

CABINET

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held in Conference Room 1, County Hall, Ruthin at 12.05 p.m. on Tuesday 19 December 2006.

PRESENT

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

Observers: Councillors J R Bartley; R E Barton, M LI Davies; G C Evans, K N Hawkins, C L Hughes; T R Hughes; M M Jones, P J Marfleet; N J Roberts; S Thomas; C H Williams and R LI Williams.

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive, Financial Controller and the County Clerk.

APOLOGIES

Councillor E C Edwards, Lead Member for Communities and the Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources.

735 URGENT MATTERS

Item 9 Revised Policy for Issuing Refuse Collection Sacks.

736 MINUTES OF THE CABINET

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28 November 2006 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28 November 2006 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

737 REVIEW OF CAR PARKING CHARGES

The Chief Executive presented the report as Members were requested to identify in principle, the appropriate direction in respect of the charging policy. Cabinet would then be asked to make a final decision on the 20th February 2007 when information on the potential financial implications and the Council's budgetary position would be known. He stressed the need for clarity on the way forward and referred to a previous debate on the issue. It was not good practice to have free car park spaces as this encouraged the use of cars. He referred to annex 2 to the report which had been produced after the Scrutiny Committee had been held. Members would need to justify any special treatment on car parking charges for Corwen, for example. There was no scope for introducing a lower tariff without impacting on the Council's services.

Councillor G O Rowlands confirmed that both Rhuddlan Councillors, the traders and the Community Council agreed the need to introduce charges in the Parliament Street, Rhuddlan car park. Members agreed to include Rhuddlan car park charges in the recommendation.

Councillor E W Williams said no charges had been introduced in Corwen whilst the consultation on car parking had been held and he reminded Members of the minimal onstreet parking available in the town. He felt it should be recognised that parking in the market towns should be treated differently so as not to take trade away. It was important to rejuvenate Denbighshire's

market towns. He commended the work carried out by the Head of Transport and Infrastructure and his staff and the many consultation meetings held.

Councillor R W Hughes thanked officers for the information and felt she could agree with most of what the Scrutiny Committee had recommended.

Councillor E W Williams referred to Councillor G M Kensler's remarks about parking at previous meetings regarding the lack of onstreet parking and the fact that residents in many areas wanted permit parking. The Head of Transport and Infrastructure said offstreet and onstreet parking were subject to different legislation and therefore the issues must be kept separate.

Councillor P A Dobb, referring to parking costs in Ruthin, said people living in the surrounding rural area had to pay charges for a short visit to the town. She said concessions should be agreed for all Denbighshire's market towns. She referred to the staff car park at County Hall and asked whether this could be opened to the public at weekends and whether consideration should be given to charging staff for parking in the office car parks across the County, up to £20 a year. She reminded Members that the Authority was aiming for silver in the Corporate Health Standard in 2007 and car park provision for staff would not count in the Authority's favour. Councillor Dobb said more should be provided in the way of advertising of parking passes, and that advertising in County Voice was not sufficient. She suggested a couple of parking bays should be provided in Market Street, Ruthin for use with parking passes for those people with ill health who did not qualify for blue badges.

Councillor J Thompson Hill thanked the officers for their thorough work on car parking charges. He reminded Members that the Authority did not own the car park at County Hall, Ruthin and would therefore not be able to impose charges without negotiation. With regard to the report, there was no consensus of opinion within different organisations regarding car park charges. All Members could make a case for exceptions to charges in their towns. He had concerns regarding option (b) in the Scrutiny Committee report.

Councillor M A German said it was important to encourage the use of public transport.

