

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Tuesday, 17 July 2012 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Hugh Evans, Leader and Lead Member for Economic Development; Hugh Irving, Lead Member for Customers and Communities; Huw Jones, Lead Member for Tourism, Leisure and Youth; Barbara Smith, Lead Member for Modernising and Performance; David Smith, Lead Member for Public Realm, and Eryl Williams, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Education.

Observers: Councillors Ray Bartley, Joan Butterfield, William Cowie, Richard Davies, Gwyneth Kensler and David Simmons.

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (MM); Corporate Director: Customers (HW); Head of Legal and Democratic Services (RGW); Head of Finance and Assets (PM); Head of Children and Family Services (LR); Head of Housing and Community Development (PM); Head of Communication, Marketing and Leisure (JG); Conservation Architect (PE); Strategic Regeneration Manager (MD), and Committee Administrator (KEJ).

1 APOLOGIES

Councillor Bobby Feeley, Lead Member for Social Care and Children's Services.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor David Smith declared a personal interest in the Ruthin Leisure Centre Development Proposal (Agenda Item No. 6) as he was a School Governor at Ysgol Brynhyfryd.

3 URGENT MATTERS

No urgent matters had been raised.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 19 June 2012 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

5 AGREEMENT OF A JOINT SCHEME FOR THE PROVISION OF LOCAL PRIMARY MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES

In the absence of the Lead Member for Social Care and Children's Services, Councillor Barbara Smith presented the report seeking Cabinet's approval of a joint

scheme for the provision of Local Primary Mental Health Support Services in North Wales as required under Part 1 of the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010. A regional scheme for the area of the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) had been developed by the Health Board and local authorities in North Wales and agreement to the scheme was now being sought from all partners. The Health Board was the lead agency for the scheme.

Cabinet considered the legislative changes and requirements brought about by the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010 and implications in terms of the provision of mental health support services in the area. Assurances were sought regarding future funding provision for the scheme in order to safeguard the Council's position and the likely demand on services as a result of early intervention. Mr. Wyn Thomas from BCUHB reported upon the funding allocation across local authorities and the proposed investment in staffing in order to equalise caseloads across the areas. Future demand on services was unknown at this stage but there was a commitment to review activity on an ongoing basis. The Head of Children and Family Services added that the Welsh Local Government Association would be monitoring funding arrangements and Councillor Barbara Smith advised that the scheme would be reviewed by partners on an ongoing basis.

Councillor Joan Butterfield queried whether there was any flexibility in the scheme to address social deprivation and Mr. Thomas responded that support would be provided alongside or in GP services and the workforce would be utilised dependent upon activity and demand in particular practices. Councillor Ray Bartley raised his concerns regarding the extra workload for psychiatric nurses and Mr. Thomas replied that additional staff would be recruited as part of the process.

Cabinet noted that the scheme would be reviewed regularly and Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill proposed that reference to safeguarding future funding arrangements be made within the resolution. Consequently it was –

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the Joint Scheme (as attached to the report) subject to a review if the funding assumptions change.

6 RUTHIN LEISURE CENTRE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

[Councillor David Smith declared a personal interest in this item as he was a School Governor at Ysgol Brynhyfryd.]

Councillor Huw Jones presented the report seeking Cabinet's approval of the proposals for the development of PE and leisure facilities at Ruthin Leisure Centre / Ysgol Brynhyfryd. The proposals included a new all weather pitch, reception area, changing areas, fitness suite and future potential for a running track. Councillor Jones highlighted the work undertaken by the development partner and elaborated upon affordability of the scheme. If the proposals were approved building work would likely begin in September/October and take approximately twelve weeks to complete.

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill expressed his support for the proposals advising that the Strategic Investment Group had carried out a detailed analysis of the

business case. He stressed the need to secure private sector involvement in such schemes to make them financially viable and advocated the use of development partners where appropriate.

The Head of Communication, Marketing and Leisure (H:CM&L) responded to members' questions and elaborated upon the specifics of the scheme; competition in the sector and marketing of the facilities. He confirmed that the project involved the separation of public and pupils to allow greater community use and would also enable the school to make a saving on their contribution to the facility. Councillor Joan Butterfield highlighted the lack of track facilities in the county and advocated taking up the option of a running track to meet those needs. She also sought assurances that maintenance costs had been included within the budget projections. The H:CM&L advised that a running track would be considered in the future if the scheme generated enough income to cover the cost of investment. In terms of maintenance costs, the proposals would remove much of the maintenance backlog on the site and maintenance budgets were in place. The development partner was also required to undertake some maintenance work under the framework agreement.

