

CABINET

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday 26 May 2009 in Conference Room 1, County Hall, Ruthin.

PRESENT

Councillors P A Dobb, Lead Member for Health, Social Care and Wellbeing; H H Evans, Leader and Lead Member for Education; S Frobisher, Lead Member for Communities; R W Hughes, Lead Member for Personnel and Business Management; P J Marfleet, Lead Member for Modernisation and Improvement; J Thompson Hill, Lead Member for Finance; D A J Thomas, Lead Member for Environment: Regeneration and E W Williams, Lead Member for Environment: Sustainable Development.

Observers: Councillor G C Evans.

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive; Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources; Corporate Director: Environment; Corporate Director: Social Services and Housing; County Clerk and the Financial Controller.

APOLOGIES

Councillor M M Jones, Lead Member for Children's Services; Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning.

34 URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent items.

35 MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING 28.04.2009

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28 April 2009 were submitted.

Item 10 Routine Reporting on Personnel: Councillor R W Hughes agreed with Councillor P A Dobb's suggestion that Personnel provide each Cabinet Member with a programme of work by e-mail to enable them to work with Heads of Service covering their portfolios.

Councillor P A Dobb said the Head of Personnel had not provided the figures on adult services performance appraisal figures as had been agreed. Councillor R W Hughes thought this had been done and agreed to discuss with the Head of Personnel and ensure the figures were provided.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

36 MODERNISING EDUCATION ACTION PLAN MONITORING

Councillor H H Evans presented the report for Members to consider the work undertaken to progress the Modernising Education Agenda with regard to the implementation of the Action Plan arising from the 2007 Estyn Inspection of Education Services.

Progress against the action plan was being regularly monitored by Cabinet, Scrutiny Committee and the Modernising Education Board to ensure delivery. Since the report was written the number of actions completed had risen from 86% to 94%, with 8 of the 9 targets met. There was steady improvement in comparison with other Authorities. Councillor Evans asked Members to note that the remaining actions would be monitored as part of the business plans and quarterly performance report.

Councillor Evans said the aim was for Denbighshire to be in the top 10% in Wales by the end of the current Council term, and although this would need hard work it was achievable.

He thanked the Programme Manager for driving the action plan forward and for ensuring the number of actions was being reduced.

RESOLVED that Cabinet notes progress achieved to date by the Authority in relation to progressing the recommendations within the Action Plan and confirm that further progress against the remaining activities will be reported to Cabinet via the quarterly performance report for Lifelong Learning.

37 MONITORING PERFORMANCE AGAINST DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLANS: QUARTER 4 2008-2009

Councillor P J Marfleet presented the report for Members to consider the performance of each Directorate against their Directorate Business Plans as detailed in the report for the fourth quarter of 2008/09. Although the information in the report was historic, it was important that Members dealt with any issues of possible concern as early as possible in the current financial year, whether it was over particular indicators or financial concerns. He felt the report layout was more meaningful and it was easier to see those indicators above or below target at a glance. He reminded Members that there were also good news stories within the indicators.

Councillor Marfleet said recycling was making good progress and Denbighshire was currently ahead of the Welsh Assembly Government target, although the target had been set at 40% in the current year. He said some of the data provided by the North Wales Police may have been slightly inaccurate and this could have led to some targets not being met. He drew Members' attention to the Council being first in the improvement on pupil achievement position across Wales and coming joint 8th in Wales on attendance figures was such an improvement from the previous 18th position. He suggested that any disparity between Care.comm and PARIS should have been resolved. However, 42% of key performance indicators were below target and Councillor Marfleet suggested that there was a need to prioritise within the indicators, to concentrate on those which could impact on services or finances.

The Corporate Director: Environment said the Welsh Assembly Government statutory target was 25% and Denbighshire had actually achieved 32%. A new range of recycling initiatives had been introduced including food recycling in 20,000 homes in the north of the County. 52% recycling had been achieved in April 2009 and he reminded Members that there was a need to meet a 40% overall target. Changes were being made to service delivery and the County's residents were responding positively.

Turning to the number of prosecutions, there was a relatively low level of environmental crime such as dog fouling or littering. However, it was important to reinforce the message that the environment of Denbighshire was important.

Regarding the data provided by the North Wales Police, the Corporate Director: Environment said they were amongst the best in the UK on providing quality data and they were consistently updating the way in which figures were captured. There was a slight increase in reported crime but officers were working closely with the North Wales Police and other agencies.

