

## **CABINET**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin and by video conference on Tuesday, 24 September 2024 at 10.00 am.

### **PRESENT**

Councillors Jason McLellan, Leader and Lead Member for Economic Growth and Tackling Deprivation; Gwyneth Ellis, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets; Elen Heaton, Lead Member for Health and Social Care; Alan James, Lead Member for Local Development and Planning; Julie Matthews, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities; Barry Mellor, Lead Member for the Environment and Transport; Rhys Thomas, Lead Member for Housing and Communities, and Emrys Wynne, Lead Member for Welsh Language, Culture and Heritage

**Observers:** Councillors Michelle Blakeley-Walker, Joan Butterfield, Justine Evans, Bobby Feeley, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Brian Jones, and Cheryl Williams

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Chief Executive (GB); Corporate Directors: Social Services and Education (NS), Governance and Business/Monitoring Officer (GW), and Environment and Economy TW; Heads of Service: Finance and Audit (LT) and Corporate Support Services: Performance, Digital and Assets (HVE); Climate Change Manager (JH), and Committee Administrators (KEJ & NPH [Webcaster])

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

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

No declarations of interest had been made.

#### **3 URGENT MATTERS**

No urgent matters had been raised.

#### **4 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 30 July 2024 were submitted.

**Matters Arising** – Page 9: Item 7 UK Government Levelling Up Funding Award (Round 3) – Vale of Clwyd Constituency – in response to a question from Councillor Brian Jones, the Leader advised that an announcement would be made in October as part of the UK Government's Spending Review in relation to funding and timelines.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2024 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

## 5 DENBIGHSHIRE'S LOCAL AREA ENERGY PLAN

Councillor Barry Mellor presented the report seeking Cabinet's endorsement of the Denbighshire Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) Main Report and Technical Report. The LAEP had been developed as part of a Welsh Government Project.

The LAEP was a data driven, whole energy system setting out a route for the local area towards meeting net zero targets as part of a coordinated approach. Ambition North Wales were managing a contract with consultants developing the LAEP for Denbighshire and other North Wales counties and the plans would fall under the ownership of each local authority in Wales. All LAEPs would be aggregated to inform the development of the National Energy Plan. The LAEP had been reviewed by the Greener Denbighshire Board, the Cross-Party Political Working Group (Climate Change and Ecological Emergency), Strategic Planning Group and Communities Scrutiny Committee and the report included that feedback. Next steps included a Members Briefing on the LAEP, the development of a delivery/monitoring mechanism to progress LAEP actions, and a review of the Plan in approximately five years' time.

Cabinet was advised that the LAEP included high-level indicative costs with actions assigned to many organisations. The actions assigned to the Council aligned with Climate and Nature Strategy and were subject to securing and maintaining necessary funding. Delivery of the actions would be for a wide range of stakeholders and subject to sufficient political and financial support.

The Head of Corporate Support Services: Performance, Digital and Assets and the Climate Change Manager were also in attendance for this item.

Cabinet considered the comprehensive report acknowledging the importance of the LAEP and collaborative approach in delivering on the ambitions for net zero targets.

Main areas of debate focused on the following –

- whilst there was one Wellbeing Impact Assessment (WBIA) covering the whole plan it was a high level assessment focused on broad areas whereas individual projects would likely require a further WBIA and suitability sized or specific feasibility study to identify what needed to be done and the impacts
- questions were raised regarding the uptake of particular energy systems in private properties, such as rooftop solar panels, etc. and assurances sought that they were accurately captured to be included in future reports. Officers confirmed that, as part of the process, the Carbon Trust had used open source data to ensure insulation in private properties was included as part of the baseline of the report. However, the report had highlighted the need for a level of monitoring and oversight of those energy systems and as a North Wales region further work was intended to explore tracking with the Welsh Government through Ambition North Wales to inform that work and engagement with private home developers and private homeowners. The need to have mechanisms in place to allow all people the opportunity to contribute was highlighted
- the fast pace of change was acknowledged and given the number of different factors and variables feeding into the LAEP the data that informed it would quickly

change. The intention was to review and update the LAEP in approximately five years' time as the 2030 target date for net carbon zero approached but there would also be annual monitoring and links with regional energy strategies and national policies which would be carried out much earlier and more frequently

- much work had been planned in terms of both offshore and onshore windfarms and further work would be carried out to increase capacity of the grid to capture the extra electricity generated as a result. The difficulty moving forward in terms of storage of renewable energy was discussed and the need for more innovative approaches in that regard to be at the forefront of such developments. The potential around land take for some of those technologies had been discussed and the LAEP provided an evidence base for pathways in the region towards an energy safe future and a means for energy companies to inform their own investment plans and grid upgrades together with local area energy systems
- the need to join energy generators to energy users across sectors and the region and Wales was highlighted together with the potential for the dual use of land for solar energy production and agriculture and how that could be managed for the best outcomes
- in terms of the next steps attention was drawn to the summary of deployment of critical energy components across Denbighshire and the importance of tracking those changes and inward investment into Denbighshire and the region.

