

CABINET

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held in Conference Room 1, County Hall, Ruthin on Tuesday 22 March 2005 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; R W Hughes, Leader and Lead Member for Regeneration; M A German, Lead Member for Children and Young People; P J Marfleet, Lead Member for Finance and Personnel; D Owens, Lead Member for Lifelong Learning; S Roberts, Lead Member for Promoting Denbighshire; and J Thompson Hill, Lead Member for Property and Asset Management.

Observers: Councillors R E Barton; M LI Davies; G C Evans; S Frobisher and C H Williams.

ALSO PRESENT

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

APOLOGIES

Councillor E W Williams, Lead Member for Environment and Corporate Director: Environment.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Councillor R W Hughes referred to the recent Environment Seminar attended by approximately 20 Members. An excellent and informative seminar had been achieved by the hard work of the Corporate Director: Environment, the Head of Environmental Services and the Environmental Group Manager and their staff and she thanked them on behalf of the Members.

761 URGENT MATTERS

There were no Urgent Matters.

762 MINUTES OF THE CABINET

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 22 February 2005 were submitted.

Item 4 Denbighshire County Council's Priorities: Councillor E C Edwards asked whether consultation with Community Councils was part of the Communities Portfolio. Councillor R W Hughes confirmed this was the case.

Item 10 Response to Consultation on the Pensions Green Paper: The Chief Executive informed Members that official confirmation had been received that the strike due to be held on 23.03.2005 had been postponed as a consequence of John Prescott promising to revoke the order bringing about changes to the LGPS from 1 April 2005 and re-considering the pensions issue.

Item 13 Managing School Places: Councillor D Owens updated Members and said that he and Councillor R W Hughes would be visiting the schools named in the original report and others and a working group, including the Chair and Vice Chair of Lifelong Learning Scrutiny, had been set up to progress the issue. Three seminars would be convened on 25, 27 and 28 April at various locations in the County and dates for meetings also offered to AMs and MPs.

Councillor P J Marfleet said he had also visited 3 schools in his Ward and discussed various issues with the headteachers who were keen to communicate with the Authority and work together.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 22 February 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

763 INVESTORS IN PEOPLE [IIP]

Councillor R W Hughes welcomed the staff who had been most involved with the Authority being awarded IIP status for the whole organisation to the meeting. She presented the plaque and certificate to Councillor M LI Davies, Chairman. The Chief Executive thanked staff present and across the organisation for coordinating the IIP work. He said meeting the IIP standard had been one of the original corporate priorities. The plaque and certificate would be displayed in the reception area.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the award of IIP status to the Council.

764 PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF JOINT REVIEW ACTION PLAN

Councillor P A Dobb and Councillor M A German presented the report seeking Cabinet consideration of further action relating to risk areas arising from monitoring of the Joint Review Action Plan. Councillor Dobb said the verbal report received from the SSIW was both pleasing and positive in regard to Adult Services and Business Support and Development.

Councillor M A German said Children's Services were providing an appropriate service under extremely difficult conditions and thanked staff for all their hard work. He said SSIW would be meeting the service on a quarterly basis.

Councillor P J Marfleet reminded Members that Children's Services could have a knock-on effect on Adult Services. He said that all the Group Leaders had written to the Welsh Assembly Government over the issue of funding for young adults and would be writing again when a more detailed response was received.

In response to a query from Councillor E C Edwards regarding extra care housing, the Corporate Director: Personal Services confirmed that development of a site in Prestatyn was still being pursued and Prestatyn members would be meeting with the interested developer in April. Significant discussions were being held with various agencies and local Members. Councillor Edwards said that it was important all Members were kept informed of developments.

The Chief Executive referred to Members' roles as corporate parents and said the resource levels, particularly for children's services, were never enough and staffing levels were also a problem. He said transferring resources from Adult Services to Children's Services had helped in the past but it would not be possible to keep on so doing.

The Corporate Director: Personal Services said a disproportionate number of children on the child protection register lived in Denbighshire and any increases had a negative effect on the budget. Councillor P J Marfleet said the budget was already agreed and the 3 year plan would need to draw attention to such issues although the transient nature of the population added to the difficulties.