Councillor P A Dobb said PARIS was work in progress and she had a meeting arranged with the Business Manager to discuss various issues. Regarding the data provided by the North Wales Police, she asked that the Police Authority member be asked to investigate what was happening and report back to the Council. She asked that her name be removed from the indicator for agricultural estates and public conveniences, and replaced with Councillor P J Marfleet. The Disabled Facilities Grants had been reduced to 352 days to install facilities and she wished to congratulate the team as this was 4 months less than the Welsh average. Regarding the average number of days taken to complete non urgent repairs, Councillor Dobb informed Members that consultants would be working alongside Housing and Contract Services departments to ensure improvements were made.

Councillor R W Hughes said she was pleased to see improvements in the number of appraisals carried out. However, although much work had been undertaken by officers to ensure improvement, the target was 100% and nothing else would do.

Councillor D A J Thomas said improvements to the total lengths of rights of way was dependent upon available funding. Turning to the number of businesses assisted in one year, Councillor Thomas informed Members that that funding had now ceased but it was likely that new funding for qualifying capital projects would be announced. He reminded Members that the successful Objective 1 programme had finished and the replacement convergence programme had been slow to replace it. The targets needed to be reviewed and defined on the number of jobs created through regeneration.

Councillor H H Evans discussed the new indicators and the percentage of young people on Project 11 in particular. The Authority was on target to meet this 100%. The young people 16+ in further education was not on target and he would be investigating the issue. He wanted every child to be employable on leaving school or college.

The importance of Cabinet Members' roles was emphasised by Councillor Evans and he wanted to ensure that targets were realistic. It was important for Cabinet Members to have input into realistic and achievable target setting.

Councillor R W Hughes asked that Scrutiny Officers provide feedback to Members of any comments from Scrutiny Committees.

Tony Ward, the Policy and Performance Officer was thanked by Councillor Marfleet for his hard work and for accommodating the needs of Cabinet in the presentation of the report. In response to Councillor Marfleet's query on how well Denbighshire's 88.5% performance indicators target compared to other Authorities, the Policy and Performance Officer said the information would be presented to the Welsh Assembly the following month and it was hoped that an indication of how well Denbighshire was doing would be given.

RESOLVED that Cabinet notes the Quarterly Performance Report.

38 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET & CAPITAL PLAN UPDATE 2009-2010

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report for Members to note the forecast outturn position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Housing Capital Plan for 2009-2010. The initial forecast showed that an in-year revenue surplus of £256k should be generated by the end of the financial year, which was £37k less than forecast in the original budget set in February 2008.

Councillor Dobb said the Council would probably be compensated by the Welsh Assembly Government for any loss arising from the changes to the subsidy payable as a result of the removal of leased property from the subsidy scheme. The Housing Stock Business Plan remained viable.

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

39 REVENUE BUDGET AND SUMMARY CAPITAL PLAN 2009-2010

Councillor J Thompson Hill presented the report for Members to note the likely outturn figures as detailed in Appendix 1 attached to the report and the summary capital plan performance for 2008-2009 as detailed in Appendices 2 and 3.

The projected overspend in Lifelong Learning was £133k, mainly due to the residual costs of the Hyfrydle facility and the potential pressures on the school meals service. A report on school meals was to be presented to Cabinet in June 2009. Social Services and Housing were forecasting an underspend of

£383k. The budget contained a contingency provision of £880k to part fund pressures and a review was underway of how it might be allocated to services.

Councillor P J Marfleet suggested that underspends carried forward did not give a real view of how well the Authority was performing. He queried the £880k contingency budget and was informed by Councillor J Thompson Hill that the allocation had been made when it was known that some issues would need funding but that the level of cost involved could not be assessed with certainty. The detail would form part of future reports to Cabinet.

In terms of sustainability, there was a need to ensure services were financially stable over a number of years.

The Corporate Director: Environment, responding to a query from Councillor H H Evans, said that a project team and finalised brief were in place for the Hyfydle facility and discussions were ongoing with prospective occupiers. It was hoped to have the first report drafted before the summer recess.

RESOLVED that Members note the initial projected outturn figures for 2009-2010 as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report and note the summary capital plan performance figures for the 2008-2009 financial year as detailed in Appendices 2 and 3 to the report.

40 ROUTINE REPORTING ON PERSONNEL

Councillor R W Hughes presented the report for Members to note the statistics on Personnel. A second meeting of the Personnel Task Group had been held and a presentation given on the Trent system. She asked that if any other Members wished to have a presentation on the Trent system to let her know. Personnel had produced Appraisal Matters for staff and she said this could be circulated to Members if they wished.

