

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin on Tuesday, 22 May 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 Meirick Davies, Mabon Ap Gwynfor, Huw Jones, Arwel Roberts, Rhys Thomas and Emrys Wynne

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (JG); Corporate Director: Economy and Public Realm (GB); Heads of Service: Legal, HR and Democratic Services (GW), Education and Children's Services (KE) and Finance/S.151 Officer (RW); Economic and Business Development Team and Programme Manager (MH); Project Manager (KW); Principal Manager – Modernising Education (GD); Legal and Procurement Operations Manager (HM); Procurement Business Partner (MW) and Committee Administrator (KEJ)

1 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The following members declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 – Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020 –

Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts – Governor/Parent of child in Denbighshire school
Councillor Brian Jones – Parent of child in Denbighshire school
Councillor Tony Thomas – Parent of child in Denbighshire school

3 URGENT MATTERS

No urgent matters had been raised.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 24 April 2018 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

5 NORTH WALES REGIONAL REGENERATION PLAN AND WELSH GOVERNMENT TARGETED REGENERATION INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

Councillor Hugh Evans introduced the report and presented the North Wales Regional Regeneration Plan 2018 – 2035 (RRP) and proposals for Targeted Regeneration Investment (TRI) for approval to submission to Welsh Government.

The TRI programme had been launched by Welsh Government to provide funding for regeneration projects over three years with £22m allocated to North Wales. A collaborative approach was necessary as funding was conditional upon submission of a prioritised RRP agreed by all six North Wales councils. In line with funding requirements twelve areas across the region had been proposed as priority areas based on deprivation rankings which included Rhyl and Denbigh, with four priority areas (including Rhyl) identified for the initial three year funding period. The reasoning behind the focus on Rhyl as a priority area was explained given the funding criteria set by Welsh Government and Rhyl's ranking as the most deprived town in North Wales, and given the Council's investment and commitment to the regeneration of Rhyl it was appropriate that potential funding avenues be used to help deliver that aim. The report acknowledged both poverty associated with larger urban settlements and the need to address poverty and regeneration in small towns and rural areas which it was hoped would be realised during the course of the Plan.

Cabinet welcomed the funding allocation for the regeneration of areas within the region but recognised the constraints for accessing that funding given the criteria set by Welsh Government in terms of the methodology for prioritising regeneration areas and the need for a regional approach leading to consensus across all six North Wales councils which required a degree of negotiation and compromise on all parts. Cabinet also noted that the criteria and thematic approach of the RRP was broadly aligned with other corporate priorities and highlighted the need for Denbighshire to maximise opportunities from regional working in that regard.

In response to questions the Lead Member and officers advised that –

- the RRP had been approved by three councils and would likely be approved by the remaining councils given that the funding would otherwise be lost
- in terms of monitoring baseline figures had been identified for different regeneration areas to measure progress and outcomes at a programme level and individual projects emerging from the Plan would have their own targets subject to scrutiny by Welsh Government prior to funding being allocated
- there were further opportunities outside of the Plan to support other priorities and tap into a wide range of different Welsh Government initiatives and work was being undertaken to guide those other sources of support and investment over the long term
- there had been positive engagement at officer level with agreement and commitment to key issues across the region – having worked collectively to agree priorities the RRP was considered a good and reasonable compromise

- Rhyl had been ranked first in order of deprivation and had been identified for targeted investment in the first three years, however some funding may also be attracted to Denbigh in the short term across the thematic proposals of housing and key buildings and in the longer term Denbigh was well positioned to benefit given that it was ranked tenth in terms of deprivation
- there was also an issue around smaller communities and rural poverty identified in the Plan and work was ongoing as to how best to address and prioritise those needs in the future whilst also complying with Welsh Government criteria
- the TRI programme required match funding for projects of 30% which could come from a range of sources including officer time, public and private sector sources, and through the usual council processes.

During further debate the background and rationale behind the Council's priority for the regeneration of Rhyl was discussed. Whilst it was disappointing to note Rhyl's position in the deprivation rankings the significant investment in the waterfront and infrastructure projects was highlighted together with the next stage to focus on the wider issues and outcomes for local people, improving health, employment and life opportunities. Officers also elaborated upon other regeneration work and plans for the town centre and referenced work within the wider Rhyl Regeneration Programme. Whilst criteria for the RRP funding stream was capital based around delivering specific economic and housing outputs, projects emerging through the TRI programme would link to other elements of regeneration, including addressing barriers to employment and community benefits to create work opportunities.

