

CABINET

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday 11 September 2007 in the Dean's Library, St Asaph.

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; and J Thompson Hill, Lead Member for Property and Sustainable Development.

Observers: Councillors R E Barton, M LI Davies, G C Evans and C L Hughes.

ALSO PRESENT

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

APOLOGIES

Councillors G O Rowlands, Lead Member for Finance and Procurement; S Roberts, Lead Member for Promoting Denbighshire and E W Williams, Lead Member for Environment; Corporate Director: Environment and the Financial Controller.

315 URGENT MATTERS

There were no Urgent Matters.

316 MINUTES OF THE CABINET

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 17 July 2007 were submitted.

Item 9 Routine Reporting on Personnel – Councillor S A Davies drew Members' attention to his suggestion at the last Cabinet meeting that they provide details of any problems emerging with sickness absence, as every day lost was a financial cost to the Authority.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

317 DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S DRAFT EFFICIENCY STRATEGY

Councillor R W Hughes presented the report seeking Members' consideration of Denbighshire County Council's draft Efficiency Strategy 2007 – 2010 (Appendix I) and draft Action Plan (Appendix II) and agree any further amendments and that the draft Efficiency Strategy and Action Plan be presented to Full Council on the 18 September 2007 for agreement. She reminded Members that efficiency gains every year for 5 years would be required, which meant £7.5m by 2010 or just over £1.5m per year.

Councillor Hughes said the Change Management Board had been set up to oversee delivery of the Efficiency Strategy and she (as Leader), Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Finance and Procurement would join the Board as observers. The minutes and reports of the Change Management Board would be available for all Members on the Council Members' Database.

Referring to paragraph 2.5, Councillor Hughes highlighted the projects already being progressed which meant the Authority was already working better. She referred to the Social Services and Housing Directorate Core Briefing (available to all Members) which detailed the efficiency savings required to staff in a simple and understandable way.

The Action Plan at Appendix II detailed the individual actions which Members would be responsible for. It was important that all Members were enthusiastic about the Strategy as it was not just about trying to save money but also the Authority working more efficiently.

Councillor P A Dobb, referring to the Bright Ideas Scheme, said this was a superb staff resource and was the cheapest resource in the Authority for getting ideas. She suggested it should be promoted further, perhaps through Payroll or a 'pop-up' on the computer. Councillor M A German asked whether a similar opportunity was available for Members to deliver ideas or solutions to issues.

Councillor M LI Davies (Observer), referring to the list on page 14 of the Strategy, suggested that new furniture for offices was not always required and that existing furniture could be moved and used in new offices. Turning to Modernising our Business Processes (page 17 of the Strategy), Councillor Davies (Observer) said in many instances the venues for Council meetings were not compatible with new technology. He also referred to the reduction in staff travel on page 11 of the Action Plan and said the 'excluding schools' should be included in the last column, as it was the figure which excluded spend on school travel.

Councillor E C Edwards strongly expressed his concern regarding the efficiency savings which would be required as he felt these would have an impact on service delivery. Many residents were concerned about the education of children, refuse collection, street cleaning and being safe in their homes for example and he wondered how these services would be delivered. An annual efficiency target of £2.5m from 2008-2009 would be of the greatest concern to the Authority's residents. He wondered whether this signalled the need for a major restructure in the Authority.

Councillor S A Davies said all Members had to take responsibility for the Strategy. He said personnel were the highest cost to the Authority and it would not be possible to continue along the same lines as at present. Funding available from the Welsh Assembly Government was decreasing whilst in 3 years' time when Single Status and the Pay and Grading Review came to fruition, it could mean an extra 3% per £1m on Council Tax. He agreed with Councillor Edwards that frontline services were the Authority's priorities and said following discussions in the Change Management Board he felt the actions were reasonable. Councillor Edwards, referring to the priorities, said that many millions would be required for example to upgrade the County's highways.

The Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources endorsed Councillor Hughes' introduction to the Strategy. He outlined that the Efficiency Strategy had to be considered in the wider context of what was anticipated to happen in the next few years. He reminded Members that account had to be taken of such issues as Single Status, since the Pay and Grading Review (based on current estimates) could cost the Authority by Year 5 £1.5m more than the amount currently set aside. Waste Management costs were likely to escalate and the current level of Supporting People funding was at risk. In addition, there was currently an Assembly initiative to review the current distribution methodology for education funding, which could result in Denbighshire County Council's funding reducing significantly.

In response to Members' questions, the Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources indicated that improved procurement practices were one of the key routes to driving efficiencies. Also, investment in new IT developments could result in improved working practices and better use of Council buildings.

Councillor R W Hughes, referring to Strand 5 Making our Workforce Fit for the Future, supported officers in planning their reductions to the workforce. Redundancies could be avoided by planning workforce reductions and this would be done by the managers and not the politicians.