After further discussion, Members agreed to revise the recommendations and

RESOLVED that Members agree:

[a] the principle of users of car parks being charged for the service provided

[b] long stay tariff of 20p for first hour, 40p for second hour, 60p for third hour, 80p for fourth hour and £2.00 per day be introduced at the Green Lane car park in Corwen with 20 free car parking spaces being designated outside the Health Centre, and no charges should be introduced for Corwen's Pavilion and Station Road car parks, with similar charges being introduced at Ruthin, Denbigh and St Asaph

[c] free charging periods be not accepted

[ch] the free student parking scheme in the multi-storey car park in Denbigh be implemented on a permanent basis

[d] the current levels of tariffs be changed to reduce charges in Ruthin, Denbigh and St Asaph to the levels set for Corwen in (b) above. All other tariffs to remain unchanged

[dd] a review of the parking restrictions in Denbigh be undertaken with a view to increasing the number of free on-street, time-limited spaces available

[e] the budget provision allocated for the maintenance of the Council's car parks be increased to address some of the backlog of maintenance issues

[f] to introduce charges in Parliament Street, Rhuddlan at the same level as in (b) above

[ff] officers consider ways of publicising parking permits.

738 DENBIGHSHIRE'S OLDER PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONING STRATEGY

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report for Members to note the actions achieved in relation to Denbighshire's Older People's Commissioning Strategy Action Plan and to agree the development of the Joint Commissioning Strategy. Members were also asked to agree and note the proposed way forward to implement the National Service Framework for Older People.

Councillor Dobb said the Authority had come a long way over the last 4 years and said the main aim was to provide preventative services and to keep people in their own homes. The Welsh Assembly Government had launched a National Service Framework, a 10 year programme to bring services up to standard. Reports on progress would be provided to Cabinet on a regular basis. She praised the Social Services Department for taking the Strategy forward and said the Department was extremely well thought of and respected by other agencies.

Councillor E W Williams congratulated Councillor Dobb and the staff on their important work. He said many elderly people were proud and did not ask for help at an early enough stage. Councillor R W Hughes agreed with Councillor Williams and said it was important for people to have a voice. Members agreed to Councillor Hughes' request to endorse the Scrutiny Committee recommendation of Councillor J R Bartley as the Denbighshire Disabilities Champion.

RESOLVED that Members note the progress of the Denbighshire Commissioning Strategy for Older People's Services Action Plan and agree the development of a Joint Commissioning Strategy. Members also agree and note the proposed way forward to implement the National Service Framework for Older People in Denbighshire. Members endorse the appointment of Councillor J R Bartley as the Denbighshire Disabilities Champion.

739 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2006-2007

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report for Members to note the latest financial forecast position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) (revenue and capital) for the current financial year. The outturn projection at the end of November showed a net surplus at the year end of £770k was shown against a budgeted surplus of £333k. This was an increase of £70k to the surplus at the end of October.

Councillor Dobb informed Members that capital plan environmental improvement works were being considered and tenants would be invited to participate. All sheltered accommodation was to have wiring renewed. The Authority was on track with the refurbishment programme. The business plan review was under way as the Determinations had been received.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the latest financial forecast position [revenue and capital] of the Housing Revenue Account for the current financial year.

740 REVENUE BUDGET AND SUMMARY CAPITAL PLAN 2006-2007

Councillor G O Rowlands presented the report for Members to note the latest revenue budget performance figures for the 2006/2007 financial year as detailed in appendix 1 attached to the report. Members were also asked to note the summary capital plan performance figures for the 2006-2007 financial year as detailed in appendices 2 and 3 attached to the report.

Councillor Rowlands detailed the year-end projections on service budgets along with pressures and savings within the corporate budgets. He emphasised that the equal pay claims would lead

to a significant pressure in the current year and confirmed that as HM Treasury had refused to agree to capitalise these costs, suitable provision would need to be set up which would lead to a major reduction in general balances. These would need to be rebuilt in future years through top slicing of the overall revenue funding.

Referring to the elections due in May 2007, Councillor E W Williams stressed the importance of pressing the mainstream political parties to include capitalisation provision in their manifesto. He said Council Tax could go up by 3% in order to fund single status and the electorate should be informed of the reasons why this could happen.