The emphasis had been on sick absence and headcount in the report. Return to work interviews were being carried out but not always routinely recorded on the Trent system. It was important that Cabinet Members took an active role in the sickness absence in their departments.

Councillor H H Evans, referring to Members' involvement, said although sickness absence, for example, was an operational issue it should be remembered that managers had a responsibility to monitor absence. He suggested the number of target days lost was the same for every Directorate and this should be reviewed. It was important for Corporate Directors to challenge the process. Councillor R W Hughes said Members had already been effective and their support politically had helped with the targets.

The Chief Executive emphasised the need to be clear about the rationale for targets and he said the Corporate Executive Team would consider the targets and ensure they were realistic. He would be pleased to involve Councillor R W Hughes as the Lead Member early on in the discussions. He also said the quality of the reports had improved over the past year. He wanted to ensure that data collection was robust and analysis accurate. The Personnel Officer agreed and said operational managers must be aware of their roles.

Councillor P J Marfleet discussed the problems of an officer on sick leave in a small department, and said in some instances this could cause more work and stress for colleagues. He also said staff in the public sector should not be more prone to sickness than those in the private sector. He also agreed it was important to have management buy-in to sickness absence. He felt targets should be set more realistically and by now because of the information available from the Trent system, that Personnel should know where the hotspots of absenteeism were.

Councillor P A Dobb said sickness had many forms, and some staff had chronic diseases such as arthritis and she suggested that use should be made of the NHS expert patient programme, where people were trained in how to cope with chronic sickness. She suggested that as this was a free service, the County's Occupational Health Department could arrange for workshops to be carried out. The Personnel Officer

said a member of staff was due to go on the course but the course was usually individual led. Councillor Dobb asked that all staff be made aware that this service was available.

Councillor E W Williams asked whether there was any information available that could show whether staff were pressurised when others were on sick leave. The Chief Executive suggested that some people were more anxious during a recession. When functions or posts were cut, it had to be accepted that sickness absence could rise. The expectation that the activity would continue had to change. There were issues around expectations of jobs in the public sector and it was important that all managers were robust in their challenges whilst at the same time ensuring those who were ill were supported. Councillor Williams said that the collaboration agenda had lessened the burden of work in some ways as there would usually be someone else available at times of sickness absence.

The Corporate Director: Social Services and Housing said she was fully signed up to a robust approach to sickness absence and she and the Lead Member were ensuring the message was devolved throughout the Directorate. However, there were significant issues with some posts, for example social workers, where morale was an issue and this did not occur in the private sector.

Members agreed with Councillor H H Evans' suggestion that the Corporate Executive Team progress this issue. Councillor R W Hughes said the Corporate Executive Team input into the report from June 2009.

Members discussed Councillor P A Dobb's question of whether some staff would take time off because of boredom with their role. However, it was possible for staff in some posts to be moved around departments.

***RESOLVED** that Members note the information in the report.*

41 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor R W Hughes presented the Cabinet Forward Work Programme. She thanked Members for including their items on the Programme and took the opportunity to remind Members and officers that Cabinet was a decision making body and reports for noting should not be submitted to Cabinet.

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

42 ISSUES REFERRED TO CABINET BY THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no issues referred.

43 URGENT ITEMS

There were no Urgent Items.

PART II

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

44 CAPITAL PLAN 2008-2009 – 2011-2012

Councillor J Thompson Hill presented the report for Members to note the latest position on the 2009/10 element of the Capital Plan. He detailed the current position regarding the major projects, which were progressing well.

In response to a query from Councillor P J Marfleet on Denbighshire plans being dependent upon the private sector, the Corporate Director: Environment said this was an issue which affected the whole country to some extent because of the recession. Some plans were not making as much progress as they should and some proposals when completed would be different to what had originally been envisaged.

Councillor D A J Thomas reported on the £9m convergence funding achieved by Denbighshire for the North Wales Coastal Strategic Regeneration Area, which includes Rhyl. Match funding was also being sought for another project. The Corporate Director: Environment said guidance had been sought from the Deputy First Minister on strategic regeneration areas outside Rhyl, as the boundaries had been extended as there could be opportunities for the creation of jobs.

Regarding Councillor G C Evans' query on building refurbishment and whether so many units were required at this time, the Corporate Director: Environment confirmed that there was still a strong demand for industrial buildings despite the recession and 85% of the units were fully occupied.

RESOLVED that Members note the latest position on the 2009/10 element of the Capital Plan.

The meeting concluded at 11.20 a.m.
