

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held by video conference on Tuesday, 27 July 2021 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's Services and Public Engagement; Brian Jones, Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment; Tony Thomas, Lead Member for Housing and Communities; Julian Thompson-Hill, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets, and Mark Young, Lead Member for Planning, Public Protection and Safer Communities

Observers: Councillors Meirick Davies, Melvyn Mile and Graham Timms

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Communities (NS); Heads of Service: Legal, HR and Democratic Services (GW), Finance and Property (SG), and Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services (EJ); Traffic, Parking and Road Safety Manager (MJ) and Committee Administrators (KEJ & SLW [Webcaster])

1 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Melvyn Mile declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Llangollen 2020 Castle Street Improvement Scheme because he was a member of Llangollen Town Council.

3 URGENT MATTERS

Proposed Redevelopment of the former Prestatyn Library Site – approval to commence the tender process

This matter would be considered as part of the Finance Report (agenda item 6).

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 29 June 2021 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2021 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

5 LLANGOLLEN 2020 CASTLE STREET IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

Councillor Brian Jones presented the report seeking Cabinet approval to proceed with the implementation of the Llangollen 2020 Castle Street Improvement Project. Given the estimated project cost of £1.75m and the significant community interest in the scheme a decision was sought from Cabinet to approve its implementation.

Councillor Jones advised that he had walked the route of the scheme with officers and residents and had been pleased to note the positive response to the proposed improvements and substantial investment in the area. The comprehensive public engagement exercise and response to feedback clearly demonstrated residents and businesses had been listened to and the Council had worked with them to address issues and areas of concern which had resulted in changes to the scheme, and there was scope to make further amendments in that regard as appropriate. In commending the project Councillor Jones advised that the local MP and MS were also supportive of the project and he urged Cabinet to approve its implementation.

The Traffic, Parking and Road Safety Manager (TPRSM) delivered a presentation on the detail of the scheme which, in brief, included reference to the following –

- the work of the Llangollen 2020 Group in initiating a project to consider traffic, parking, pedestrian safety and public realm issues in the town centre
- funding secured from Cadwyn Clwyd and Llangollen Town Council to undertake a feasibility study seeking people's views through various engagement exercises and media platforms which identified a number of concerns
- highlighted the existing issues of concern including traffic and parking-related congestion, pavements being too narrow, difficulties for pedestrians crossing Castle Street and poor condition of the public realm
- detailed design proposals had been developed based on the feasibility study's findings to create a more pedestrian friendly environment with less on street parking and provision of loading bays for businesses; artist impressions to illustrate how the proposed changes would look had also been provided
- the estimated total project cost was £1.75m which included a Council contribution of £780k and Welsh Government grant funding totalling £970k
- a comprehensive public engagement exercise had been carried out on the design proposals and an overview of people's views on the project was provided – overall 64% considered the scheme was generally a good idea and 36% considered the scheme was generally not a good idea
- the public engagement feedback had resulted in some proposed design changes for further improvement and to allay concerns raised. Main issues raised were elaborated upon with an explanation of the subsequent changes proposed and reasoning why other issues had not resulted in proposed changes
- the project was phase 1 and should Cabinet approve its implementation there were other important phases which would need to follow such as parking management around the town, active travel routes, directional signage and the introduction of an environmental weight restriction
- the next steps, should Cabinet approve the scheme, had been highlighted with construction starting in September 2021 for completion in March 2022.

The Head of Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services referred to the extensive engagement and consultation process as invaluable with significant involvement from the community, local members, town council and businesses and significant changes had been made to the design proposals as a result.

The Leader invited the two local members to speak on the project.

Councillor Melvyn Mile highlighted the outcome of the consultation process with approximately two thirds to one third generally in favour of the scheme and subsequent amendments made in response to feedback. He was fully supportive of the scheme, as was Llangollen Town Council of which he was also a member and who had contributed financially to the initial scoping study. Councillor Mile was enthusiastic about the significant investment in the town to secure improvements and thanked officers for all their hard work in that regard and in finding solutions and compromises to the issues and concerns raised. He urged Cabinet to approve implementation of the scheme without delay.

