

CABINET

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held at 10.30 a.m. on Tuesday 24 April 2007 in the Town Hall, Rhyl.

PRESENT

Councillors S A Davies, Lead Member for Policy, Communications and Improvement; P A Dobb, Lead Member for Health, Social Care & Wellbeing; E C Edwards, Lead Member for Customer Care and Citizen Engagement; M A German, Lead Member for Children, Young People and Families, R W Hughes, Leader and Lead Member for Economic Prosperity & European Programmes; D Owens, Lead Member for Schools and Lifelong Learning; G O Rowlands, Lead Member for Finance and Procurement; S Roberts, Lead Member for Promoting Denbighshire and J Thompson Hill, Lead Member for Property and Sustainable Development.

Observers: Councillors R E Barton, M LI Davies, G C Evans, S Frobisher, J A Smith 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Councillor R W Hughes welcomed Mr Ian Mackinder and Ms Helen Keatley of the Wales Audit Office and Councillor Mike Edwards, co-Chair of Corporate Governance and Policy Scrutiny Committee of Wrexham County Borough Council to the meeting who were attending to observe as part of their remit in respect of "Denbighshire County Council – The Role of Members in Securing Improvement" peer review initiative. Councillors R E Barton, S Frobisher, J A Smith and C H Williams were the Denbighshire Members participating in the initiative.

Councillor R W Hughes informed the meeting that 30 young people from Denbighshire had visited the European Parliament at Strasbourg. This had led to the first European group for young people being set up in Wales.

The Chief Executive apologised that the translator was unavailable to attend the meeting and said the public inquiry being held at the same time had taken priority. It had not been possible to arrange for another translator to be available at short notice.

1184 URGENT MATTERS

Item 9 Delegation of Functions.

Item 10 Capital Plan – further information and recommendation.

1185 MINUTES OF THE CABINET

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 27 March 2007 were submitted.

Item 4 Rhyl Town Centre Redevelopment: Councillor R W Hughes referred to discussion with a member of the public in the 1:1 session held earlier in the day and said it was important to preserve as much of the façade as possible.

Item 13 Capital Plan and Recommendations of the Capital Strategy Group: Councillor R W Hughes said that a review of the resource situation of the Community Capital Fund would be carried out in 6 months' time.

Councillor S A Davies stated that he would prefer to use prudential borrowing for the Rhyl building purchase.

In response to a request from Councillor E C Edwards for an update on the separate entrance at the Rhyl Pavilion Theatre, Councillor S Roberts confirmed that a combined study by Clwyd Leisure Limited would be undertaken and this would include the feasibility of a separate entrance at the Rhyl Pavilion Theatre.

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 12 April 2007 were submitted and agreed.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the minutes of the meetings held on 27 March 2007 and 12 April 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

1186 IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Councillor R W Hughes presented the report seeking Cabinet approval to the draft Improvement Plan. She said the new design of the Plan made it easier to read and more user friendly. The document would also be available electronically. Changes or additions should be reported to the Strategic Policy Unit as soon as possible. Actions arising from the Vision from the previous year and for future years would be included.

Members suggested various amendments / additions:

Page 7 average increase for Community Councils figure to be included.

Page 9 Launch of budget consultation at the Denbigh and Flint Show to be included.

Page 10 "improved absence" to be replaced with "absence management".

Page 12 Welsh Language and Culture to be included. Work of the Equalities Steering Group and Welsh Language Group to be included. Add "The Council continues to work closely with the Welsh Language Board and will focus this year on ensuring that Welsh Language considerations are incorporated into workforce plans and the work of the Children and Young People's Partnership."

Section 4: Councillor P A Dobb suggested hard copies of the final document could be sent to high level job applicants or used at stakeholder events. It was important that consistency be applied throughout i.e. local/national PI numbers should be included for each item or deleted. The Outdoor Challenge to be included at page 19.

Section 5: Councillor R W Hughes said she would be meeting with officers to ensure local information would be included and certain European work which was currently not measured or monitored. Councillor E C Edwards welcomed the section on Economic Prosperity and said it was important that an economic strategy be provided for each town and surrounding rural areas, as each town was different. Councillor P A Dobb suggested that the excellent work carried out in Upper Denbigh be included as this was an area of deprivation which was being improved. Councillor S Roberts informed Members that the first phase of the new tourism strategy would be completed by September 2007.