The Corporate Director: Personal Services informed Members that the SSIW would be meeting on a quarterly basis with Children's Services and a comprehensive inspection of the service was to be held later in the year. She outlined the scale of sensitive issues dealt with on a daily basis by Childcare Social Workers and the core difficulties with recruitment of staff to this group. The WLGA and ADSS were also considering social work remuneration.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

[a] notes the overall good progress in implementing the Joint Review Action Plan

[b] receives a further report on social worker pay when the Social Worker Pay Review is published later in the year

[c] receives a further report on the resource implications of the Children's Services Improvement Plan and the SSIW monitoring process with a view to considering how the service might access "break-out" resources to help create a step change in improvement

765 FOSTERING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN - PAYMENT FOR SKILLS 2005

Councillor M A German presented the report seeking Members' agreement to:

- [i] the implementation of a Payment for Skills programme and Policy from 1 April 2005, as outlined in the report and appendixes and to agree the weekly Fostering allowances; to approve the fostering, birthday and holiday allowances; to approve the Weekly Residence Order Allowances rates; to freeze the current levels of allowances and fees to carers registered on the Foster plus scheme, as set out in Appendix 1
- [ii] the revised payment Residence Order schedule allowances for relevant children
- [iii] delegate to the Chief Executive, from the date of the meeting, the power to exercise the functions and make decisions on the matters as set out in paragraphs [i] and [ii] above.

Councillor German reminded Members that foster carers carried out an essential service.

Councillor P J Marfleet referred to the historic shortfall of provision in rural areas and asked whether there was still a shortfall. The Planning and Commissioning Manager said there were shortfalls in the South of the County although the majority of the carers were needed in the North of the County. It was intended to carry out a recruitment campaign.

Councillor P A Dobb said it was essential the rates paid were competitive and suggested that training be made available along with a discussion network.

The Corporate Director: Personal Services urged Members to make an investment in the service, which also helped financially with less out-of-County placements. In response to a query from Councillor S A Davies, she said the scheme was structured and had a built in effectiveness measurement system.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- [a] *Approve the introduction of the Payment for Skills programme and Policy from 1 April 2005, as outlined in the report and the attached appendixes*
Approve the Fostering Allowance rates as detailed in Appendix 1
Approve the Festival, Birthday and Holiday allowances as detailed in Appendix 1
Approve the weekly Residence Order allowances as set out in Appendix 1
Freeze the current levels of allowances and fees to foster carers registered on the Foster Carer register
- [b] *delegates to the Chief Executive, from the date of this meeting, the power to exercise the functions and make decisions on the matters as set out in paragraph [a] above.*

766 IMPROVING THE COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report for Cabinet to note progress on consultations with Members and tenants and the Welsh Assembly Government [WAG] and to delegate to the Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing the authority to submit a draft Housing Stock Business Plan to the WAG by 31.03.2005. A further report would be presented on the options of Stock Transfer or Stock Retention with Prudential Borrowing after more consultations and consideration of the HSBP by WAG. She said member and tenants meetings continued to be well supported.

Councillor R W Hughes expressed her disappointment at the delay in presenting the Plan.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note progress on consultations with Members and tenants and the Welsh Assembly Government [WAG] and delegate to the Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing the authority

to submit a draft Housing Stock Business Plan to the WAG. A further report to be presented on the options of Stock Transfer or Stock Retention with Prudential Borrowing after more consultations and consideration of the HSBP by WAG.

767 HEATHER AND HILLFORTS

Councillor S Roberts presented the report seeking Cabinet approval to proceed to the Development and Implementation stages of the Heather and Hillforts Landscape Partnership Scheme which would secure an investment of £2 million in conserving and improving the upland heritage of the Clwydian Range and Llantysilio Mountains, increase people's enjoyment and understanding of the area, and improve tourism opportunities in Denbighshire.

Councillor Roberts thanked officers for their commitment to the project over the last 18 months and said they would welcome the opportunity to make a presentation on the project.

Both Councillors S A Davies and P J Marfleet supported the application and said it was crucial to the tourism opportunities in the County. Councillor Marfleet asked about the effect of TAN8 if approved by the Welsh Assembly Government and the effect of wind turbines on the area. Councillor R W Hughes agreed investment in such a quality project would bring money into the County.

The Heather and Hillforts officer thanked Members for agreeing to put the project forward as a potential landscape to the Welsh Assembly Government which would raise its profile nationally. The area received about 500,000 visitors annually and the project would help to both educate them on the area and enhance the community strategy aspect.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- [a] *expresses its support for the Heather and Hillforts Project and approves that it should proceed to the Development and Implementation Phase*
- [b] *recommends to Council to make provision for a £25,000 contribution to the Heather and Hillforts project in the 2005-06 Capital Plan and £75k per annum for 3 years from 2005-2006.*

768 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.

Councillor Marfleet said the shortfall for the Authority was at £349k. The previously reported Lifelong Learning Directorate college transport situation had largely been resolved although £20k was still in dispute. The individual schools budgets would be underspent by £150k with any underspend being carried forward in school reserves. He asked for details of the miscellaneous savings achieved through management actions in the Culture and Leisure department for evaluation and if suitable these actions could be passed to other departments to achieve savings.

Personal Services expenditure continued to be volatile whilst the predicted costs in the Chief Executive's Department would continue to the year end.

Councillor D Owens said regarding the schools delegated budget the schools had taken prudent action which had led to the projected underspend.