Councillor Graham Timms (who also chaired the Llangollen 2020 Group) provided some background to the establishment of the Group which was a locally led initiative to tackle the problems identified in the town and ensure it was fit for modern day demands. There had been an emphasis on encouraging everyone to get involved to search for solutions and agree a way forward. The consultations had identified areas of broad agreement which had been included in the final scheme whilst also recognising the conflicting needs of specific groups, with the Council having responded to the concerns of all participants in those consultations. Approval of the scheme would result in the largest investment in Llangollen for generations and demonstrated how an active community scheme, funded by the Council and Welsh Government grants, could help solve problems and create a better place to live and work. The report recognised that not all of the problems would be entirely solved by the scheme and there was a need to continue to work with the community to find solutions to parking as the next priority. In urging Cabinet to approve the scheme, Councillor Timms thanked officers for their involvement, Councillor Brian Jones (Lead Member), and the Llangollen 2020 Group with specific mention to Robyn Lovelock who had been instrumental in driving the project.

Cabinet considered the merits of the scheme and there was unanimous support for the significant investment in Llangollen to secure improvements in the town. Cabinet was also pleased to note the comprehensive and wide ranging engagement process and level of response to the consultations. It was accepted that not all were in favour of the scheme but it was noted that a response had been provided to all issues/concerns raised with changes made to the scheme as a result, and an explanation provided where changes could not be accommodated.

Main areas of debate focused on the following –

- Councillor Tony Thomas queried whether the proposed new loading bay on Castle Street outside the town hall could be a recessed construction and offer all day 30 minute free parking to businesses and residents. The TPRSM shared an image of the location and explained the original proposal to narrow the road and widen the pavement and proposed changes following the engagement feedback

to keep the loading bay against the existing kerb line. It may be possible for the loading bay to be further recessed but further technical investigations would be required in terms of underground services, location of the tree and its roots, land ownership issues and any impact on retail businesses. There were also pros and cons to imposing a 30 minute parking limit which would require further consideration. Councillor Brian Jones was supportive of the suggestion and Cabinet also indicated their support with the proviso that any future works would not necessitate the removal of the tree. The TPRSM agreed to undertake the necessary investigations into the merits of the suggestion for further consideration with the lead member and local members as part of the scheme

- Councillor Bobby Feeley was pleased to note the substantial investment to further improve Llangollen and overall she welcomed the scheme with the proposed amendments. She referred to emails received from people highlighting a number of issues and concerns which she noted had mostly been covered by the report and during the meeting including the loading bay in Castle Street (raised by Councillor Thomas) and safeguarding the tree, reconsidering options for Short Street, and further looking into the introduction of a weight restriction and parking provision in the next phase of the project. She referred to access improvements made associated with the health centre a few years ago and the potential for parking provision in that area which could be considered in phase 2
- Councillor Mark Young paid tribute to the hard work of those involved in bringing the scheme forward and was pleased to note the commitment to responding to each issue/concern raised and further work to be undertaken in phase 2. In response to questions from Councillor Young the TPRSM confirmed a start date for the scheme in September if approved and in terms of minimising disruption to businesses, particularly over the Christmas trading period, advised that close liaison between the successful contractor and businesses was key and it would be stipulated in the tender documentation that the successful contractor provide a Business Liaison Officer to mitigate the impact on retailers. Progress would also be monitored to ensure minimal disruption and adherence to timescales in order to meet the grant conditions for completion of the project by March 2022
- Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill noted the scheme had been in development for some considerable time and believed it would address the long standing issues in Llangollen and had the support of local members and the town council. It was to be expected that any change of this nature would not be universally popular but the presentation and report documentation had demonstrated that the Council had been prepared to adapt the proposals where possible in response to feedback and concerns and he supported implementation of the scheme
- Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts considered local members to be best placed to respond to the detail of the scheme. Based on past experience he highlighted issues relating to loading bays, visual impact and theoretic calculations for traffic movements which had not been borne out in practice (such as turning points and manoeuvring of large vehicles e.g. HGVs) which should be physically tested beforehand. The Lead Member and TPRSM accepted lessons could be learned from past experiences. Given the wealth of input and scrutiny of the proposals in this case it was considered unlikely that any major flaws would be identified at a later stage. The Council's Conservation Officer had also been involved at an early stage in the design process and the 3D visualisation provided a good representation as to what the scheme would look like if implemented.

