

CABINET

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday 13 July 2010 in Conference Room 1, County Hall, Ruthin.

PRESENT

Councillors P A Dobb, Lead Member for Health, Social Care and Wellbeing; H H Evans, Leader; S Frobisher, Lead Member for Environment and Sustainable Development; M M Jones, Lead Member for Welsh Language, Children, Young People and Leisure; P J Marfleet, Lead Member for Modernising the Council; D A J Thomas, Lead Member for Regeneration and Tourism, J Thompson Hill, Lead Member for Finance and Efficiency and E W Williams, Lead Member for Education.

Observers: Councillors W L Cowie; C Hughes; H LI Jones and D I Smith.

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive; Corporate Director: Environment; Corporate Director: Social Services and Housing; Corporate Director: Governance and Efficiency; Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning; Principal Management Accountant and the Head of Corporate Governance.

APOLOGIES

Councillor R W Hughes, Lead Member for Customers and Communities.

209 URGENT MATTERS

There were no Urgent Matters.

210 MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING 22.06.2010

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 22 June 2010 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

211 NORTH WALES REGIONAL COLLABORATION PROJECT FOR THE PROVISION OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SERVICES

Councillor E W Williams presented the report for Cabinet to note the progress made to date with the implementation of the North Wales Regional School Improvement Service developments and to approve the continuation of this project as outlined in the report.

Councillor Williams informed colleagues that 2 joint meetings of the Project Board had been held. He said it was important that there was Member representation attending the meetings from the 6 Authorities and he asked the Leader to discuss the issue with other Leaders at their next meeting. He said both the Chief Executive and Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning ensured their opinions were clearly expressed at these meetings. The aim of the project was to ensure improved efficiency, increased capacity and to strengthen the specialist support provision to the schools and the Local Authority. Scrutiny Committee would be considering the internal review and linkages to this project at their next meeting and would consider the work carried out to date. Schools would need to realise that many changes would happen to ensure higher standards and better background services for them. Councillor H H Evans said the North Wales Leaders would be meeting on 16.07.2010 and he would discuss and stress the importance of Member attendance at the group. Councillor Evans asked about the project timescale how supportive the schools were. Councillor Williams said the timescale was outlined in the report as was how the process would be implemented. Nick Jarman, Consultant had met with the Directors of Education, the Group / Headteachers and Education Officers in three separate meetings and it was expected that Corporate Directors would promote the project in their own County. Councillor Williams stressed that the smaller schools would need to

understand the new pressures on them and their school governors and the importance of the project to them.

The Collaboration Concordat (collaboration to improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of school improvement services in the North Wales region) was distributed by the Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning. He said this had been signed by Lead Members and Directors.

Referring to the Concordat, Councillor J Thompson Hill asked what percentage of commitment was there from Members along the political line elsewhere. Councillor Williams said the Concordat had been signed and would be supported. This was not only an efficiency saving for each Authority but more importantly, was an opportunity to provide better services for schools. He confirmed that each Authority would be considering similar reports.

Councillor P J Marfleet said this was an exciting initiative with many benefits but said Denbighshire could not have great cost bills to achieve the resulting efficiency savings and he wondered whether the pace being set could lead to extra costs. Councillor Williams said schools currently bought in improvement services and the new provision would enhance this work in Denbighshire, in particular for smaller and Welsh medium education schools. The Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning said internal reviews would also be carried out. It was likely that this process would be followed by consideration of SEN and school inclusion provision.

Councillor D I Smith agreed this was a good initiative and school improvement for the benefit of pupils was the primary reason for the project, not making efficiency savings. He agreed it was important that decisions be taken on who would be monitoring the project and setting targets for example, would it be overarching or each school being monitored in turn. Councillor Williams said the first full evaluation would be carried out in January 2014. Each school had inspections and each school would also very quickly let the Authority know if the process did not work. The Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning informed Members that the Programme Board would be monitoring the process and targets would be set to improve education. Baselines would be established in order to set targets for development of the project. Accountability would rest with individual Authorities and such monitoring tasks could be carried out by Scrutiny Committee and through normal Performance Management.

The issue of collaboration was raised by Councillor C Hughes and he said that Denbighshire had raised its standards in Education over recent months. He wanted collaboration to work and also for the relationships built through the excellent staff to remain. He felt it was quite soon after the Estyn Inspection to be making changes and he was concerned about how the process would work operationally and that schools should not become more remote. Councillor E W Williams said some departments within Education were understaffed and equal services were not being provided at the present – by following the process it would be possible to have a pool of staff available for every aspect of school work. There were big opportunities by following the process and he reassured Councillor Hughes and any others who may have had doubts that this would increase the level of service provision to schools. School Governor training would also become more important.

The comments by Councillor Williams were echoed by Councillor H H Evans who said it was important not to dwell in the past as by doing so, it could stop the Authority from moving forwards. This new collaboration would provide a better and more efficient service and there would still be local officers who would maintain the close working relationships with schools, as at present and the local perspective would not be lost.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the progression of the project in accordance with the timescale as set out in the Action Plan in the report.

212 ANNUAL COUNCIL REPORTING FRAMEWORK (ACRF): THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES' FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor P A Dobb and Councillor M M Jones presented the report seeking Cabinet approval to the Director of Social Services' First Annual Report.