Section 6: Councillor M A German referred to the dedicated foster carers in Denbighshire, along with the team. He had met a number of young people recently at the Denbighshire Safe Community Project NSPCC event and he said such events gave young people the opportunity to realize their potential and have a stake in the County.

Section 7: Councillor D Owens informed Members that work had commenced on the new primary school in Prestatyn. The initial report on the Modernising Education work, being carried out by Cambridge Consultants, was due in June 2007. A decision was still awaited from DELs regarding the Community Learning Centres. Much work was being carried out in schools on raising standards and having respect. This would have a positive impact for the whole County. Councillor S Roberts referred to the art classes and projects being carried out at Plas Newydd, Llangollen. Councillor P A Dobb referred to the increased investment in healthy school meals and asked for this to be included. Councillor M LI Davies, referring to English only schools being brought into the Welsh stream, said it was important that all schools were on a par with regard to books etc. Councillor E C Edwards felt that all Denbighshire's schools should be bilingual and suggested that the Modernising Education programme could help achieve this. Councillor S A Davies supported Councillor Edwards' suggestion, however, Councillor G O Rowlands reminded Members that this could have an adverse effect on the County's one Welsh only high school. The Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning suggested that if Members so wished, the County Council's Welsh Language policy for schools could

be reviewed. Councillor S Roberts suggested more emphasis be placed on the Community Allocation funding.

Section 8: Councillor J Thompson Hill reminded Members of the importance of the efficiency strategy and the need for it to be strengthened. Councillor P A Dobb suggested alternative wording be used with regard to the 'bring sites' and more specific information provided. Councillor S A Davies referred to the Council's bio-diesel trial and asked for this information to be included. The Corporate Director: Environment said the Authority faced an increased challenge in regard to waste treatment. Putting more emphasis on waste treatment would save landfill. He also referred to enforcement action being linked to community safety.

Section 9: Councillor E C Edwards took the opportunity to introduce Roly Schwarz, Community Safety Partnership Manager and welcomed him to Cabinet. He referred to the new state of the art CCTV system which would help reduce crime and antisocial behaviour and ensure citizens' safety. Reducing overall levels of violent crime was a challenge and the Authority was working in partnership with the North Wales Police to combat this. He referred to the STARS Wardens in Rhyl who were currently targeting 200 clean-up days in the Authority, working alongside the Probation Service to clear graffiti and at the same time were targeting 150 homes to make them safer for older people.

Section 10: Councillor S A Davies said work was ongoing on improving absence management. Councillor E C Edwards said work had started with the Customer Contact Centre, looking at response times and he also wanted to improve upon the 14 days taken to have Council housing inspected, for example. It was agreed to amend page 64, by replacing "rejected" with "shelved" when referring to the 101 Service.

Additional Handout: Councillor P A Dobb suggested more positive wording was required with regard to stress management, and there was a need to highlight the use of bicycles by staff, which helped reduce carbon emissions and improved health. She also asked that the pre-retirement course information be included.

RESOLVED that Members note and agree the format, style and information contained in the draft Improvement Plan and asked for the amendments detailed above to be included in the final Improvement Plan document to be presented to Council.

1187 MONITORING THE ACTIONS AGREED BY CABINET

Councillor R W Hughes presented the report seeking Members' consideration of the progress the Authority was making against the actions which had been agreed by Cabinet since the 12 September 2006 and the update on the actions agreed since 1 January 2006 (Appendix I refers).

Members were asked to note that provision for the Extra Care Development, Prestatyn was due to be considered by the Planning Committee in August 2007, whilst the Ruthin Extra Care Development provision was due to be considered in October 2007.

RESOLVED that Members note the progress the Authority is making against the actions which have been agreed by Cabinet since the 12 September 2006.

1188 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND CAPITAL PLAN 2006-2007

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report for Members to note the provisional year-end financial position (revenue and capital) of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). A net surplus of £632 was forecast at year end, against a budgeted surplus of £333k. Right to Buy sales, at 19, were lower than anticipated. This meant higher negative subsidy but offset by increased rents. The average sale price was also higher at £60k. These factors, together with other positive outcomes meant the HSBP position had improved and the Council was on target to achieve the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012.

Councillor M LI Davies (Observer) again requested information regarding grass cutting around Council-owned garages. Councillor R W Hughes said Cabinet was not the correct forum for Members who were not satisfied with available information or actions on various topics and suggested he (and

any other Members) firstly contact the relevant officers who would provide the information or ask the relevant Scrutiny Committee to consider the topic.