The Financial Controller said there was a small WAG allocation available in the current financial year for capital directions and Authorities were being invited to bid to the Assembly regarding this. The Chief Executive informed Members that the powers to issue capitalisation direction were vested solely in the Welsh Assembly Government. Councillor R W Hughes said she would discuss this at her meeting with other North Wales Leaders the following day.

RESOLVED that Members note the revenue budget performance figures for the current financial year as detailed in appendix 1 to the report and also note the summary capital plan performance figures for the 2006-2007 financial year as detailed in appendices 2 and 3 to the report.

741 ROUTINE REPORTING ON PERSONNEL

Councillor S A Davies presented the latest report on staff headcount.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the information in the report and the proposed Action Plan.

742 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor S A Davies presented the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

743 URGENT ITEMS:

REVISED POLICY FOR ISSUING REFUSE COLLECTION SACKS

Councillor E W Williams presented the report seeking to confirm the Council's policy for the distribution of refuse collection sacks:

- a) All properties will receive a standard issue of one sack per week. For logistical reasons; in the south of the County the sacks will be delivered weekly by the refuse operatives, and in the north of the County they will be delivered annually via a roll.
- b) Extra (pink) bin sacks can be purchased from the One-Stop Shops at a cost of 6p each. Refuse collectors will also collect other refuse sacks, providing they are suitable for the job, i.e. providing that there are no adverse health and safety implications.
- c) The maximum number of bags collected from any individual property on a given refuse collection day will be six.
- d) Further steps will be taken to widen the opportunities available for recycling, especially in areas that are not currently on the Council's 'blue box scheme'. This will include new brings site in Bryn Eglwys, Llandegla, Pen Gwern (Llangollen), Llanrhaeadr, Rhewl and Corwen (Rhug shop on A5).

Councillor S A Davies said refuse collection was particularly important in rural areas where there were no recycling facilities and suggested perhaps £60k saved by supplying 1 bin bag could be found to fund smaller recycling areas in some villages. Councillor E W Williams said the

Department was considering provision of such facilities and the Welsh Assembly Government were also supporting the initiative. The Corporate Director: Environment said some funding was available from the rural area grants for provision of recycling in rural areas.

Councillor R E Barton (Observer) asked a number of questions. In response, Councillor E W Williams said the report had not been provided earlier as it had to form part of the budgetary process and it would have been remiss not to have considered this in the list of priorities discussed at the Scrutiny Committee, Members' Forum and Directorate Budget meetings. The Corporate Director: Environment said the current policy had been in existence since Denbighshire had been formed in 1996. There were issues where some residents received more than one bin bag per household and he said a clear steer was required. He asked Councillor Barton to contact him if further information was required.

Councillor E W Williams said the Authority had improved its recycling targets over the last 4 years and were meeting its 25% target. He commended the public for their support with recycling.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the continuation of the policy.

At this juncture (1.15 p.m) the meeting adjourned for 15 minutes to allow Members to participate in refreshments.

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 20, 21 and 23 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

PART II

744 CAPITAL PLAN

Councillor G O Rowlands presented the report for Members to note the latest position on the 2006-2007 element of the Capital Plan.

Councillor Rowlands said work on the Scala project was progressing to plan as was the Ruthin Craft Centre project, with an application for funding being made to DEIN. Negotiations were also progressing regarding land purchase for Project Alpha. The Community Learning Centres project had to adhere to tight deadlines which required significant work.

With regard to the Office Accommodation project at Brighton Road, Rhyl, Councillor J Thompson Hill indicated that the project was on track.

The Chief Executive clarified the funding available for the following year on the Community Projects and confirmed that the scheme would continue. He said the current report asked for Members' agreement not to allocate the £330k in 2007 as the 2006 allocation had not been spent.

The Head of Development Services said monies had been allocated and there would be no more available for allocation until April 2007, after Council had taken decisions on the Capital budget. He agreed to provide an update report showing the current status of the Community Projects. Both Councillor R W Hughes and Councillor E W Williams said it was important that Community / Members Schemes were continued with.