Councillor Rhys Thomas hoped that the document would enable the use of the resources in Wales in such a way as to be at the cutting edge of energy production and energy storage. The Leader added that the joined up approach would aid delivery of the LAEP in working towards meeting net zero targets.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet –

- endorses the Denbighshire Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) Main Report and Technical Report (Appendix 1 and 2 to the report), understanding that the LAEP actions assigned to Denbighshire County Council were subject to securing and maintaining necessary funding, and*
- confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Wellbeing Impact Assessment (Appendix 3 to the report) as part of its consideration.*

## **6 FINANCE REPORT**

Councillor Gwyneth Ellis presented the monthly report detailing the latest financial position and progress against the agreed budget strategy.

A summary of the Council's financial position was provided as follows –

- the net revenue budget for 2024/25 was £271.021m (£250.793m in 2023/24)
- an overspend of £240k was forecast for service and corporate budgets
- current risks and assumptions relating to corporate budgets and service areas
- savings and efficiencies for the 2024/25 budget (£10.384m)
- an update on Schools, Housing Revenue Account and Treasury Management.

Councillor Gwyneth Ellis proposed an amendment to the report recommendation to include Cabinet's approval of the intended use of the one-off receipt from the Council's share of the refinancing of the North Wales Residual Waste Treatment Partnership to off-set the additional costs in the Waste Service as outlined in paragraph 6.2 of the report, seconded by Councillor Julie Matthews.

The Head of Finance and Audit guided members through the detail of the report. There was a forecasted overspend of £240k at this early stage in the financial year compared with no underspend when last reported in July. The main areas of overspend were in Education and Children's Services and Highways and Environmental Services and to a lesser extent Adult, Social Care and Homelessness which were being offset by underspending on corporate budgets for items including pay and energy which initially occurred late in the financial year 2023/34 and were forecast to recur in 2024/25. It was stressed that much could change in some of the higher risk areas in the next few months, particularly changes to residential placements in Children's Services, numbers of homelessness, commissioned care in Adult Social Care and School Transport. The Housing Revenue Account had reported a slight underspend in year with a forecasted balance to just under £1.3m. A forecasted fall in school balances had been reported and work was ongoing with schools to try and reduce the expense of some of the use of balances forecasted.

The Lead Member and officers responded to questions raised regarding the one-off receipt which the Council had received from its share of the refinancing of the North Wales Residual Waste Treatment Partnership (NWRWTP). It was explained that the risks associated with the NWRWTP had diminished since it was set up and as the project progressed from the developmental phase to the operational phase. The refinancing of the NWRWTP at that later stage given the lesser risk and way they were financed on capital markets had resulted in all five local authorities involved receiving a gainshare. Work in that regard had been ongoing for some time but given the technical nature of the work required the funds had only been received in the last two weeks. As it was a one-off receipt it was for Cabinet to decide on its use. In terms of additional funding required for the Waste Service going forward, the matter would be further debated at Council Workshop on 26 September, a special Cabinet on 1 October, and Communities Scrutiny Committee on 24 October thereby providing opportunities to consider and discuss the detail around service provision and additional resources required.

Having considered the report and amendment to the recommendation it was –

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet –

- (a) *note the budgets set for 2024/25 and progress against the agreed strategy, and*
- (b) *confirms that the gainshare of £1.2m received from the refinancing of the North Wales Residual Waste Treatment Partnership as set out in paragraph 6.2 of the report be treated as income for the Waste Service and used to offset additional costs.*

The Cabinet forward work programme was presented for consideration and members noted the following additions –

- Draft Management Response to Panel Performance Assessment – November
- North Wales Domiciliary Care Agreement – January

It was also noted that the item on the Corporate Joint Committee Governance Arrangements scheduled for October may be delayed pending receipt of the report detail from Gwynedd County Council as lead authority for dissemination to all local authorities in North Wales.

***RESOLVED*** that *Cabinet's forward work programme be noted.*

The meeting concluded at 10.50 am.