

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Tuesday, 13 December 2016 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Hugh Evans, Leader and Lead Member for the Economy; Bobby Feeley, Lead Member for Social Care, Adult and Children's Services; Huw Jones, Lead Member for Community Development; Barbara Smith, Lead Member for Modernisation and Housing; Julian Thompson-Hill, Lead Member for Finance, Corporate Plan and Performance and Eryl Williams, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Education

Observers: Councillors Meirick Davies, Martyn Holland and Arwel Roberts

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (MM); Corporate Directors: Economy and Public Realm (RM) and Communities (NS); Heads of Service: Legal, HR and Democratic Services (GW) and Business Improvement and Modernisation (AS); Service Manager for Communities and Wellbeing (GG); Supporting People Senior Practitioner (KO); Commissioning and Tendering Officer (LD); Chief Finance Officer (RW), and Committee Administrator (KEJ)

1 APOLOGIES

Councillors Hugh Irving, Lead Member for Customers and Libraries and David Smith, Lead Member for Public Realm

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of personal or prejudicial interest had been raised.

3 URGENT MATTERS

No urgent matters had been raised.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 15 November 2016 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

5 DENBIGHSHIRE SUPPORTING PEOPLE LOCAL COMMISSIONING PLAN 2017-18

Councillor Bobby Feeley presented the report seeking Cabinet approval of the Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan 2017 – 18 prior to its submission to the Regional Collaborative Committee and Welsh Government in January 2017.

Supporting People (SP) was a Welsh Government funding stream providing housing related support to vulnerable people to enable them to live as independently as possible and delivered a number of the requirements of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014, the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Plan provided an update on SP's commissioning for the next financial year including strategic plans and priorities together with proposals to manage possible ongoing reductions to the SP Grant (the plan was currently modelled on a 0% reduction as the latest indications were that the grant for 2017-18 had been protected from further cut, but also included contingency planning for 5%). The grant was ring-fenced by Welsh Government for SP however the allocation of the grant and any cuts would have an impact upon other services. Reference was also made to the consultation on the LCP and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee had made minor amendments which had been reflected in the report.

Cabinet acknowledged the importance of the Plan and raised questions regarding its sufficiency and effectiveness in preventing homelessness together with work in developing the Homelessness Strategy. Questions were also raised regarding the trend in Denbighshire, impact of welfare reforms, and education of young people.

The Lead Member and officers responded to questions and comments as follows –

- elaborated upon the range of services as described in the Plan aimed at preventing homelessness which was provided to a wide range of groups with complex needs and reference was also made to legislative duties and further development of preventative measures which remained the current focus
- the development of the Homelessness Strategy was a key means of strengthening the approach to prevention and a comprehensive homeless review was being undertaken – it was hoped the Strategy would be in place by March 2017 and included key actions on a range of issues and improving the type of resources available including a move away from bed and breakfast accommodation and provision of a better range of housing
- most people presenting themselves as homeless had other issues to deal with such as financial difficulties or issues relating to mental health, substance abuse and criminality and it was imperative to take a multi-agency approach to ensure the appropriate level of support was provided
- the partnership approach had been strengthened and the Homelessness Forum re-established which had a key role in developing the Homelessness Strategy together with the Homelessness Prevention Steering Group
- there had been an increase in young people requiring services recently and there was now a greater focus as part of the Young People's Pathways on further prevention and a much more coordinated approach to stop recurrent homelessness. Councillor Eryl Williams elaborated on measures undertaken in the education system to ensure young people were less vulnerable to homelessness including financial management and early intervention
- reported upon the good work undertaken in Denbighshire supporting a range of projects with partners funded by the SP grant including the recently opened Ty Golau Shelter in Rhyl

- the impact of welfare reform changes was also discussed which would be a major challenge and a partnership approach was being undertaken to address that risk – all agencies involved were proactively trying to identify households adversely affected to ensure people were prepared for the changes
- in terms of the regional approach Denbighshire had taken a lead role and there was little risk that the regional plan would not be supported by the other local authorities – whilst there was an overarching regional plan each of the six local authorities also had their own commissioning plan but all had consistency of approach in terms of early intervention and prevention
- the process for dealing with people presenting themselves as homeless was explained together with the need to identify which authority was responsible for addressing their needs in the first instance, this included a reconnection policy linked to funding to reconnect people as appropriate.