RESOLVED that Members note the latest financial forecast position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the current financial year.

1189 REVENUE BUDGET PROJECTED OUTTURN 2006-2007 AND SUMMARY CAPITAL PLAN 2006-2007 TO 2009-2010

Councillor G O Rowlands presented the report for Members to note the projected outturn figures for the 2006/07 financial year as detailed in Appendix 1 and to note the summary capital plan performance for 2006/07 financial year as detailed in Appendices 2 and 3.

The Chief Executive said the Authority was approximately £1m underspent and this showed strong budgetary controls and financial planning by each Directorate. Councillor G O Rowlands agreed and said this was a culmination of many years' work. Councillor R W Hughes congratulated the Directorates on behalf of Cabinet.

RESOLVED that Members note the projected outturn figures for the 2006/07 financial year as detailed in Appendix 1 and note the summary capital plan performance for 2006/07 financial year as detailed in Appendices 2 and 3.

1190 ROUTINE REPORTING ON PERSONNEL

Councillor S A Davies presented the report for Members to note the report on the staff headcount. He said the average number of days lost per employee through absence was reducing and it was hoped the Authority would be on target for 10 days lost through sickness absence.

He also stated the wage bill for a workforce of 4,500 was large and the average cost of 1% of total posts equated to about £1m or 3% on Band D Council Tax. It was important that the workforce was 'fit for purpose'.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the information in the report.

1191 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor S A Davies presented the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

It was confirmed that housing need information would be contained within the June report on Local Housing Strategy. Members discussed "local" and agreed this could potentially cause difficulties with nearby Authority boundaries.

Councillor E C Edwards asked whether it was at all possible to have the Community Capital Grants report presented in May. Councillor J Thompson Hill said May was too soon as the budget had only recently been approved and applications had only just been made available. Councillor Edwards expressed his disappointment that the Modernising Education Update report would not be available until June.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

1192 URGENT ITEMS:

DELEGATION OF FUNCTIONS

The Chief Executive presented the report seeking Member approval to delegate to the Chief Executive functions in respect of footpaths and bridleways, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, which had been designated by the Welsh Assembly Government as Executive functions, having previously been Non-Executive functions. He confirmed that footpath diversion / planning legislation would still be determined by Full Council.

RESOLVED that Cabinet agree to delegate to the Chief Executive functions in respect of footpaths and bridleways, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, which have been designated by the Welsh Assembly Government as Executive functions, having previously been Non-Executive functions.

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 20 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

PART II

1193 CAPITAL PLAN

Councillor G O Rowlands presented the report for Members to note the latest position on the 2006/07 element of the Capital Plan. Additional information was provided at the meeting.

Councillor Rowlands outlined some of the current projects and said the Authority still awaited a decision from DELLS regarding the Community Learning Centres. He went on to thank Councillor E C Edwards and the Community Safety Partnership Manager for their hard work and support in bringing to fruition the new CCTV facility in the County and said Rhuddlan was now included in the CCTV provision.

Councillor S Roberts detailed the additional information provided regarding the health and safety issue around the fencing in Coronation Gardens, Rhyl. The scheme was fully funded as additional grant support had been made available. The Head of Countryside and Leisure explained that it was necessary to proceed with the work in tandem with another scheme at the site and that he would be requesting a delegated decision for exemption from Contract Procedure Rules to avoid a full tendering procedure. Councillor S A Davies stressed the need to liaise with the Corporate Procurement Unit to ensure a reasonable number of quotations were obtained to achieve the best price possible in the circumstances.

Members again discussed the procedure for inclusion of items on to the Capital Plan. Councillor P A Dobb expressed concern that replacement fencing could score higher with the system than statutory requirements. She was reminded that the reason for this was on health and safety grounds. The Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources reminded Members that a review of the scoring system would be carried out in 6 months' time.

RESOLVED that Members note the latest position on the 2006-2007 element of the Capital Plan. Cabinet also agreed that the specified amount of funding be released to allow the Coronation Gardens fence repairs to be undertaken, subject to reassurances from the Lead Member for Promoting Denbighshire, in conjunction with the Lead Member for Finance and Procurement and the Lead Member for Property and Sustainable Development that the work be undertaken within budget and on time.

The meeting concluded at 12.20 p.m.
