being included in the European Community.

Councillor Edwards also informed Members that the Home Office had delayed the Police settlement until December 2004 and this figure would need to be included in the Authority's final Council Tax figures.

Councillor P J Marfleet said the allocation formula resulted in a low figure and in certain areas, for example adult services, the Authority had been disadvantaged by £400k. He also emphasised that

the transient nature of the population in parts of Denbighshire distorted the figures and it was imperative that work was undertaken to ensure that the needs of the Council were adequately reflected in the formulae used for the settlement.

Councillor D Hannam reminded Members that some people who work were also deprived and would find it increasingly difficult to pay the Council Tax increases and could cause hardship.

RESOLVED that Members approve the response to the Provisional Local Government Revenue and Capital Settlement 2004-2006.

392 CORPORATE QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT AGAINST IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2004-2005

Councillor P J Marfleet presented the report seeking Members' consideration of the Corporate Quarterly Performance Report against the Improvement Plan for 2004 / 2005 and urged Members to monitor closely the progress being made against corporate and service risks with reference to local performance indicators with a view to considering any issue in greater depth as deemed necessary.

Councillor Marfleet referred in particular to waste management, although currently on target he said if the targets were not met, the Authority could incur financial penalties. Councillor E W Williams agreed and said Denbighshire should work together with other Local Authorities on joint procurement for refuse collection and that strong leadership was required from the Welsh Assembly Government. He said targets should be robust when set.

RESOLVED that Members note the progress on the Corporate Quarterly Performance report attached at Appendices I and II to the report.

393 HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

Councillor R W Hughes welcomed Mr Andrew Jones, Local Director of Public Health for Conwy and Denbighshire Local Health Board to the meeting.

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report seeking Cabinet agreement to the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy 2005-2008 and Action Plan, and to receive detailed proposals on Health Challenge Denbighshire. Cabinet were also asked to recommend adoption of the Strategy to Full Council.

Councillor Dobb said the Wanless Review recommended that Personal Services should work closely with the National Health Service to provide a seamless care system. She also said Denbighshire had taken a joint approach with Lifelong Learning for various initiatives.

Councillor E W Williams briefly outlined an initiative started to deliver groceries to local villages which was of help to many communities.

Councillor P J Marfleet said a structure was required to ensure all partners were involved in ascertaining real needs and then allocating resources.

Councillor R W Hughes thanked Councillor Dobb and officers for their work and commitment to the Strategy.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

[a] agrees the action plan of the Health Social Care and Well-Being Strategy 2005-2008

[b] receives the detailed proposals on Health Challenge Denbighshire, as outlined in paragraphs 2.3.15 to 2.3.17 of the report

[c] recommends adoption of the Strategy to Full Council

394 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S FRAMEWORK PLAN / CHILDREN'S PLAN (0-10)

Councillor M A German presented the report for Members to comment and agree the action plans for the Children and Young People's Framework Plan and the Children's Plan (0-10) to cover the period to March 2008.

The Corporate Director: Personal Services confirmed that a small additional sum would be received from Cymorth but as yet the terms and conditions were not known.

RESOLVED that Cabinet agrees the Action Plans for the Children and Young People's Framework Plan and the Children's Plan (0-10) to cover the period to March 2008.

395 IMPROVING THE COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report seeking agreement to enter into a new round of consultation with Members and tenants on the options for improving the Council Housing Stock to Welsh Housing Quality Standards. Members were also asked to agree a Seminar and Discussion Day be arranged for Members and tenant representatives to explore the new information and assess the options. Further consultation with all tenants was to be arranged as appropriate, including re-establishing the Housing Options Working Party and the Welsh Assembly Government be consulted on the alternatives of a Provisional Application for Housing Stock Transfer and the Housing Stock Business Plan for Stock Retention with Prudential Borrowing.

Councillor Dobb briefly updated Members on the recent meeting the Leader, Councillor P J Marfleet and she had met with tenant representatives and that the first step was for the tenant advisers to meet with officers to consider prudential borrowing in more detail. The tenants had said although the offer of stock transfer was appealing, any change should be decided by ballot. It was also suggested that the housing working group be re-established. Councillor R W Hughes agreed with the comments and said it was imperative that the tenants be kept informed.

Councillor P J Marfleet said all Members should be made fully aware of the situation and suggested seminars be convened to ensure Members were given detailed information. A substantial refurbishment programme was to be implemented during the next year and he suggested that officers should commence on the tender work as soon as possible.