Councillor Feeley paid tribute to the work undertaken by the SP team and it was –

RESOLVED that Cabinet approves the Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan 2017 – 18 prior to its submission to the Regional Collaborative Committee and Welsh Government in January 2017.

6 CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 - 2016/17

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill presented the report updating members on the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2012 – 17 as at the end of quarter 2 of 2016/17.

The report included two main elements –

- Executive Summary – detailed achievements and key exceptions with good performance overall. Only one outcome had been assessed as Red: Priority for Improvement – Outcome 7 Students achieve their potential, which was an annual indicator as previously discussed by Cabinet and scrutinised by Performance Scrutiny Committee. All other outcomes had been evaluated as acceptable or better, and
- Full quarterly report – provided an evidence based assessment of the current position focusing on key exceptions.

An explanation behind the status of each indicator had been included within the report with key issues elaborated upon further at the meeting. Most of the areas were annual indicators and there had been little movement since the last quarter.

During consideration of the report members discussed the following –

- the historical context of the report on the previous quarter was noted and for clarity it was agreed that this be emphasised within the report for readers given that particular matters within the report had since progressed
- Councillor Barbara Smith reported upon the move from the Council's own system to the NHS eLearning platform which was currently being developed and she was confident that eLearning would be in place for members by May 2017
- reference was made to the Well-being Impact Assessment and its influence on decision making and it was explained that the process would be used as a guide

to help formulate proposals and inform decisions but assurances were given that it was up to members to make their own decision following that process

- Councillor Meirick Davies believed that the Corporate Plan Performance Report for Quarter 2 as appended to the report should have been translated. In line with the Council's policy officers advised that documents sent out to the public were produced bilingually but in terms of committees, appendices longer than four page sides were not translated. It was agreed that the matter be referred to the Welsh Language Steering Group for further consideration

In considering those areas which required further scrutiny the following matters were discussed in greater detail –

- Residents Survey – the disappointing response to the residents survey and lack of high regard for the Council continued to be of concern. In providing some context to the indicator it was noted that there had been a very small amount of respondents and people were generally likely to respond if they had a negative view. It was noted that the residents survey had been subject to scrutiny previously and the methodology for undertaking the next residents survey would be considered by Communities Scrutiny Committee early next year
- Fly tipping – given the increase in fly tipping incidents Councillor Martyn Holland was keen for offenders to be prosecuted but he also believed that legal action should be taken against those using unlicensed collectors to dispose of waste. The Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services referred to the Environmental Protection Act 1990 advising that such a case would hinge on whether the individual knowingly caused or permitted the offence of fly tipping and had taken all reasonable precautions and exercised all due diligence in that regard. It was agreed that the potential to prosecute those individuals be investigated further
- Outcome 7 Students achieve their potential – this was an annual indicator and therefore would remain red for 2016/17 and was being monitored by scrutiny. Whilst the position was red overall some aspects had reached the acceptable and excellent threshold. Councillor Arwel Roberts raised his concerns regarding the standard of education in the county and felt more support should be provided to improve standards. Councillor Eryl Williams highlighted consistent improvement across educational standards advising that Denbighshire was working towards an ambitious target, hence the red indicator status. However he was confident that the changes introduced by GwE would further raise standards. With regard to Wales' performance in the PISA results the Chief Executive confirmed it was an area of concern which needed to be addressed
- Superfast Broadband availability – this remained a priority for improvement and members expressed their frustration and concerns regarding the slow progress, lack of information, and inaccurate information from providers in delivering this outcome, highlighting particular problems experienced in their individual wards and detrimental impact on both individuals and business as a result. It was also felt that the problem was not confined to the rollout of superfast broadband and the issue was compounded by problems with the infrastructure and operational difficulties. It was noted that the matter had been subject to scrutiny in April 2016 by Performance Scrutiny Committee but little progress had been made since then. The Corporate Director: Economy and Public Realm provided an update on the latest position advising that some further information had been forthcoming but it was not at the property address level as expected and

