

## **CABINET**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin on Tuesday, 20 November 2018 at 10.00 am.

### **PRESENT**

Councillors Hugh Evans, Leader and Lead Member for the Economy and Corporate Governance; Bobby Feeley, Lead Member for Well-being and Independence; Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Lead Member for Education, Children and Young People; Brian Jones, Lead Member for Highways, Planning and Sustainable Travel; Richard Mainon, Lead Member for Developing Community Infrastructure; Tony Thomas, Lead Member for Housing, Regulation and the Environment; Julian Thompson-Hill, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets, and Mark Young, Lead Member for Corporate Standards

**Observers:** Councillors Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Meirick Davies, Alan James, Arwel Roberts, Peter Scott, Glenn Swingler, Rhys Thomas and Emrys Wynne

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Chief Executive (JG); Corporate Directors: Economy and Public Realm (GB) and Communities (NS); Head of Finance/S.151 Officer (RW); Solicitor (HR); Strategic Planning Team Manager (NK); Commercial Development Manager (DM) and Committee Administrator (KEJ)

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

#### **2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

The following members declared a personal interest –

Councillor Meirick Davies – Agenda Item 5 – Chair of North Wales Fire Authority  
Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill – Agenda Item 5 – Director of Data Cymru  
Councillor Tony Thomas – Agenda Item 8 – Rhyl Town & County Councillor  
Councillor Brian Jones – Agenda Item 8 – Member of Business Group/Rhyl Town & County Councillor

#### **3 URGENT MATTERS**

No urgent matters had been raised.

#### **4 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Special Cabinet meeting held on 15 October 2018 and the Cabinet meeting held on 30 October 2018 were submitted.

## **Matters Arising –**

**Special Cabinet (15 October 2018)** – Councillor Brian Jones noted the end of the meeting had been recorded as 6.10 p.m. and felt it would be prudent to use twenty-four hour clock in future to avoid any confusion.

**Cabinet (30 October 2018)** – Page 16, Minute Item 4 Matters Arising – Gypsy and Traveller Site Provision – Councillor Peter Scott conveyed the views of businesses located on St. Asaph Business Park who had objected to the proposal for locating the Gypsy and Traveller Site at Green-gates Farm East, St. Asaph and referred to evidence of the disruption, damage and security issues previously experienced at that location. He also highlighted the detrimental impact of the proposal in terms of retaining existing businesses and in attracting future business to the Business Park. Councillor Scott urged Cabinet to use any influence they had over the pre-planning consultation so as to ensure that the future of St. Asaph Business Park would not be jeopardised. The Leader advised that Cabinet had been well represented by the Lead Member, Councillor Tony Thomas in public meetings and the business sector with regard to the proposal and all concerns would be taken into account. Councillor Thomas confirmed he had met with representatives from St. Asaph Business Park and had taken their views on board – the pre planning consultation phase was currently ongoing with a deadline of 25 November 2018.

***RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings held on 15 October 2018 and 30 October 2018 be received and confirmed as a correct record.*

## **5 CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 2018 - 19**

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill presented the report updating members on the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2017 – 2022 as at the end of quarter 2 of 2018 – 19.

The report included three main elements –

- Executive Summary – detailed achievements and key exceptions with two narratives for each priority: Performance Status and Programme Progress
- Full quarterly report – generated from Verto Performance Management System and provided an evidence based assessment of the current position
- Summary of the projects being managed under each Programme Board – Communities and Environment and Young People and Housing.

Performance was as expected at such an early stage given the lead times to deliver improvements. Two priorities had been assessed as ‘priority for improvement’ – Resilient Communities and Young People which required a greater involvement of external partners and were not directly under the Council’s control. The remaining three priorities continued to be at an acceptable level – Housing, Connected Communities and Environment. Progress had been assessed as good across all priorities and details of the projects managed by both Programme Boards had been highlighted showing their various stages. One project had been rejected and closed because the Board did not consider it would deliver its aims which demonstrated a robustness in the assessment process.

The Strategic Planning Team Manager guided members through the priority areas contained within the report and highlighted a number of areas of good practice and elaborated upon project developments in key areas. Councillor Thompson-Hill added that, as part of the monitoring process, regular reports were submitted to Scrutiny Committee to consider whether any areas warranted further investigation.

During consideration of the report members discussed the following –

- in terms of the project to bring 500 empty homes back into use, 500 had been considered a deliverable but challenging target bearing in mind the fluctuation in the level of empty homes – it was noted that progress was on target
- the Leader highlighted the importance of an ambitious Corporate Plan and he was pleased that the Council had retained its ambition and momentum on behalf of residents and the commitment to deliver despite the financial climate – having set the right priorities good progress was being made in delivering them
- the involvement of Cabinet members in the Programme Boards established to focus on priorities and delivering projects was noted together with the key summary of projects to effect improvement which had been included as an appendix to the report – there was some debate as to the merits of further strengthening links with non-Cabinet members in addition to the regular monitoring by Scrutiny Committee and Annual Improvement Report to Council. The Chief Executive agreed to discuss with the Lead Member whether further dissemination or sharing of information would add value to the current process
- Councillor Mark Young highlighted the importance of ensuring ongoing maintenance of existing flood defence systems and assurances were provided that this element was considered as business as usual and there was a programme of maintenance works – the Corporate Plan aimed to enhance the current provision rather than dealing with day to day maintenance issues. With regard to flood defence schemes and studies work was ongoing with partners in that regard. In response to a question from Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones regarding the independent report into the flooding at Ffordd Derwen, Rhyl, Councillor Brian Jones confirmed that a letter to residents was imminent
- in response to questions raised regarding the Llantysilio Mountain fire, the Leader advised that a report would be submitted to Communities Scrutiny Committee in February 2019 in order to consider the impact and lessons learnt following the incident and further detail would be available at that time
- Councillor Richard Mainon elaborated upon the reasoning behind the rejection and closure of the Digital Access Points project given that the project would not deliver on making a significant difference and justify the cost – it was considered that the financial resources would be better directed to a real solution on a more permanent basis – the Strategic Planning Team Manager agreed to circulate the closure report to members for information.