Councillor Dobb said that all Social Services departments across Wales were completing similar reports and this requirement had been designed to reduce the number of inspections to be held and

improve service provision, by improving and strengthening internal Council arrangements for assessing and managing performance of social care. The Annual Report 2009-2010 booklet in Denbighshire had been formed using Ceri's Family (Denbighshire's virtual family) as a base, with previous inspection work taken into account as well as the new business plan. Seven priorities had been identified for improvement, including meeting the impact of demographic change, and working closer to the community.

The Corporate Director: Social Services and Housing said the Authority was performing well with strong leadership and a committed workforce. Scrutiny Committee was pleased with the report and had asked her to highlight to Cabinet that the Department's finances were being prudently managed. The report had not been written by external inspectors and this change represented a significant shift in emphasis which transferred performance management accountability from the national centre back to local authorities. The position statement would play a key role in monitoring and driving forward the improvement of services as part of the Council's Corporate Plan and response to the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. Angela Mortimer, Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) had met with officers and initial feedback said Denbighshire had provided a comprehensive report. Ms Mortimer would provide a formal report by September 2010 once she had reviewed and analysed evidence underpinning the report - this would result in an individual inspection and review plan for Denbighshire.

Councillor M M Jones said there were 4 parts of the report – overview, analysis, audit trail and business planning. There was a requirement for the report, written by the Corporate Director, to be formally approved by Council. Using Ceri's Family to present the information was an excellent idea and the report set out the actions and expected outcomes for the service. It was important that service users understood both the Adult and Children's Services in the County. She thanked officers for their hard work.

The Corporate Director: Social Services and Housing said that the service was performing well across most areas but there would be challenges which would need action. There was increased work in Children's Services as a result of the Baby P case and it was important to ensure that staff could cope with all the extra work. Staff had to work to deadlines and activity recording had increased, therefore it was important to rebalance the amount of time staff spent with clients to ensure a better balance. Rural service delivery was also an issue and would face challenges as there was better service delivery in the north than south of the County. The report was not aspirational, performance indicators were linked in to the High Performing Council and budget constraints.

Responding to a query from Councillor H H Evans, the Corporate Director: Social Services and Housing said taking resource pressures into account and where it all fitted in with performance indicators was in line with what the Authority was trying to achieve corporately. The work would be monitored through Scrutiny Committee.

CSSIW would provide their formal feedback in September 2010 and would then discuss and agree with the service what would be inspected in 2012.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the changes to inspection, review and evaluation following the introduction of the Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF). Cabinet accept the Director of Social Services' first annual report.

213 REVENUE BUDGET AND SUMMARY CAPITAL PLAN 2010-2011

Councillor J Thompson Hill presented the report for Cabinet to note the latest estimate of the likely outturn figures for the 2010/11 financial year as detailed in Appendix 1 attached to the report and the summary capital plan performance for 2010/11 as detailed in Appendices 2 and 3 attached to the report. Cabinet were also asked to note the latest Housing Revenue Account and housing capital position for 2010/11 as detailed in Appendices 4 and 5 attached to the report.

A great deal of work had been carried out since the previous month to ensure the overall budget overspends were reduced. To date, an overall overspend of £68k was forecast, excluding the schools' delegated budget. The overspend on the schools' delegated budgets had increased to £628k and this was of great concern which would affect future years. However, Lifelong Learning

was forecasting a balanced budget as the previous pressures relating to the cost of maternity cover had been reviewed and a revised agreement with schools introduced. Councillor H H Evans congratulated Lifelong Learning in particular on reducing their overall overspend.

Social Services and Housing were forecasting an in-year underspend of £2k mainly due to 2 specialist placements in Children's Services having ceased. A balanced budget was being forecast in the Environment Directorate but with major pressures on the large income budgets relating to building and development control and car parking being forecast. The Corporate Governance & Efficiency budgets are forecast to be £70k over as a result of pressures on the translation budget. The Capital expenditure at the end of June was £2.8m for a Plan totalling £23.7m.

The Housing Revenue Account was showing an in year surplus of £277k and capital expenditure of £6.9m against an original plan of £8m. Denbighshire was still on target to achieve the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by the end of 2012. Responding to a query from Councillor H LI Jones, Councillor D A J Thomas said that the Authority should achieve the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and this was monitored by the Head of Housing Services and staff. Denbighshire was in the forefront in Wales with this and the County's Housing Stock Business Plan had been formally agreed for another 3 years by the Welsh Assembly Government. Compared to other Authorities, Denbighshire was in a good position regarding this.

Councillor E W Williams said he had recently heard Jocelyn Davies AM, Deputy Minister for Housing and Regeneration discuss council housing and the fact that all those Authorities who had council housing stock had funding sent to Westminster. Councillor Williams asked that Denbighshire lobby on this as the money should be retained in Wales.

RESOLVED that Members note the initial revenue projections for 2010/11 as detailed in Appendix 1 attached to the report and note the summary Capital Plan performance figures for the 2010/11 financial year as detailed in Appendices 2 and 3 attached to the report. Members also note the Housing Revenue Account and Housing Capital Plan forecasts as detailed in Appendices 4 and 5 to the report.

214 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor H H Evans presented the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

At Councillor P J Marfleet's request, Members discussed the Agricultural Estate Review and the need for the report to be presented during September. It was agreed that a special Cabinet meeting be held following County Council on 21.09.2010.

Councillor E W Williams, referring to the Dee Valley West Review said this would now be referred to as the Edeyrnion Review.

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

215 ISSUES REFERRED TO CABINET BY THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no issues referred to Cabinet by the Scrutiny Committees.

216 URGENT ITEMS

There were no Urgent Items.

The meeting concluded at 10.55 a.m.
