

CABINET

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday 20 October 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; M M Jones, Lead Member for Children's Services; P J Marfleet, Lead Member for Modernisation and Improvement; D A J Thomas, Lead Member for Environment: Regeneration; J Thompson Hill, Lead Member for Finance and E W Williams, Lead Member for Environment: Sustainable Development.

Observers: Councillors W L Cowie, J Chamberlain Jones, G C Evans, R L Feeley, G M Kensler, and D I Smith.

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive; Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources; Corporate Director: Environment; Corporate Director: Social Services and Housing, Financial Controller; County Clerk; Head of Planning and Performance Lifelong Learning, and Strategic Policy Manager

APOLOGIES

Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning

397 URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent items.

398 MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING – 29 SEPTEMBER 2009

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 29 September 2009 were submitted.

Item 7 (top of page 7) – Revenue Budget and Summary Capital Plan 2009-2010

Councillor PJ Marfleet said that the Minutes should read "it was important to ensure that there would be no overspent budgets at year end by closely monitoring at the half year stage."

RESOLVED that subject to the above the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

399 MODERNISING EDUCATION - DEE VALLEY EAST EDUCATION REVIEW

Councillor H H Evans presented the report regarding the Modernising Education Review of Dee Valley East which follows a decision taken by Cabinet in July, 2009 to commence the formal consultation process regarding the potential closure of Ysgol Llantysilio for September 2010.

A thorough consultation has taken place with a letter being sent to a number of stakeholders advising them of the start of the commencement of the consultation process. A public meeting was held on 15 September 2009, and separate meetings have been held with staff, and discussions taken place with other schools in the area.

With only 3 pupils on the roll for September 2010, the rationale behind the recommendations is clear, but it is also a sad reflection as to what is happening in rural areas.

The Head of Planning and Performance – Lifelong Learning reported that an Action Plan has been developed, and that the statutory notice will be published on 11 November 2009 which would give an objection period of 2 months for any written objections to be submitted.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the publication of the required statutory notice regarding the proposed closure of Ysgol Llantysilio for September 2010, and note the findings from the Area Review of the Dee Valley East area.

400 DENBIGHSHIRE'S REVISED WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME

Councillor H H Evans presented the report requesting Cabinet to discuss Denbighshire's revised Welsh Language Scheme which is currently in draft form, and to agree a formal six week consultation on the draft Scheme before recommending it to Council for agreement in December, 2009.

The revised Scheme, which is essential in maintaining and developing the language within the County had been discussed by a number of groups which included the Bilingual Group which meets on a regular basis and attended by Members and Officers.

He expressed his concern that translation is perceived as an overspend, and explained that this was not the case as it is an essential part of the Council's work, and therefore will be asking the bilingual group to discuss each budget that is aligned to the Welsh language to ensure that we are making the best use of resources.

As the Member leading on Welsh language, Councillor Evans was pleased that the Chief Executive had taken on the Corporate Executive Team role to Champion the Welsh language.

The Strategic Policy Manager explained the key changes to the new Scheme and how it reflects the Council's commitment in the Local Development Plan Deposit Draft where a development would be refused if its size, scale or location would cause significant harm to the language balance of a community.

The scheme has also been strengthened to reflect the Welsh Language Board's priority in ensuring our third party contractors also comply with our scheme, and as the Council enters into more partnership agreements we will ensure that the partnership will operate with regard to the Welsh language and adopt the Welsh Language Scheme.

Members chairing meetings will also be encouraged to open and close formal meetings bilingually, and training will be provided where needed.

Councillor E W Williams felt that when planning applications are submitted, it is important that the impact on the Welsh language is included. He was also interested to find out how many of the young people who work for Denbighshire are Welsh speakers.

Members felt that Chairs opening and closing meetings could prove difficult for some, and Councillor R W Hughes suggested that it would be useful for Members to have a sheet of stock phrases to assist them if they wished to say something in Welsh.

Councillor P A Dobb also suggested that training be provided for Members so that they can be much better at promoting the culture within the organisation. She also asked for assurances that efficiencies are also being looked at in the Translation Budget.

Councillor E W Williams referred to the culture within the Council, and to flippant remarks being made to some Members when they choose to speak or complete forms in Welsh.

The Chief Executive believed that staff and others need to be encouraged to speak Welsh in a public setting, and that there needs to be a culture change to give everyone the confidence to converse and write in Welsh.

RESOLVED that Cabinet agree the commencement of a formal six week consultation on the Draft Welsh Language Scheme before recommending it, subject to any amendment, for agreement by Full Council on 1 December, 2009, and the issues raised by Members at the meeting be taken back to the Bilingual Forum for discussion.

401 SUPPORTING PEOPLE OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR 2010-2011

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report seeking Cabinet agreement to the Supporting People Operational Plan for 2010/11.