***RESOLVED*** that Cabinet receives the report and notes the progress in delivering the Corporate Plan as at the end of quarter 2 of 2018/19.

## **6 FINANCE REPORT**

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill presented the report detailing the latest financial position and progress against the agreed budget strategy. He provided a summary of the Council's financial position as follows –

- the net revenue budget for 2018/19 was £194.418m (£189.252m in 2017/18)
- an overspend of £1.292m was forecast for service and corporate budgets
- detailed agreed savings and efficiencies worth £4.6m including those which had already been achieved with the assumption that all service efficiencies/savings would be delivered – any exceptions would be reported to Cabinet if required
- highlighted current risks and variances relating to individual service areas, and
- provided a general update on the Housing Revenue Account, Housing Capital Plan and the Capital Plan (including the Corporate Plan element).

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill highlighted the usual risk areas but confirmed there had been little movement in the figures since the report to the last meeting. The Chief Executive added that the challenges around School Transport and Children's Services were not unique to Denbighshire and had been driven by increased demand. Assurances were provided that officers had scrutinised those pressures in detail and considered them to be genuine pressures which would need to be dealt with alongside the poor financial settlement for 2019/20.

The following matters were raised during debate –

- Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts referred to the pressures on school transport which amounted to nearly £600k but in context he advised that Powys County Council spent approximately £68k per day (£12.5m a year) on school transport costs. He provided assurances regarding prudence when applying the eligibility criteria for school transport and clarified the discretionary elements in the policy. He did not advocate a review of the non-statutory elements as he believed it would result in a significant impact on learners
- the Council had made best efforts over the last few years to restructure services with a focus on resilience in order to reduce budgets whilst not impacting on service users but concerns were raised that it may not be possible to afford that protection in the future. In response to questions regarding the potential for additional monies, specifically for social care, Councillor Thompson-Hill advised that an additional £30m had been included in the draft Welsh Government budget for social care in the health budget line but it had yet to be determined how that funding would be allocated; local authorities were lobbying for some of that funding. With regard to allocation of the consequential from the UK Autumn Budget it was not yet known whether it would result in any additional funding for local government. Detail of the final settlement was due on 19 December 2018. Members reiterated the difficulties in future financial planning given the uncertainties over budgets and late notification of the final settlement. It was noted that the Welsh Local Government Association continued to lobby Welsh Government on that point
- Councillor Mark Young made reference to the recent Welsh Government announcement of £15m earmarked for teachers professional development and Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts confirmed he had raised the issue with Education Secretary Kirsty Williams and his view that, given that losing teaching posts was a real possibility, local authorities should be permitted to distribute

education funding based on need which would prove more beneficial for schools rather than spend being specifically earmarked. The Education Secretary had responded that teacher unions were happy with the allocation for training

- in response to questions regarding the maintenance contract for the Pont y Ddraig bridge issues were clarified around the service and repair costs and it was explained that a renegotiation of the maintenance contract was required in order to anticipate future costs and a lifetime repair cost. The additional cost had already been factored into existing estimates.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet note the budgets set for 2018/19 and progress against the agreed budget strategy.

## **7 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Cabinet Forward Work Programme was presented for consideration.

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

## **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12, 13 and 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

## **8 GRANT AWARD FOR THE ACQUISITION OF PROPERTIES ON WEST PARADE AND SUSSEX STREET IN RHYL**

Councillors Hugh Evans and Julian Thompson-Hill presented the confidential joint report seeking Cabinet approval to accept an offer of grant funding from Welsh Government for the acquisition of properties on West Parade and Sussex Street in Rhyl.

Cabinet had approved the purchase of the buildings in April 2018 subject to the acquisition costs being externally funded and there being no associated revenue costs to the Council. Welsh Government had now confirmed an initial grant funding offer of £2.5m to allow the Council to progress with the purchases and an in principle commitment of an additional £2.5m to assist with redevelopment of the sites. The Leader highlighted the proposed redevelopment of the site as a key project to contribute to the ongoing regeneration of Rhyl, bringing partially derelict properties back into productive use, providing job opportunities and business growth, and stimulating further private sector investment in the town. Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill highlighted the differences to the original proposition considered by Cabinet in April 2018 and reasoning behind the intention to acquire all the property in one lot as opposed to the previous approach of two lots. He also elaborated on the detail of the grant funding offer and financial implications together with risks arising from the proposal.

Cabinet noted that the proposal had the support of Rhyl Member Area Group and the Asset Management Group, and the Strategic Investment Group had also

recommended approval to proceed with the proposal. The merits of the proposal from a regeneration perspective was also acknowledged. During a detailed debate the Lead Members and officers responded to further questions regarding the identified risks, the impact on financial resources, the availability of grant funding and legal agreements/action required to proceed. Having taken into account the benefits of the proposal and recognising the risks in order to proceed it was –

***RESOLVED*** that Cabinet –

- (a) *approves the acceptance of an offer of grant funding from Welsh Government for the acquisition of properties on West Parade and Sussex Street in Rhyl comprising the former Savoy Hotel and the Queen's Market, Theatre and Hotel conditional upon the proposed acquisition including any associated preliminary revenue costs being externally funded, and*
- (b) *confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 2 to the report) as part of its consideration.*

The meeting concluded at 11.22 hrs.