In response to a query from Councillor R E Barton, the Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources said the Authority's Financial Statement would be available approximately 6 months after the year end with the final audited figures available 9 months after the year end.

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

769 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2004/2005

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report for Members to note the latest financial forecast position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the current financial year and the surplus of £185k.

Councillor P J Marfleet suggested some elements, for example homelessness, should not be included as part of the report whilst others had been omitted. The Financial Controller agreed some overhead costs had not been fully reflected while other costs should not strictly be charged to the HRA but the two figures were close and would be amended accordingly.

***RESOLVED** that Cabinet note the figures in Appendix 1 to the report including the surplus of £185k.*

770 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND EUROPE

The Chief Executive reported on his visit with the Leader to Brussels earlier in the month to attend a WLGA seminar on Local Government and Europe, where they met an official from the Directorate General's Office for Regional Aid. He said it was essential to have European support at the highest level and Authorities should lobby Government with regard to Objective 1. Both the North Wales Economic Forum and the WLGA would individually lobby for support as two thirds of European legislation affected Local Government.

Whilst in Brussels the Chief Executive had attended a Welsh Language Board seminar on minority languages. An officer had been appointed and a funding stream would be provided for all languages. A European competition on minority languages was to be set up and since his return he had spoken with the Chief Executive of the Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod to see if they would be interested in hosting / participating in such a competition.

Councillor R W Hughes informed Members she had attended a seminar on culture and met again a speaker from Sweden who had previously worked with both Denbighshire and ECTARC and who was outlining the benefits of professional development and accessibility to funding achieved through working with Denbighshire.

Councillor P J Marfleet suggested more frequent meetings were required with the MEPs as a number of issues were pertinent to Wales only and a channel of communication was required. The UK had not signed up to the landscape convention whilst other European countries had.

Councillor E C Edwards said further good news had been received regarding Objective 1 and some lobbying was carried out through the Cohesion Group. However, Objective 1 schemes could be different from 2007 onwards. He agreed with Members the area was short of industrial sites and the infrastructure needed improving. The Head of Development Services agreed infrastructure was of paramount importance and a programme for Objective 1 was required from 2007 and it was essential to have as long a lead in time for the project as possible.

***RESOLVED** that Cabinet note the report.*

771 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 Cabinet Business Plan was currently being drafted and any developments would be reported back to Cabinet.

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

772 CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2003-2004

Councillor J Thompson Hill presented the report seeking Cabinet approval to the draft Corporate Asset Management Plan 2004 and its submission to the Welsh Assembly Government; and that work should begin immediately on the next Corporate Asset Management Plan 2005 for completion in autumn 2005.

He informed Members that the Plan had been to the Asset Management Committee. Work was already in progress on updating the Service Asset Management Plans.

Councillor P A Dobb referred to two of the Personal Services buildings which required improvement work and asked which criteria were used in selecting which assets were to be sold, revamped or improved.

Councillor J Thompson Hill said an interim report could be provided before the Autumn. Schools condition surveys were currently being carried out. He also agreed to arrange, with the Head of Development Services, a seminar for Members on the County's assets and their current state and any improvement works required.

The County Asset Manager agreed to correctly re-number the pages of the Plan.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the draft Corporate Asset Management Plan 2004 and its submission to the Welsh Assembly Government; and that work should begin immediately on the next Corporate Asset Management Plan 2005 for completion in autumn 2005.

At this juncture (11.25 a.m.) the meeting adjourned for 10 minutes to allow Members to participate in refreshments.

773 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 paragraphs 8 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

PART II

774 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 detailed the current position and said any slippage would be carried forward to the following year. He discussed the appendices in detail and said invoices had recently been received totalling approximately £1m which would reduce the amount of slippage but this was not sufficient for the actual spending to match the level of commitments.

Councillor Marfleet said future works needed to be carried out in conjunction with the County's Asset Management Plan.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the updated position in respect of the Capital Plan.

775 SINGLE TENDER APPROVAL FOR PROVISION OF HR SUPPORT

Councillor P J Marfleet presented the report to seek Cabinet approval to continue to use an external consultancy to support various developments which were agreed as part of the response to the Corporate Improvement Assessment. He said the current consultants were again being recommended as they had already gained the confidence of the Directors and Heads of Service.

In response to a request from Councillor E C Edwards, it was agreed that minutes of the Monthly Management Conference [MMC] be provided to Cabinet Members as decisions made by this committee were pivotal to the Council. Councillor P J Marfleet said he attended MMC and had found it useful. The management team were the County's greatest asset and as such should be nurtured and developed. Councillor Edwards agreed and said Lead Members worked closely with their Heads of Service and Directors and it was hoped this would go from strength to strength to ensure delivery of services.

Councillor R W Hughes said that she and Councillor S A Davies attended all meetings of MMC, when convenient, and that other Cabinet Members would be invited when the agenda had items relevant to their portfolios.