Councillor Dobb reported that Officers had made every attempt to deliver even better value for money this year, and still meet the local needs more closely. As the future of the Supporting People Grant was still unclear, no decision had been made by the Welsh Assembly Government as to how it might transfer into the Revenues Support Grant, and therefore in year surpluses were being earmarked to dampen the impact of future grant cuts. It is also imperative that the Council find creative workable ways of remodeling its services.

Councillor Dobb referred to the risk of people being overlooked because of the change of eligibility which will now be geared to people who need the service, rather than all people in homeless accommodation. There is a further risk relating to the funding from WAG, and the minimal possibility that the Minister may not approve the changes to the provider Clwyd Alyn.

Members discussed the length of time it has taken, and the Corporate Director: Social Services and Housing advised Members although it is still uncertain as to when a decision will be made, it is anticipated that the first tranche of formula change will happen in years 2011/12, and that the length of time it has taken has been of benefit to Denbighshire.

In response to the Leader's question about the Plan being linked into the Council's Demographic priorities, the Corporate Director Social Services and Housing advised Members that the work around Sheltered Housing and the cost of Warden Services is being supported by the Demographic Change Board.

Councillor P J Marfleet conveyed his appreciation to those Officers who have anticipated what lies ahead.

RESOLVED that Cabinet agree the Supporting People Operational Plan for 2010/11 and support the projects identified to proceed to meet the needs of vulnerable people.

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

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report for Members to note the forecast outturn of the Housing Revenue Account (H.R.A.) and Housing Capital Plan for 2009/10. The forecast shows an in-year revenue surplus of £194k. She explained that due to the change of contractor, the number of completed properties this year had reduced, and therefore the capital expenditure was lower. Now that the new contractor had been appointed, it was possible to recalculate and reduce the forecast capital charges by £113k.

Councillor D A Thomas referred to the loft insulation work being undertaken to reduce carbon omissions and asked whether all properties that had this work done over 10 years ago would be revisited. In response Councillor Dobb explained that the properties in poor condition would be revisited within this term up to 2012, with the remainder being revisited at a later date.

RESOLVED that Members note the forecast outturn of the Housing Revenue Account (H.R.A.) and Housing Capital Plan for 2009/10.

403 REVENUE BUDGET AND SUMMARY CAPITAL PLAN 2009-2010

Councillor J Thompson Hill presented the report for Members to note the latest estimate of the likely outturn figures for the 2009/10 financial year as detailed in Appendix 1 attached to the report and the summary capital plan performance for 2009/10 as detailed in Appendices 2 and 3.

The forecast overall underspend was £81k excluding the schools' delegated budgets. There had been a slight reduction in the forecast underspend for Social Services. The rate of expenditure against the Capital Plan was increasing as we go through the year.

He also advised Members that the Council no longer had any investments with any foreign-owned banks.

Councillor R W Hughes referred to the individual schools in deficit, and asked how these schools were being monitored to ensure they are taking the appropriate action to bring their budgets back into surplus.

In response, the Head of Planning and Performance – Lifelong Learning assured Members that Officers were in regular contact with the schools with deficit budgets.

RESOLVED that Members note

- (a) *the latest projected outturn figures for 2009/10 as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report*
- (b) *the summary Capital Plan performance figures for 2009/10 financial year as detailed in Appendices 2 and 3 attached to the report.*

404 UPDATE ON ASSEMBLY SETTLEMENT

Councillor J Thompson Hill presented the report for Members to note the content of the Assembly's Provisional Settlement for the Council for the next financial year.

Denbighshire has received an increase of 2.4% which is an increase over the current year is £3m. This is above the Wales average and is due to the above average increase in population, the below average reduction in pupil numbers together with the improvement in the collection of free school meals and benefits entitlement data.

Councillor Thompson-Hill advised Members that the Budget Challenge Group had looked at the proposals, and although the settlement for 2010/11 was better than expected, the position for future years is going to change dramatically and therefore the current efficiency targets needed to be retained.

Councillor H H Evans said that he saw this as a budget for sustaining services and linking into future years, and that the key message is to keep to the original plan.

Members discussed the funding allocated to Education, and as the current draft proposals only allow for just under a 2% increase, a further £1.2m was needed to be allocated to continue with the strategy of budgeting at the level of element of SSA for Education.

In response to Councillor P J Marfleet's question as to where the further £1.2m would be allocated, Councillor J Thompson-Hill explained that the money will be closely monitored and targeted on improving where it is most needed on a one off basis.

Councillor E W Williams said that nearly all Denbighshire schools had school development plans, and if there were budget proposals to improve facilities at schools, it was important that all schools raise their attainment levels. He also felt it was important for schools to work closely with libraries.

The Head of Planning and Performance – Lifelong Learning said that plans were in place to work with Schools and linking it into their development plans.

