

CABINET

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held in Eirianfa, Factory Place, Denbigh on Tuesday 29 November 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; 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 J R Bartley; M LI Davies; G C Evans; C L Hughes; M M Jones, N Hugh Jones and G M Kensler.

ALSO PRESENT

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

APOLOGIES

Councillors M A German, Lead Member for Children and Young People and E W Williams, Lead Member for Environment.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Councillor S Roberts said the Garden Restoration Project at Plas Newydd, Llangollen had received the British Association of Landscape Industries award on 18.11.2005 at the annual awards ceremony in London. The award marked the achievement of the project in sensitively restoring a Grade II listed landscape. The £1m project, funded by ERDF, Heritage Lottery Fund and the Authority, also provided a shop/cafe/new toilets on the site and enabled a further two rooms to be opened in the house along with provision of an audio guide for use by visitors.

Councillor D Owens said the Lifelong Learning Student Finance Team had been voted the top in Wales for processing the highest number of student loan applications within the prescribed timescale and had also been voted 4th overall in the UK.

586 URGENT MATTERS

There were no Urgent Matters.

587 MINUTES OF THE CABINET

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 25 October 2005 were submitted.

***RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 25 October 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.*

588 DENBIGHSHIRE INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY

Councillor R W Hughes presented the report seeking Cabinet approval of the Denbighshire International Strategy. She hoped to develop the process so that Members would be aware of ongoing work and allow an opportunity for them to suggest new works.

Councillor P J Marfleet, whilst supporting the strategy and drawing down of funding, expressed his concern about the amount of involvement in the international strategy and said that 250 person days of foreign travel had taken place during the year but this information had not been included in the report, this included about 20 people going to Ireland at different times. However, he expressed his

support for the work done by the Head of Development Services and the Principal European Officer and their team for their skills in drawing funding to the County.

Councillor Marfleet referred to the Aims and Objectives - Promoting Economic Development and Competitiveness - and said the Authority should be developing links with the region and on a national basis. He suggested the County should be targeting its nearer neighbours for tourists rather than Silesia for example.

Councillor Marfleet discussed the Denbighshire International Forum which involved officers and the Leader. He then suggested a list be drawn up of companies / large firms who already export their goods internationally, for example Ifor Williams Trailers, who could then be approached to see if the Authority could help enhance their business in any way which would lead to economic benefits in the County.

Councillor D Owens agreed it was important to emphasise the business aspect of the Strategy and asked that a breakdown of the funding received be provided for all Members.

Councillor E C Edwards said excellent work had been carried out in communities. He also agreed that it was important that all Members be kept informed of results, for example there had been 5 visits to Athy but few people were aware of the quantifiable benefits.

Councillor P A Dobb expressed her disappointment that Health was not included as part of the Aims and Objectives as it was important that expertise was shared on a variety of social and economic problems. It was agreed that the Strategy be revised to include Health as part of the Aims and Objectives.

In response to a query from Councillor N Hugh Jones, the Chief Executive said refurbishment works had been carried out for the youth, for example in Prestatyn Youth Club.

The Head of Development Services informed Members that much youth development work was carried out by ECTARC and two officers in Lifelong Learning were also involved in youth development. With regard to the Rhyl Athy Project, he saw no reason why the Coordinator could not provide a report for all Members on the outcomes to date. He said it had been decided at an early stage to concentrate on the Objective 1 Programme and then on the Interreg as the Objective 1 was coming to an end.

Councillor R W Hughes said it was important to look at major structural fund programmes along with the lottery. She agreed that officers should explore the possibility of business connections with large employers in Denbighshire.

RESOLVED that Cabinet agree the Denbighshire International Strategy be approved with the proviso that a section on Health be included in the Aims and Objectives.

589 MODERNISING EDUCATION UPDATE

Councillor D Owens presented the report for Members to note progress made with the Modernising Education programme and to approve the issue of an Invitation to Tender (ITT) to appoint consultants to work on the Modernising Education Programme. Members were also asked to note that the potential contract value to undertake the work described in the ITT would be ascertained from tender responses and that any contract arising from the tendering process will only be let subject to the availability of sufficient funding.

Councillor P J Marfleet supported the process of tendering for external consultants and said it should be included as part of the budget setting process for the Directorate. The Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning said the figure was included in the following year's budget, but as a commercial in confidence figure. This was a high priority programme.

In response to a query from Councillor P A Dobb, the Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning clarified Annex A for Members and said that consultants would be carrying out some of the specialist project

work whilst the Authority's staff carried out other aspects of the work. He confirmed that the costs would be available once tenders had been received and evaluated.

Councillor E C Edwards asked whether the consultants would be given a steer to include community issues as part of the consultation as he felt it was of the greatest importance. The Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning said schools were increasingly being seen as the hub of communities and the Welsh Assembly Government had a policy of community focus through schools and had made a small amount of funding available. He said this was a fantastic opportunity to have more consultation with the community.