RESOLVED that Cabinet authorises officers to progress the programme, outlined in Section 2 of the report, with a Single Tender action in line with the costs detailed in Section 4 of the report. It was also agreed to provide Cabinet Members with electronic Monthly Management Conference minutes.

776 LEGIONELLOSIS CONTROL IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Councillor J Thompson Hill presented the report seeking Members' consideration of the water and ductwork hygiene report and approval to provide funding for essential works to the water and ductwork installations within public buildings in 2005/06 and annually thereafter, as detailed in the appendix.

He informed Members that no funding had previously been allocated for this work as bids in previous years had been unsuccessful.

Councillor P J Marfleet reminded officers that estimated costs for such works must be made known as early as possible in the budget setting process as likely expenditure. The Head of Development Services agreed that in future reports requiring funding for such items would be provided by November each year and to investigate whether any of the expenditure could be capitalised.

The Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources agreed that although bids should have been made earlier in the budget setting process for such works, the health and safety aspects of the work had to be a priority over other works planned. Investigations would be made to capitalise other expenditure if possible in order to allow this expenditure to be included as revenue.

Both Councillor E C Edwards and M A German said such matters had been raised in previous years. Councillor German asked that staff be trained in keeping the systems clean as part of their induction.

RESOLVED that Members note the requirements of the water and ductwork hygiene detailed in Appendix 1 to the report and approve expenditure from existing Environment Directorate budgets as a priority, to meet the requirements of the report in order to carry out essential works to water and ductwork installations within public buildings in 2005/06 and annually thereafter.

777 LIGHTNING PROTECTION TO PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Councillor J Thompson Hill presented the report seeking Members' consideration of the requirements for lightning protection to public buildings as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. Members were also asked to make funding available, as detailed in the report, in order to carry out essential lightning protection works in 2005/06 and further funding annually for 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09.

The Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources asked the Building Group Manager to ensure that the public liability and buildings insurance position be clarified as soon as possible.

RESOLVED that Members note the requirements for lightning protection to public buildings as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report and recommend Cabinet make capital funding from existing block allocations available, as detailed in the report, in order to carry out essential lightning protection works in 2005/06 and further funding annually for 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09.

778 FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS AND COMPARTMENTATION TO ROOF VOIDS IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Councillor J Thompson Hill presented the report seeking Members' consideration of the requirements to undertake fire risk assessments. Members were also asked to make funding available, as specified in the report, in order to carry out essential fire risk assessment investigations and, initially, minor remedial works to roof voids in public buildings in 2005/06.

Members agreed fire risk assessments for schools also needed to be factored into the Managing School Places review.

Councillor P J Marfleet asked that officers explore the possibility of reduced insurance premiums once works had commenced or been completed.

Councillor J Thompson Hill agreed in future to provide figures at an earlier stage of the budget setting process.

RESOLVED that Members note the requirements to undertake fire risk assessments and recommend that capital funding from existing block allocations, as specified in the report, be made available in order to carry out essential fire risk assessments and minor remedial works to roof voids in public buildings in 2005/06.

779 REQUIRED CAPITALISED AND PLANNED MAINTENANCE WORKS TO PUBLIC BUILDINGS 2005/06

Councillor J Thompson Hill presented the report for Members to note the requirement for capitalised and planned maintenance work in appendix 1 of the report. Members were also asked to make additional funding available, as specified in the report, in order to carry out essential capitalised maintenance works to school buildings and a further additional sum as specified made available in order to carry out essential capitalised maintenance works to other public buildings in 2005/06 and continued for future years.

Councillor E C Edwards asked whether the list of works in schools had been compiled in conjunction with the School Bursars. The Building Group Manager confirmed that Headteachers, Bursars and Caretakers of schools had been consulted.

The Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources suggested a process was required to ensure the most needy areas of the Authority were due to have maintenance works carried out and suggested Resource Scrutiny Committee be asked to participate in and support the process. Members agreed as many Members as possible should be made aware of the maintenance works required to the Authority's buildings across the County.

The Chief Executive said the Asset Management Plan needed to be considered in conjunction with the required maintenance works and if works detailed in the report were to be carried out, it would have an impact elsewhere in the budgets.

Councillor E C Edwards raised the question of staff increases listed in the Asset Management Plan and the effect these would have on accommodation requirements.

RESOLVED that Members note the requirement for capitalised and planned maintenance work in appendix 1 of the report and recommend that some additional funding, as specified in the report, is made available in order to carry out essential capitalised maintenance works. Members further agree to ask Resources Scrutiny Committee to consider the pressure on capitalised and planned maintenance to other public buildings in 2005/06 and future years as part of the exercise to prioritise capital schemes for funding in future.

The meeting concluded at 12.25 p.m.