Having considered the suitability and merits of the scheme Cabinet were pleased to support the proposals for redevelopment to improve facilities for the school and wider community and were satisfied that the proposals had been based on reasonable assumptions. Members also noted the potential for further efficiencies if the level of demand identified in the feasibility study was met. The Leader congratulated the service on the innovative approach in providing sports and leisure facilities and members paid tribute to the work of the officers involved.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the proposals for a £1.3 million development of PE and leisure facilities at Ruthin Leisure Centre / Ysgol Brynhyfryd.

7 FORMER NORTH WALES HOSPITAL, DENBIGH - PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor David Smith presented the report updating Cabinet on progress with the site and recommended authorisation for further action. The report also included a confidential appendix on projected costs.

Councillor Smith provided some background to the current situation including progress following the Urgent Works Notice served on 6 June 2011, costs incurred to date and estimated future costs. It was noted that the creation of a Single Purpose Vehicle (in the form of a Building Preservation Trust) was essential prior to serving the Repairs Notice and Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill felt that reference to this should be included within the resolution. If the owner failed to make progress with the repairs within two months the council could begin compulsory purchase proceedings.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (H:L&DS) referred to an e-mail received the previous day sent on behalf of the property owners alleging that the council had acted unlawfully. The H:L&DS refuted the allegations and advised Cabinet that the legalities were all in order. Councillor Hugh Irving took exception

to the e-mail which threatened legal action and felt the property owners should try and reach an agreement with the local authority.

During consideration of the report members welcomed the progress now being made and paid tribute to the officers for their hard work in addressing the long running problem under difficult circumstances. In response to a question from the Leader regarding timescales the Conservation Architect (CA) indicated that was largely dependent upon the owner's reaction but the compulsory purchase proceedings and subsequent planning permission for alternative use may take up to three years. Members also discussed future plans for the site and the Leader was pleased to see a clear process to be followed. The CA advised that development of the site could follow compulsory purchase action and planning permission would be sought for alternative use by the Building Preservation Trust. In response to Councillor Ray Bartley's concerns over security of the site, the CA advised that warning notices had been erected around the building and all entry points had been boarded up. He also referred to the possibility of CCTV cameras being installed around the site.

RESOLVED that Cabinet confirms its approval to serve a Repairs Notice, set up a Single Purpose Vehicle and proceed to Compulsory Purchase action with a back to back agreement for transfer of the site to the Single Purpose Vehicle.

8 FINANCE REPORT 2012/13

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill presented the report detailing the latest financial position and progress against the agreed budget strategy, and also sought Cabinet's consideration of a recommendation from the Strategic Investment Group. He provided a summary of the Council's financial position as follows –

- the latest revenue budget forecast showed a balanced position across all services
- £1.312m of the savings agreed as part of the budget had been achieved and £2.131m were being progressed
- highlighted key variances from budgets or savings targets relating to individual services, and
- a general update on the Capital Plan and Housing Revenue Account.

Councillor Thompson-Hill also sought support for the Strategic Investment Group's recommendation (as detailed in Appendix 5 to the report) relating to a capital scheme to improve the provision of library services in Prestatyn. Councillors Huw Jones and Hugh Irving welcomed the scheme advising that they would be meeting with Prestatyn Town Council that evening with a view to allaying any concerns raised regarding the proposals. The Head of Communication, Marketing and Leisure clarified that any objections on planning grounds would need to be considered by Planning Committee but would not affect the project timescales.

Councillor David Smith noted the significant differences in interest rates for borrowing and investment. The Head of Finance and Assets explained that most of the council's debt had been borrowed by predecessor authorities when interest

rates were extremely high. The council currently had to investment on a short term basis.