The Head of Housing Services said a seminar for all Members had been arranged for the afternoon of 20 December, to be held at the Henllan Centre. With regard to the refurbishment of the housing stock, the principles and the properties to be refurbished would need to be the subject of consultation with tenants. Councillor Dobb suggested a new mechanism for selecting membership of the Working Party be agreed and the Head of Housing Services said the original working party membership was 5 (politically balanced) Denbighshire County Council Members and 5 tenants. He suggested an observer from Dyffryn Housing be included, with no decision making powers.

Councillor E W Williams suggested the average rent increases should be included on a north - south basis. He also asked that consideration be given to introduce local craftsmen in the refurbishment programme wherever possible and that the educational training establishments in the County also be included.

The Corporate Director: Personal Services agreed that local people would be involved wherever possible and that a system would be put in place to start the refurbishment programme.

RESOLVED that Cabinet agree:

- [a] to enter into a new round of consultation with Members and tenants on the options for improving the Council Housing Stock to Welsh Housing Quality Standards
- [b] a Seminar and Discussion Day be arranged for Members and tenant representatives to explore the new information and assess the options
- [c] further consultation with all tenants be arranged as appropriate, including re-establishing the Housing Options Working Party as listed above
- [ch] the Welsh Assembly Government be consulted on the alternatives of a Provisional Application for Housing Stock Transfer and the Housing Stock Business Plan for Stock Retention with Prudential Borrowing

396 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 expressed his disappointment in the figures and said improvements in performance were required each month otherwise a shortfall of up to £0.5m would occur by the year end.

Councillor Marfleet said the current month had showed an improvement of only £5k. He suggested meetings be convened with Lead Members to go to relevant departments to discuss the balance of the current year's budget.

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

397 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2004/2005

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report for Members to note the latest financial forecast position of £971 potential underspend of the Housing Revenue Account for the current financial year.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the figures in Appendix 1 to the report and agree the remedial actions to align projected spending levels with approved budgets.

398 CORPORATE FONT SIZE POLICY

Councillor S A Davies presented the report seeking Cabinet agreement to standardise the font size and typeface for all Council information and communication to Arial 12 point except in limited cases where practical or design issues apply and to revoke the existing policy requiring 14 point Arial for Cabinet and Asset Management Committee reports.

Councillor Davies said the change would meeting DDA requirements and also was in line with Welsh Assembly Government and other Local Authority standards.

RESOLVED that Cabinet agree the policy regarding font size for Council information and communication is standardised to Arial 12 point except in limited cases where practical or design issues apply.

399 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.

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

400 URGENT ITEMS

There were no Urgent Items.

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 1, 8 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.*

PART II

401 CAPITAL PLAN 2004-2005

Councillor P J Marfleet presented the report seeking Members' consideration of any actions necessary in the management of the Capital Plan. He said only approximately £4m of the £13m general funding had been spent to date and that reinstatement of the Block Allocations was dependent on the generation of capital receipts. He said as some of the original estimates in the Capital Plan had been understated and because of inflation they would now be insufficient to carry out the work and so would need to be addressed.

Councillor E C Edwards asked whether it was possible to reallocate and prioritise some of the funding. The Deputy Chief Executive/Corporate Director: Resources said there was undoubtedly slippage in the programme, and an update of the report would be presented to Council in December 2004 following more detailed work and consideration could be given to other projects.

Councillor E W Williams agreed the capital be readdressed but reminded Members that time was required to set up contracts and follow the tendering process. He said some officers were concerned over the need to carry out work for some Members in their areas, which had not been included in the original schedule. Councillor Williams said he hoped this was not happening and could be seen as a form of bullying.

Councillor R W Hughes said she would address and challenge any issues of bullying and stressed she wanted to be informed immediately of any such instances.

***RESOLVED** that Cabinet:*

- [a] note the updated position in respect of the Capital Plan*
- [b] agree Services review the estimates of projected 2004-2005 expenditure, taking account of the in-year spend to date, with the objective of identifying any areas where slippage may arise.*

402 COMMUNITIES FIRST

Councillor M A German presented the report seeking Members' agreement for the proposals for change to the Communities First programme set out in the Assembly report as set out in Section 5 of the Appendix attached to the report.

Councillor E C Edwards congratulated Councillor German and officers on moving the matter forward and asked whether there would be an opportunity to make retrospective claims. The Corporate Director: Personal Services said she also was pleased the matter was being progressed, however, it would not be possible to make retrospective claims. She also said it was difficult to produce community action plans but the Authority needed to ensure the funding would not be allocated elsewhere.

RESOLVED that Cabinet agree the proposals for change to the Communities First programme set out in the Assembly report as set out in Section 5 of the Appendix attached to the report.

The meeting concluded at 1.00 p.m.