RESOLVED that Cabinet –

(a) approves –

- *submission of the final North Wales Regional Regeneration Plan (and broad priorities contained within it) to Welsh Government in order to access Targeted Regeneration Investment funds*
- *the outline projects proposed for submission by the Council to the Targeted Regeneration Investment*
- *delegated authority for the Corporate Director, Economy and Public Realm in consultation with the Lead Member for the Economy and Corporate Governance, Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services and Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) to –*
 - *make any project funding applications necessary to secure resources from the Targeted Regeneration Investment programme for the period of its operation*
 - *accept and undertaken expenditure on projects accessing Targeted Regeneration Investment programme support, including award of grants to third parties*
 - *negotiate and enter into agreements with other North Wales councils where this is necessary to bid for or receive Targeted Regeneration Investment programme funds*

(b) *notes that there will be an annual review of the Regional Regeneration Plan in line with governance and monitoring arrangements (set out in Appendix 1*

to the report) offering opportunity for changes in strategy and direction that may focus resources on other towns/areas)

- (c) *confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 4 to the report) as part of its consideration.*

6 WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 - 2020

Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts introduced the report and presented the Council's proposed Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017 – 2020 for approval (the draft WESP had been approved by Welsh Government in March 2018).

The Plan demonstrated how the Council aimed to meet Welsh Government targets by developing Welsh Medium education in the county and focused on improving skills, particularly oral communication and understanding. The long term aim was for all children and young people in the county to leave full-time education competent and confident in using both Welsh and English languages.

Councillor Hilditch-Roberts referred to the Council's proven track record of developing services through the medium of Welsh and investment in Welsh Medium education and the Council's approach had been praised by Estyn during the recent inspection of education services. The Plan would be delivered in partnership with key stakeholders including schools, Urdd, Mudiad Meithrin and Menter Iaith and the Welsh Government had made various funding streams available to help meet targets including £30m capital funding and £2m workforce development grants against which bids could be made. The Head of Education and Children's Services highlighted the comprehensive consultation process in setting the objectives and the role of the Welsh in Education Strategic Group in the Plan's development and monitoring its delivery. Key elements focused on (1) quality and standards of Welsh taught through schools' curriculum, improving outcomes for learners and the level of proficiency across all schools, and (2) ensuring sufficiency of places in Welsh Medium education. The Head of Service commended the Plan and the hard work in its development.

Cabinet welcomed the Plan as a means of further developing Welsh Medium education in the county and contributing to the national target of achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Tribute was also paid to those involved in developing the Plan with specific mention to the Welsh in Education Strategic Group. Councillors Arwel Roberts and Emrys Wynne, who were members of the Welsh in Education Strategic Group, added their support to the Plan and commended the work with partners and the good work and success which had already been achieved in the county which had also been recognised in the recent Estyn inspection report.

During the ensuing debate –

- further detail was sought regarding the financial implications of delivering the Plan and officers provided a breakdown of funding streams made available by the Welsh Government and how that funding could be used to meet outcomes, including funding for workforce planning and continual professional development

- assurances were also provided that the council and its partners were continually working to capitalise on any external funding streams from other sources open to them in order to meet the aims and objectives within the Plan
- the good work and success achieved in Denbighshire was highlighted with a renewed focus on further improvements within existing resources and capitalising on available external funding sources to focus on specific outcomes
- the need for balance to ensure the right provision for learners taking into account parental choice and providing opportunities to learn the Welsh language was acknowledged and officers reported upon the comprehensive work undertaken in the county in terms of predicting demand for school places which had identified an increase in demand for Welsh Medium places
- reference was made to the benefits of a bilingual education, particularly in terms of future employment opportunities where proficiency in the Welsh language was important, and the challenge to demonstrate the benefits of a bilingual education to non-Welsh speaking families so that informed choices could be made for learners from an early age
- it was confirmed that Welsh language was at the centre of the Futures Curriculum focusing on high quality learning for pupils and the new leadership and teaching standards also focused on the importance of developing the Welsh language and culture within the profession and in schools
- reported upon the excellent relationship with partners who were fundamental to the Plan's success and promoting the benefits of a bilingual education within schools and communities
- tribute was paid to the work of Athrawon Bro, testament to which was the Welsh Language Charter silver award mark which had been achieved by all Welsh Medium schools in the county, and work was progressing to continue that success in English Medium schools and support the work of the Plan
- officers advised that the Plan would be monitored by the Welsh in Education Strategic Group and would include milestones in terms of monitoring objectives to determine progress of schools and there was an expectation for schools to include how they had responded to outcomes in the Plan in their annual reports
- the majority of grants for training and workforce development would be through GwE and there would be a regional training offer and package building on previous successes including the sabbatical programme; it was also important to offer a more bespoke training programme to meet the needs of teachers
- officers reported upon the Council's strong record of maintaining transition from English medium settings to Welsh medium education and elaborated upon the different pathways including both immersion and peripatetic but highlighted that the offer was dependent on the needs of the child and work was ongoing to develop a more flexible, robust and sustained offer to build on that success
- in terms of evaluating Welsh Medium provision and identifying any gaps regular surveys were carried out to ensure a level of competency and to identify deficits to effectively target professional development of skills
- officers acknowledged specific concerns raised by Councillor Mabon Ap Gwynfor regarding the strength of the Welsh medium offer in Ysgol Dinas Bran and loss of pupils from Welsh medium education in the Dee Valley area together with the impact of the school transport policy given the close proximity to the border with Gwynedd and confirmed the intention to consider the Llangollen area as part of the Band B 21st Century Schools Programme and look to