Councillor D Smith welcomed the paper, but said it was imperative to maintain momentum to raise attainment levels in schools.

RESOLVED that Members note:

- (a) *the level of the Assembly Provisional Settlement for 2010/11;*
- (b) *that in light of the likely tight future settlements, the need to retain current savings targets, and*
- (c) *that the Corporate Executive Team are developing spending proposals to use the balance of additional resources for next year in ways that assist the delivery of improvements to services and produce savings, in a cost effective manner.*

405 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor R W Hughes presented the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, but explained that once the realigning of Portfolios had taken place, Members would need to input into the Programme.

Councillor H H Evans advised Members that the Corporate Executive Team had removed some reports from the programme for this meeting, and asked that in future the Lead Member needs to be consulted so that they are clear as to why the reports have been removed.

The Chief Executive said that there needs to be some clarity as to what reports come to Cabinet. He explained that when the Corporate Executive Team discussed the programme, four reports for today's meeting were highlighted as falling under delegated powers to Officers and Lead Members, and therefore they were removed from the agenda. There are still a number of reports being submitted to Cabinet that could be dealt with under delegated powers.

Councillor E W Williams referred to the frequency of meetings and as to whether Cabinet needed to meet on a monthly basis, or possibly be moved to six weekly.

The Chief Executive explained that the Scheme of Delegation needed to be used more, and that clarity is required as to what items are submitted to Cabinet.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, and before any future reports are removed from the Work Programme, they must be referred back to the Lead Member.

406 ISSUES REFERRED TO CABINET BY THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no issues referred.

407 URGENT ITEMS

There were no Urgent Items.

At this juncture (11.30 a.m.) the meeting adjourned for 15 minutes to allow Members to Participate in refreshments.

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.

408 REVIEW OF LIBRARY SERVICE PROVISION ACROSS THE COUNTY

Councillor M M Jones presented the report seeking a Cabinet decision as to which of the 7 options put forward in the Library Service Review should be considered to achieve the expected £90,000 efficiency saving in 2010/11.

Members discussed all 7 options in detail, and although there was a general consensus that closing a library at this time was not the right decision, disappointment was expressed that an opportunity had been missed to have a thorough review of the entire service.

Members felt that a review needed to be carried out as a priority to rationalise the Library Service linking the review into Schools and Leisure Centres in order to provide a modernised library service.

Aligning operating costs to the appropriate budget for services provided at libraries but which fall within other Directorates was also discussed together with the need to ensure that collaboration is enforced to ensure efficiencies.

Members requested that proposals be submitted to a future Cabinet meeting to agree the scope and expected outcome of the review.

Following a lengthy debate it was

RESOLVED that Cabinet agreed to:

- (a) identify £38k savings by restructuring the management team;
- (b) identify £38,565 by reducing library opening hours at various branches;
- (c) Officers to identify remaining savings required from Lifelong Learning Directorate, and
- (ch) consider terms of reference for a further review to rationalise the Library Service to provide a modernised service

409 CAPITAL PLAN 2009/10 – 2012/13

Councillor J Thompson-Hill presented the report for Members to note the latest position on the 2009/10 element of the plan; note the approval by the Corporate Executive Team under delegated powers for improvement works totaling £238k to the Children's Village, Rhyl, and approve the use of £140k from the Capital Contingency towards the overspend on Telpyn Bridge, Rhyl.

In response to a question about the decision to renovate some of the buildings under the Convergence Business Regeneration Project, the Corporate Director: Environment advised Members that applications for funding had been submitted for the refurbishment of a number of buildings to provide accommodation for small businesses and community organisations. Decisions on the applications are awaited from WEFO.

Following a question from Councillor G M Kensler about the Convergence funding for environmental improvements to Rhyl High Street, the Corporate Director: Environment explained that the works were part of a £36m European Project across North Wales.

Members discussed the repair works on Telpyn Bridge, and the proposal that the overspend be funded from the Bridges capital block allocation. Councillor E W Williams asked that at year end the capital contingency fund be reviewed to consider reinstating £120k to the bridges capital block allocation. The Corporate Director: Environment said that it was difficult to predict what pressures may emerge on the budget over the winter months, but the situation could be reviewed towards the end of the financial year.

Members also discussed the proposed improvement works to the Children's Village, Rhyl as part of the Welsh Assembly Government Strategic Regeneration Area Initiative.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) notes the latest position on the 2009/10 element of the Capital Plan;
- (b) note the approval by the Corporate Executive Team under delegated powers for improvement works to the Children's Village, Rhyl;
- (c) approve the use of £140k from the Capital Contingency towards the overspend on Telpyn Bridge, Rhewl, and
- (ch) at the year end the capital contingency fund be reviewed to consider reinstating £120k to the bridges capital block allocation.

The meeting concluded at 1.30 p.m.