RESOLVED that Members note Denbighshire County Council's draft Efficiency Strategy 2007 – 2010 (Appendix I) and draft Action Plan (Appendix II) and agree the amendments above and that the draft Efficiency Strategy and Action Plan as revised be presented to Full Council on the 18 September 2007 for agreement.

318 MONITORING THE AUTHORITY'S KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND PROGRESS AGAINST THE KEY ACTIONS IN THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Councillor S A Davies presented the report for Members to consider the Corporate Quarterly Performance report against the Improvement Plan 2007-2010 which detailed the performance against

the Authority's key performance indicators for the 1st quarter of 2007-2008 (June, July and August 2007) (Appendix 1) and that Cabinet consider any issue in greater depth as deemed necessary.

Members commented on / detailed some of the indicators:

Councillor M A German said there were reasons for the slippage on the percentage of first placements of looked after children during the year that began with a care plan in place. Officers were working towards meeting the target.

Councillor P A Dobb referred to the number of affordable housing units granted planning permission being below target. This was a result of smaller plots of land being developed which were not required to comply with policy. The target was currently misleading and it was hoped progress would be made on the provision of planning permissions in the coming 6 months.

The indicators for Councillor S Roberts were on target.

The Chief Executive reported that some of Councillor E W Williams' indicators were not on target i.e. some enforcement activities and recycling issues.

Councillor D Owens said the Lifelong Learning indicators were annual targets. He agreed with the Chief Executive that it should be possible to list school attendance by term, and indicators should be identified which could be reported against more frequently.

Councillor J Thompson Hill reported his indicators were annual targets and the Authority was on target to meet these.

Councillor E C Edwards said the new Community Safety Team in place was working well and stressed the importance of continuing to work corporately.

Councillor R W Hughes said she still hoped to include indicators for the Authority's European work.

Councillor S A Davies said a detailed update report on performance appraisals would be provided for the October Cabinet, to highlight the importance of reporting these figures.

The Head of Strategic Policy referred to the matrix on page 2 of the cover report and reminded Members and officers to focus on those indicators which had slipped against the target or had not improved since the previous year. A locally produced analysis detailing Denbighshire's performance in relation to all Wales would be presented to Full Council in November 2007. She suggested that more focus was required on the indicators that continually did not perform and the need to consider quarterly reporting for Education.

Regular monitoring of Council services was important. Councillor R W Hughes said some Members felt unaware of when indicators were continually going down and these could be included in an exceptions report.

The Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources suggested Lifelong Learning should consider including additional performance indicators. The Chief Executive suggested indicators reporting, for example, the number of exclusions from school or attendance figures. Councillor R W Hughes said it was important for all Members to have meaningful indicators. Councillor S A Davies said monthly information could be brought to Cabinet if it was useful. The Head of Strategic Policy said the new Ffynnon performance management system was being set up and said that separate systems should not be used.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the proposed Quarterly Performance Report and agree to pay particular attention to issues requiring further discussion and/or remedial action, particularly those indicators which are not on target.

319 ROUTINE REPORTING ON PERSONNEL

Councillor S A Davies presented the report for Members to note the report on the staff headcount, the figures shown being a month in arrears. Agency figures were circulated at the meeting. Councillor Davies stressed the need for all Heads of Service to provide up to date figures.

Councillor M LI Davies (Observer) suggested that instead of the decision on the report asking Members to note the figures, the decision should ask Cabinet to take action where relevant. Councillor R W Hughes agreed and suggested that actions required should be recorded. She asked Cabinet Members to discuss with the relevant Corporate Directors or Heads of Service proposals to bring down the level of agency figures.

Members discussed the gross pay which had increased by £100k per month compared to the same time last year.

Councillor P A Dobb referred to the 3 Board Members in the Social Services and Housing Directorate which received an honorarium which meant they had to be included as employees.

Councillor D Owens asked that figures be provided showing agency staff which had been employed for 6 months or longer, particularly in the Design Services department.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the information in the report and take action as required and that the next report on agency staff should show agency staff engaged for 6 months or longer.

320 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor S A Davies presented the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

The Chief Executive said a report on Education would be brought to the 25.09.2007 Cabinet; an Action Plan in regard to the Estyn report on 30.10.2007 and the report on Modernising Education would be brought on 18.12.2007 and not 27.11.2007.

Councillor R W Hughes referred to the Rhyl Going Forward – Performance Measurement information report which had been circulated to all Members and said people's perception of Rhyl was improving and it was good to see the positive findings in the review.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the Cabinet Forward Work Programme and the amendments.

321 URGENT ITEMS:

There were no Urgent Items.

PART II

There were no Part II items.

The meeting concluded at 11.00 a.m.