address the issues raised as part of that review. The complexity of the issue spanning a number of policies and procedures was highlighted

- the importance of developing skills at an early stage to enhance progression was recognised together with ensuring no pupils were lost from continuing a Welsh Medium education following transition from primary to secondary school whilst at the same time highlighting opportunities for those from English Medium settings transferring to Welsh Medium schools either as latecomers or when transitioning from primary to secondary school – in order to promote the Welsh offer the Communications Team was developing a marketing strategy, which included the use of social media, to ensure parents were fully aware of the benefits of a bilingual education when choosing a school for their children
- Councillor Bobby Feeley was pleased to highlight that the number of Welsh speakers in Denbighshire had risen from 24.6% in the population census of 2011 to 36.7% in the annual population survey in 2017.

RESOLVED that Cabinet –

- approve the proposed Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020 that had been approved by Welsh Government in March 2018, and*
- confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report) as part of its consideration.*

At this point (11.45 a.m.) the meeting adjourned for a refreshment break.

7 FINANCE REPORT

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill presented the report detailing the latest financial position and service budgets for 2018/19 together with the Budget Summary Book 2018/19. 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)
- 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
- there were no variances to report at this stage in the financial year but a number of service pressures had been highlighted which required careful monitoring
- provided a general update on the Capital Plan, Housing Revenue Account and Housing Capital Plan.

Cabinet was also asked to approve the use of a one-off Highways Refurbishment Capital Grant from Welsh Government for priority schemes as recommended by the Strategic Investment Group and outlined within the report.

The following matters were raised during debate –

- the ongoing pressures on social care were discussed and officers reported upon work to model future needs advising that data trends had concluded a cost increase through the sector and an increase in complexity of some cases.

There was a need to focus on the immediate impact over the next few years to inform the Medium Term Financial Plan and the pressure was subject to annual review to inform the forthcoming year's budget submissions. The importance of leisure services was also highlighted as a key element in terms of building resilience and well-being with the effect of reducing demand on other services

- the Leader welcomed the additional grant funding for highways from Welsh Government but highlighted the difficulties in managing one-off allocations at short notice and hoped any additional provision in future years would be allocated at an earlier stage, such as through the RSG settlement, in order to better aid financial planning. He added that the merits of a three year budget instead of a one-off annual budget settlement for local authorities had been discussed by the Welsh Local Government Association
- Councillor Brian Jones advised that Welsh Government officials would be attending a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee on 7 June to discuss highway funding and he would raise the point about the need for timely funding allocations in order to plan effectively for highway works.

RESOLVED that Cabinet –

- (a) *note the budgets set for 201/19 and progress against the agreed budget strategy, and*
- (b) *approve the use of a £1.2m one off Welsh Government capital grant on the priority highways schemes as outlined in the report and included in the Business Case (as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report).*

8 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Forward Work Programme was presented for consideration and it was noted that the following items would be added to the work programme for June –

- Regional Growth Bid
- Establishment of a Voids Maintenance Framework

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 Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

9 MANAGED SERVICE FOR THE PROVISION OF AGENCY WORKERS

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill presented the confidential report seeking approval to award the contract for the supply of temporary agency staff to the named supplier as detailed within the report.

Cabinet had received a report in December 2017 regarding the procurement exercise and resolved to ask the appropriate scrutiny committee to scrutinise that process together with alternative options open to the Council based on best value. The findings and recommendations of the Performance Scrutiny Committee in that regard had been detailed within the report together with details of the tender evaluation procedure and the outcome and recommendation for award. Councillor Huw Jones, Chair of Performance Scrutiny Committee confirmed he was satisfied with the recommendations to Cabinet going forward.

RESOLVED that Cabinet –

- (a) *appoints the named provider as detailed in the report as the supplier of temporary agency staff using the MSTAR framework agreement, and*
- (b) *authorises the Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services to finalise and enter into an appropriate form of contract with the named provider.*

The meeting concluded at 12.30 p.m.