therefore the information had been requested again in order to identify those not covered in the rollout phase. That information together with information expected shortly from OfCom on actual broadband coverage would provide a clearer picture of coverage across the county. It was felt that when the necessary data was received the issue may warrant further discussion at scrutiny. As an aside some work needed to be undertaken to ascertain why the registration for broadband and take up was limited in those areas in which it was available. Members considered how best to proceed and progress the matter to a satisfactory conclusion at the earliest opportunity in order to provide assurance to residents and businesses. It was agreed that the service providers of superfast broadband be invited to the relevant scrutiny committee and that an open letter be sent to Welsh Ministers detailing members' concerns.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *Cabinet note the contents of the report;*
- (b) *that the relevant representatives of the providers of superfast broadband be invited to the relevant scrutiny committee to answer questions and concerns of members in respect of the rollout of superfast broadband in Denbighshire, and*
- (c) *that an open letter be sent to the Welsh Ministers setting out Cabinet's concerns regarding the progress of the rollout of superfast broadband in Denbighshire.*

7 FINANCE REPORT

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill presented the report detailing the latest financial position and service budgets for 2016/17. He provided a summary of the Council's financial position as follows –

- a net underspend of £0.909m was forecast for service and corporate budgets
- 68% of savings had been achieved to date (target 5.2m) with a further 2% making good progress; 25% would be deferred and achieved in 2017/18 with only 5% of savings not being achieved within the timeframe
- highlighted current risks and assumptions relating to individual service areas
- a general update on the Housing Revenue Account, Housing Capital Plan and the Capital Plan (including the Corporate Plan element).

Cabinet was also asked to approve the transfer of the ICT Service underspend into the IT Networks Development Reserve to fund specific modernisation projects together with the write off of sundry debtor balances relating to Clwyd Leisure Ltd.

The following matters were raised during debate –

- with regard to the Ysgol Glan Clwyd project Councillor Eryl Williams was pleased to confirm that the move to the new block would begin the next week
- the Chief Finance Officer reported upon the Welsh Government's requirement for local authorities to retrospectively provide information on previous years

major housing repairs which would prove onerous and difficult to provide given there had been no requirement to record that information at the time. Officers were in dialogue with Welsh Government and confident that the matter would be resolved satisfactorily. A further update would be provided in the next report

- Councillor Bobby Feeley highlighted the financial pressures on Community Support Services and Children's Services and whilst those pressures could be contained during the current financial year there was a long term concern
- the request to transfer the ICT underspend into the IT Networks Development Reserve was discussed further with the Leader seeking assurance regarding the consistency of approach for services when dealing with underspends given that the underspend would be retained for two years and there were existing pressures in other areas. Councillor Barbara Smith explained the underspend in ICT related to earlier realisation of efficiencies via the restructure and the intention was to place the underspend in a reserve to help fund the Corporate ICT Strategy over a two year plan in 2017/18 and 2018/19 as set out within the report. If Cabinet was not minded to retain the underspend to fund the ICT Strategy the funding would need to be found from elsewhere in the future. Members were also advised of the longer lead in times generally for ICT work and that the ICT Strategy supported other service areas
- Councillor Meirick Davies asked whether the CYSILL programme (a software package on Welsh spelling and grammar) could be rolled out across the Council and it was suggested it may be a matter for the Welsh Language Steering Group to consider. Councillor Davies also raised concern regarding the quality of particular technical information translated and officers reported upon the excellent service received via Conwy County Borough Council's Translation Service who welcomed feedback to ensure continual improvement. It was suggested Councillor Davies contact the Democratic Services Manager directly to feedback in that regard.

RESOLVED that Cabinet –

- (a) *notes the budgets set for 2015/16 and progress against the agreed budget strategy;*
- (b) *approves that the current and previous year's underspend within the ICT service be transferred into the IT Networks Development Reserve to fund the specific modernisation projects described in Section 6 of the report and receive periodic progress reports on delivery, and*
- (c) *approves the formal write-off of sundry debtor balances amounting to £37,599 relating to Clwyd Leisure Ltd which had already been provided for in full.*

8 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Forward Work Programme was presented for consideration and members noted the following additions –

- Proposed 3-16 Catholic School in Rhyl – January
- Agricultural Estates: Bodynys Farm, Rhewl, Ruthin – January

- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment Update – January (tbc)

RESOLVED that *Cabinet's Forward Work Programme* be noted.

The meeting concluded at 11.50 a.m.