Regarding the Members' Priority Scheme, Councillor Williams said the procedure was too cumbersome and should be simplified for the following year.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the latest position on the 2006-2007 element of the Capital Plan. The Head of Development Services to provide an update report showing the current status of the Community Projects.

745 HEATHER AND HILLFORTS

Councillor S Roberts presented the report seeking Members' endorsement of the submission of the Stage 2 Heather and Hillforts Landscape Partnership Scheme funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), and to agree to progress to the implementation phase of the project if the bid was successful.

Members discussed the project and agreed with Councillor E W Williams' suggestion of perhaps a 5% or 10% contribution to a project where the environment was changing. The County Archaeologist said it was hoped to research changes in the environment and that parallel projects would achieve this. She confirmed that negotiations with the graziers were ongoing.

RESOLVED that Members endorse the submission of the Stage 2 Heather and Hillforts Landscape Partnership Scheme funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, and to agree to progress to the implementation phase of the project if the bid is successful.

746 PEN Y PIGYN, CORWEN UPDATE

Councillor J Thompson Hill presented the report to inform Members of the slope stabilisation work at Pen y Pigyn quarry and the funding requirements in 2006-2008 to allow to completion of slope stabilisation works. Photographs of the various works were distributed at the meeting.

Councillor Thompson Hill detailed the works to date and referred Members to the photographs circulated. He agreed to provide a further update to Cabinet in February or March 2007.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the progress on the work at Pen y Pigyn quarry and support slope stabilisation and associated works as quickly as conditions and safety permit and provide the appropriate funding.

747 CAPITAL PRIORITISATION PROCESS REVIEW

Councillor G O Rowlands presented the report for Members to recommend to Council the proposed changes to the Capital Prioritisation Progress, as detailed in paragraphs 2.10 to 2.21 of the report.

Councillor P A Dobb, referring to Appendix 2, said some of the projects listed were statutory requirements and therefore they should be scored higher.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that they were being asked to amend the current methodology and that the scores in the report were examples only. The future scoring would incorporate any changes agreed. The Corporate Executive Team scored the projects which would then be discussed and agreed by Cabinet.

Councillor E W Williams said Members would have an opportunity to question the project scoring, if required, at Cabinet. He asked whether the projects would be considered by Cabinet at an early enough stage to be included in the budget system for project priority order.

Councillor R W Hughes welcomed the inclusion of Economic Impact into the scoring process but also expressed concerns about the scoring of community projects.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that schools and highways for example have to be provided for and if these items scored higher than some other projects, Cabinet would be able to alter the ranking following discussion.

RESOLVED that Members recommend to Council the proposed changes to the Capital Prioritisation Process as shown in paragraphs 2.10 to 2.21 of the report.

748 LIFELONG LEARNING DIRECTORATE RESTRUCTURING

The Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning presented the Restricted Circulation report in detail seeking Cabinet support for the case for additional costs associated with the Lifelong Learning Directorate Restructuring, as outlined in the report.

The Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning discussed various issues, including the need to provide a Deputy for the Corporate Director to be available to take statutory decisions in his absence. It was agreed the Corporate Executive Team would discuss whether there was a need for a Deputy Director role in other Directorates. He also discussed the timetable of events.

Following discussion on job evaluation, the Chief Executive said if some posts have managerial responsibilities, such responsibilities would have to be paid for, as would recruitment and retention allowance if appropriate.

Members were assured by the Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning that the ongoing consultation regarding school places would not be affected by the proposed restructuring. The Cambridge Education Consultants had been involved in building the restructuring process and were involved in the need to raise standards in schools.

Councillor P A Dobb expressed strong concerns and felt she could not support the report.

RESOLVED that Cabinet support for the case for additional costs associated with the Lifelong Learning Directorate Restructuring, as outlined in the report.

The meeting concluded at 3.35 p.m.