Councillor Meirick Davies voiced his support for the scheme. He queried whether reference to LIC (Llywodraeth Cymru) in the Welsh report should be changed to Senedd. The Leader agreed to look to amend that reference where appropriate.

The Leader thanked the local members for their vision and leadership in this scheme and for the work of the lead member and officers in that regard. It was accepted that where such changes were suggested there would inevitably be a reaction which would not always be positive but Cabinet could be assured that officers had responded to each of the points raised and provided an explanation of any issues which could not be accommodated. Cabinet could also take assurance from the extensive engagement and consultation process carried out to inform the decision making process. The Leader welcomed the substantial investment in Llangollen and benefits it would bring and was fully supportive of the scheme.

RESOLVED that Cabinet –

- (a) *approves the implementation of the Llangollen 2020 Castle Street Improvement Project, including the amendments listed in Appendix A to the report which resulted from recent public engagement feedback and agreed with the local members, and*
- (b) *confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix C to the report) as part of its consideration.*

6 FINANCE REPORT

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill presented the report detailing the latest financial position and progress against the agreed budget strategy as outlined below –

- the net revenue budget for 2021/22 was £216.818m (£208.302m in 2020/21)
- an overspend of £0.708m was forecast for service and corporate budgets
- detailed agreed savings and efficiencies worth £4.448m relating to fees and charges, operational efficiencies, changes in service provision and schools
- highlighted current risks and assumptions relating to individual service areas, corporate budgets and schools together with the impact of coronavirus and position on funding claims to the Welsh Government
- a general update on the Housing Revenue Account and Housing Capital Plan, Treasury Management and Capital Plan with an update on major projects.

Cabinet approval was also sought for an urgent matter not included in the report and further recommendation relating to the commencement of a tender process in respect of the proposed redevelopment of the former Prestatyn Library site. The urgency of the matter was explained given the timescales involved to tender for the proposed scheme with a formal contract award to be brought before Cabinet in September for consideration. The Strategic Investment Group had approved the proposal which involved demolition of the current building on the site and construction of fourteen one-bedroom apartments for social rent and two ground floor commercial units. The overall scheme had been valued at £4.3m funded from the Housing Revenue Account (£2.9m) and Welsh Government's social housing grant (£1.4m).

The Head of Finance provided a further update on Covid related claims to the Welsh Government confirming that the Quarter 1 (April – June) loss of income claim had been submitted amounting to £2m but it was expected that future claims would be much lower from July onwards given the opening up of the leisure sector etc.

Having considered the report, urgent item and additional recommendation it was –

RESOLVED that Cabinet –

- (a) *note the budgets set for 2021/22 and progress against the agreed budget strategy, and*
- (b) *approve the commencement of the tender process in respect of the proposed redevelopment of the former Prestatyn Library and the construction of fourteen one-bedroom apartments for social rent and two ground floor commercial units.*

7 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

- Denbighshire Learning Disability Community Living Schemes – September
- Prestatyn Flood Defence Scheme – December
- Central Rhyl Flood Defence Scheme – January

RESOLVED that Cabinet's forward work programme be noted.

The meeting concluded at 11.05 hrs.