Councillor R W Hughes said the Visioning would also form part of the consultation. She said she would wish to see the consultants interviewed.

The Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning confirmed that Welsh medium education was naturally included as part of the key skills. The consultants once appointed would understand that some schools produced fluent bilingual speakers.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

[a] note progress made with the programme to date

[b] approve the issue of an Invitation to Tender to appoint consultants to work on the Modernising Education Programme

[c] note that the potential contract value to undertake the work described in the ITT will be ascertained from tender responses

[d] note that any contract arising from the tendering process will only be let subject to the availability of sufficient funding.

590 DENBIGHSHIRE'S RESPONSE TO THE AUDITOR'S REPORT ON THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2005-2006

Councillor R W Hughes presented the report for Members to agree the Authority's draft Action Plan in response to the Auditor's report on the Improvement Plan. She congratulated the officers on their work.

Councillor P A Dobb queried the updated risk assessments and their severity. The Policy Unit Manager said workshops had been held and it was hoped that any confusion on risks had been resolved. It was important that Services carried out their own risk assessments, to feed into the budget setting process.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the Authority's draft Action Plan in response to the Auditor's report on the Improvement Plan.

591 MONITORING THE AUTHORITY'S KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Councillor P J Marfleet presented the report for Cabinet to consider the Corporate Quarterly Performance Report which detailed the Authority's key performance indicators and urged Members to monitor closely the progress being made against corporate and service risks with reference to local performance indicators and progress towards target of statutory performance indicators, with a view to considering any issue in greater depth as deemed necessary.

Councillor P A Dobb, referring to NPA 6, said the Welsh Assembly Government had changed the reporting definition and they had not included welfare benefits which the Authority included. She stressed the need for more accurate reporting. Regarding Housing, she said negotiation was required with the Welsh Assembly Government to negotiate changes to targets in respect of homeless families.

The Corporate Director: Social Services and Housing said Children's Services were showing significant improvements but they were still struggling with looked after children SCC/C/004. It was important to identify potential foster carers.

Councillor J Thompson Hill said it was hoped the receipt for the car park site in Ruthin would be received by 01.12.2005. He said the annual target would need further consideration and the figure should be revised.

The Corporate Director: Environment said the private sector houses figure had improved and recycling targets were improving whilst the municipal waste figures were exceeding some targets. The Authority was also working within the limits of the biodegradable material tonnage sent to landfill sites.

Councillor R W Hughes reported that the target for new high quality jobs created through the financial support programme would be achieved.

Councillor D Owens said it was hoped for an improvement in the percentage of attendance in secondary schools with a new strategy. Mobile classroom numbers had to be increased although this number would fall if further resources were available for schools maintenance. Councillor P J Marfleet queried whether the number of mobile classrooms could be linked to the number of pupils. The Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning reminded Members that some mobile classrooms, for example the laboratories at Ysgol Brynhyfryd, were in better condition than the school buildings. Councillor Owens said the Welsh Assembly Government were aware that pupil numbers had increased in parts of the County and that the figures would therefore be distorted.

Councillor E C Edwards reported that the reduction in the level of crime figures was an annual target. He said a more accurate figure would be to report the number of cases brought to justice. Violent crime figures in North Wales could increase as a result of the new Licensing Act. However, the all crime and burglaries figures were on target and vehicle crime was down. He was concerned about the increase in anti social behaviour. He said the Chief Executive had built strong partnerships with the North Wales Police and thanked him for his work with the Steering Group and the Area Commander. He welcomed the Corporate Director: Environment to the Steering Group as he would be taking over from the Chief Executive.

Councillor P J Marfleet, referring to the Council Tax figures, said it was harder to achieve a 1% improvement at 97% than at say 50%. The figures in CHR/C/002 had been transposed as an improvement in the number of working days had been achieved and he asked that the data be corrected for the next report. The Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources referred to progress in relation to Single Status.

Councillor S Roberts said fitness targets had been increased.

The Policy Unit Manager said the Authority's own targets could be changed and officers could discuss these with the Scrutiny Committees. Each Service's Performance Management Officer should provide accurate information.

RESOLVED that Members monitor closely the progress being made against corporate and service risks with particular reference to those indicators not on target. CHR/C/002 to be amended for the next report as the performance symbols should be transposed.

592 REVENUE BUDGET 2005-2006

Councillor P J Marfleet presented the report for Members to note the budget performance figures for the current financial year as detailed in the appendices to the report and consider any actions necessary to bring the Directorates' projected spending in line with available budgets. All Directorates had contributed to the potential underspend totalling £192k. However, there was still time to go before year end, including the winter period, therefore there was no room for complacency.

Councillor Marfleet said the Social Services and Housing budget deficit of £540 k was masked by the budget underspend brought forward from the last financial year. Social Services areas needed remedial actions although the overall figures were good.

The Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning said the Directorate had saved £216k by extreme cost savings.

The Chief Executive said the reported figures should not lead to a false sense of security as some of the savings were from increased income.

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

593 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2005 / 2006

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report for Members to note the latest financial forecast position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2005-2006, which showed a potential net underspend of £267k at the year end. This had resulted from an increase in rents as fewer houses were being sold and staff vacancies.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the latest financial forecast position of the Housing Revenue Account for 2005-2006.

594 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor S A Davies presented the Cabinet Forward Work Programme. He confirmed that all Members received the Cabinet papers. Reports now included Action Plans which would be monitored. He stressed the need for 'middle management' to produce the reports in a timely manner.

Councillor R W Hughes said a report on Collaboration with a Statement of Intent would be discussed at the December 2005 Cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

595 URGENT ITEMS

There were no Part I Urgent Items.

At this juncture (11.35 a.m.) the meeting adjourned for 10 minutes to allow Members to participate in refreshments.

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

PART II

596 THE DEVELOPMENT OF YSGOL TIR MORFA - PHASE II

Councillor D Owens presented the report seeking Cabinet's recommendation that Full Council consider the inclusion of Tir Morfa Phase II development within the capital plan as soon as resources were available and to consider what potential resources could be available to the Authority to fund the development. To help with costs, the project was three phased. He stressed that if it was not possible to proceed with the project it would have cost implications with regard to the mobiles in use at the school.

The Chief Executive said the Corporate Executive Team would bring options and proposals to the next Cabinet meeting if Members decided to proceed with the project. The Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning said Tir Morfa Phase II should be included in the Capital Plan.

Members discussed various aspects of the report and expressed their disappointment that prudential borrowing could not be an option. They agreed the project was a high priority and that it was important to continue with Phase II.

Savings could be made once the project was completed as children would not be going out of County. It was hoped that this project could become a regional facility and discussions were being held with the Welsh Assembly Government.

The Senior Education Officer outlined the project to date and said if Phase II was not built, children over the age of 7 years would have to be sent out of County for their education.

After further detailed discussion of the scheme, Members agreed to defer Recommendation 9.2 until the next meeting.

RESOLVED that:

[a] *Cabinet recommend that Full Council consider the inclusion of Tir Morfa Phase II development within the Capital Plan as soon as resources become available*

[b] *a further report be considered by Cabinet at its next meeting to consider what potential resources may be available to the Authority to fund the development.*

597 CAPITAL PLAN 2005-2006

Councillor P J Marfleet presented the report for Members to note the latest projected position in the 2005/06 element of the capital plan.

Councillor Marfleet reported that the sale proceeds from the former temporary car park in Ruthin were still awaited and should be received later in the week, which would allow reinstatement of the block allocations for maintenance works to schools. He expressed his overlying concern regarding slippage identified, which he felt was not realistic. With regard to the unfunded overspend of £300k at paragraph 2.9, it was agreed that the Corporate Executive Team would resolve the issue. It was important as overspends could impact on such schemes as Tir Morfa or the Scala.

In response to a query from Councillor S A Davies regarding accurate preparation of tenders, the Chief Executive said there were usually good reasons why some refurbishment work could not have been foreseen as in Rhyl Leisure Centre for example or if asbestos was found in buildings. He said many completed schemes were as per the tender.

Councillor Marfleet said it was important that scheme plans were as realistic as possible and if expenditure was changing during the course of any scheme it should be reported at the time.

The Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning said the project teams plan the schemes and then are charged for the design which resulted in a payment being required before the project could be agreed. Funding should be flexible to the planning stage and then accurate figures provided in order for a decision to be made. Councillor E C Edwards said it was important the scheme project managers had technical ability.

The Financial Controller detailed the current potential slippage and other types of funding which were scheme specific. With regard to the potential overspend of £217k on generally funded schemes, if no slippage occurred it would fall on the Revenue budget.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the position of the 2005/06 element of the Council's agreed 3 Year Capital Plan.

598 RESTRUCTURING OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT - RESTRICTED CIRCULATION

The Chief Executive apologised to Members and said the report should have been in his name and not in the name of the Lead Member. The report asked Members to note the creation of an additional post of Personnel Officer, Pay and Rewards and sought approval for the use of the existing Single Status provision to cover the additional costs outlined in this paper.

The Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources outlined the changes to the Central Personnel Department and the works required on both Single Status and the Staff Appraisal System.

Councillor P J Marfleet said the report was a good example of looking at the whole departmental structure when staff resigned or retired to meet the needs of service provision.

RESOLVED that Members note the creation of additional post of Personnel Officer, Pay and Rewards and approve the use of the existing Single Status provision to cover the additional costs outlined in the report.

The meeting concluded at 12.55 p.m.