Councillor Gwyneth Kensler queried the £50k pressure on Rhyl Regeneration and the increased costs associated with the Rhyl in Bloom project. She also referred to the dissatisfaction in Conwy over the School Transport budget and asked whether this council could confirm the robustness of its own budget for School Transport. The Leader reported upon additional work undertaken in the Rhyl Going Forward Plan advising that the lack of resources and capacity would be examined. The Head of Housing and Community Development agreed to provide some costing for Councillor Kensler on the Rhyl in Bloom project. Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill reported that no issues of concern had been raised regarding Denbighshire's School Transport budget.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *the budgets and savings targets for the year and progress against the agreed budget strategy be noted, and*
- (b) *the capital project to improve library services in Prestatyn as detailed in Appendix 5 to the report be approved.*

9 ECONOMIC AMBITION STRATEGY FOR NORTH WALES

Councillor Hugh Evans presented a report seeking Cabinet's approval of the principles of the Economic Ambition Strategy for North Wales and the establishment of an Economic Ambition Board to coordinate and oversee delivery of the strategy. The Strategy Document and Draft Constitution of the Board had been attached to the report at Appendix A and B respectively.

Councillor Evans highlighted the economic indicators which showed that the North Wales economy had low productivity; low levels of new firm formation; high levels of youth unemployment and lack of inward investment in comparison to other parts of Wales and the UK. In order to address those issues a Strategy had been developed involving joint working between the region's six local authorities. The Council could pursue its own priorities for economic development but also work collaboratively where it was advantageous to do so. It was proposed that delivery of the Strategy be undertaken by the creation of an Economic Ambition Board for North Wales.

The Strategic Regeneration Manager advised that the same report would be issued to the other local authorities in the region. Partnerships Scrutiny Committee had fully endorsed the approach and made a number of comments which were fully in line with the action being undertaken. The Head of Housing and Community Development added that the regional collaborative approach would enable North Wales local authorities to benefit collectively from outside providers. The approach had worked in other areas where real economic benefits had been realised.

RESOLVED that Cabinet –

- (a) *approve the principles of the Economic Ambition – A Strategy for Change document as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, and*
- (b) *approve the formation of the Economic Ambition Board and the draft constitution as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.*

10 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Hugh Evans presented the Cabinet Forward Work Programme for consideration advising that the two scheduled meetings in September would likely be required in view of the volume of business to be transacted.

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill asked that items in the work programme be allocated to specific Lead Members now that Cabinet Members and portfolios had been confirmed. The Corporate Director: Customers advised of a possible delay (from September to October) in producing the following reports –

- Ruthin Schools Review
- Review of Faith Based Education Provision

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 items of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

11 MELIDEN REEMA'S REPORT

Councillor Hugh Irving presented the confidential report seeking Cabinet's consideration of the preferred investment option for the REEMA properties in Meliden. He explained that a consultation exercise and options appraisal had been undertaken in order to determine an agreed way forward. Details of the options considered had been provided.

The Independent Tenant Advisor addressed Cabinet and conveyed the tenants' views on the options and future expectations. The tenants were keen for the council to make a clear decision about the future of their homes.

Members considered the future of the housing stock given the consultation feedback, financial appraisal and independent and impartial input from the consultants and independent tenant advisor. The Head of Housing and Community Development clarified particular issues in response to members' questions regarding the properties including financial implications and options in terms of refurbishment or demolition with new build. Following a full and detailed debate it was –

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *Cabinet prefers in principle the option of demolition of the existing stock and new build development of the site subject to an appropriate funding model being developed;*
- (b) *the Head of Housing and Community Development be given delegated authority to develop and implement a local lettings and decant policy;*
- (c) *a Working Group be established to include residents to develop the preferred option and funding model for the new build development;*
- (d) *the Head of Housing and Community Development be authorised to enter into discussions with the Welsh Government for provision of housing subsidy to develop new council housing on the site, and*
- (e) *once a preferred new building option and funding model have been developed the matter be brought back to Cabinet for final approval.*

12 CONTRACT 7 AWARD OF WHQS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Councillor Hugh Irving presented the confidential report seeking Cabinet approval to formally award Contract 7 of the Housing Improvement Programme following completion of the tendering process through the current framework agreement. Details of the framework agreement together with progress relating to the Housing Improvement Programme had been included within the report.

Councillor Eryl Williams sought assurances that the contract award would ensure local employment and recruitment from within the county. He felt that this directive should be included as a prerequisite in future contracts. The Head of Housing and Community Development advised that this condition would be built into a new framework agreement and work was ongoing with the contractor concerned to encourage local employment. He agreed to provide Cabinet with further detail on that issue for information.

RESOLVED that, *subject to satisfactory validation checks of the contractor's tender submission, the contract be awarded to Adever Construction Limited.*

The meeting concluded at 12 noon.