

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Tuesday, 19 March 2013 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Hugh Evans, Lead and Lead Member for Economic Development; Bobby Feeley, Lead Member for Social Care and Children's Services; 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, Julian Thompson-Hill, Lead Member for Finance and Assets, and Eryl Williams, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Education

Observers: Councillors Richard Davies, Gwyneth Kensler and Arwel Roberts

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (MM); Corporate Directors: Economic and Community Ambition (RM), Customers (HW), Modernising and Wellbeing (SE); Head of Legal and Democratic Services (RGW); Head of Finance and Assets (PM); Commissioning Officer (RA), and Committee Administrator (KEJ)

1 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor David Smith declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 6 on the Proposed Regional Emergency Planning Service.

3 URGENT MATTERS

No urgent matters had been raised.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 19 February 2013 were submitted.

Accuracy – Councillor Richard Davies advised that he had been incorrectly referred to as 'J.R. Davies' instead of 'R.J. Davies' within the minutes.

Matters Arising – Page 15 - Item No. 9 Etape Cymru Cycling Event 2013, resolution (c) – Councillor Huw Jones agreed to check that the request for local members to be regularly updated in relation to concerns raised was being progressed.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

5 YOUNG CARERS REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Councillor Bobby Feeley, Lead Member for Social Care and Children's Services presented the report seeking Cabinet approval for work to be taken forward to develop regional/sub-regional collaboration for the provision of Young Carer Services across North Wales Authorities and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

Cabinet was provided with some background history to the proposals including the statutory responsibilities in relation to Young Carers and the findings of a detailed analysis of current contracts and providers. Based on current usage and delivery significant savings and service improvements could be made if a regional contract was sought across all six North Wales authorities. Subject to political approval commitment had been confirmed from Conwy, Denbighshire and Wrexham. Should other authorities decline to be part of a regional contract it was proposed to enter into a sub-regional contact which would still deliver cost savings and benefits.

The Leader sought clarification regarding cost implications and officers advised that a regional contract would require a financial commitment of approximately £300k - £350k which would be funded from within current service budgets. It was believed savings could still be made if collaboration proceeded on a sub-regional basis but to a lesser extent. In response to a question from Councillor David Smith it was confirmed there would be scope for any authorities who declined to be part of a regional contract at this time to join in the future.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the work to be taken forward to develop regional/sub regional collaboration for the provision of Young Carers Services across North Wales Authorities and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

6 PROPOSED REGIONAL EMERGENCY PLANNING SERVICE

[Councillor David Smith declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 6 on the Proposed Regional Emergency Planning Service and left the meeting during consideration thereof.]

In the absence of Councillor David Smith, the Leader Councillor Hugh Evans presented the report recommending adoption of the final business plan to establish a Regional Emergency Planning Service and delegation of authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Lead Member to approve the transition arrangements. A summary of the current arrangements together with the final business case had been attached to the report.

The development of a business case for a single service had been commissioned by the Chief Executives of the six North Wales Local Authorities and had since been included in the Local Government Compact. The report highlighted the benefits of establishing a North Wales Regional Service based on a sub-regional structure with an officer presence in each authority to ensure local expertise and knowledge and local service continuity. Although cost savings were minimal collaboration would provide a more efficient, effective and resilient service and all

six authorities were being asked to support the recommendation to join. It was proposed that the new service became operational in October 2013.

During the ensuing debate the Leader sought assurances that the risks identified within the business case were being well managed and the ability of the service to respond to an emergency would not be detrimentally affected during the transition. In view of the diversity of the geographical area and risks associated with particular areas such as heavy industry and flooding (both coastal and inland), Councillor Eryl Williams sought assurances regarding the expertise to deal with the differing needs across the two separate hubs identified within the new structure. He also highlighted that compatibility of IT systems was integral to collaborative projects. Councillor Huw Jones referred to the different Welsh language policies across local authorities and the need for consistency with Denbighshire's policy of putting Welsh before English.

The Corporate Director Economic and Community Ambition responded as follows –

- reported upon the mitigation of the risks identified within the business case advising that the service already worked closely with other authorities across the region and the implementation phase, which was relatively short, would be overseen by an officer group. In addition the core functions were backroom services to the emergency response and therefore the ability to respond to an incident would not be affected during the transition
- the proposal was for a single regional service and Western and Eastern hubs had been identified for ease of placing staff within the new structure; there would be shared strategies and plans across the whole region to deal with the diversification presented across the six areas. There would also be a dedicated officer in Denbighshire to tailor the authority's emergency response, and
- acknowledged the importance of IT systems advising that Denbighshire and Flintshire already shared an IT system.

Cabinet also discussed governance issues and whilst noting that Partnerships Scrutiny Committee had examined the proposals in detail a need was highlighted for scrutiny during the transitional period and following implementation. The Chief Executive referred to the lack of political appetite for establishing regional scrutiny committees and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services reported upon the establishment of joint scrutiny committees by agreement as referenced within the Local Government Measure. It was noted that a briefing on the Measure had been scheduled for the next Council Briefing meeting.

RESOLVED that Cabinet –

- adopts the final business plan to establish a regional Emergency Planning Service on the basis set out in paragraph 4.12 of the report;*
- delegates authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Lead Member to approve the detailed transition arrangements to the new service and undertake all necessary tasks to establish the new service, and*

- (c) *recommends that the regional service be subject to scrutiny by the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee both during the transitional phase and following full implementation.*

7 FINANCE REPORT

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

- an under spend of £1.1m was forecast across service and corporate budgets with the forecast for schools being a positive movement on balances of £306k on delegated budgets and £161k on non-delegated budgets
- £3.418m (99.3%) of agreed savings had been achieved or replaced with £25k (0.7%) being deferred to next year
- highlighted key variances from budgets or savings targets and details of individual service budgets, and
- provided a general update on the Capital Plan and Housing Revenue Account.

Cabinet took the opportunity to raise questions with Councillor Thompson-Hill and the officers who responded as follows –

- clarified the immediate response costs associated with the flooding event in November together with on-going and future costs in terms of social services support, housing and council tax exemptions
- elaborated upon the underspend in the Highways and Infrastructure Service and plans to fund a temporary post to facilitate the transfer of the harbour management function and that of coastal assets facilities to Communications, Marketing and Leisure Services
- provided an update on the workforce efficiencies ballot advising that union members had rejected proposals but the turnout had been very low. Unions would be reporting back on their position following discussions with their members on the ballot outcome, and
- Councillor David Smith reported upon progress with the Fleet Review in Highways and Environment Services advising that the money set aside may not be required.

The Leader congratulated Heads of Services for effectively managing a challenging budget leading to underspends within services. Councillor Eryl Williams advised that School Improvement Officers Tony Jones, Ann Jones and Eirwen Vogler would be leaving the authority at the end of March and he conveyed his appreciation for their hard work and dedication to the Education Service.

RESOLVED *that the budget and savings targets for the year and progress against the agreed budget strategy be noted.*

8 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT GROUP

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill presented the report seeking Cabinet's support of projects identified for inclusion in the 2013/14 Capital Plan as recommended by the

Strategic Investment Group (SIG) and detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. Councillor Thompson-Hill guided members through the report and elaborated upon the available funding for capital works to be allocated to one-off projects and block allocations for on-going programmes of work together with the scoring criteria used to appraise projects. Members were advised of the work of the SIG in reviewing bids for allocations together with issues that arose during the bidding process. Finally a summary of the recommendations of the SIG was provided together with further details of the proposed allocations of capital funding.

Councillor Huw Jones noted the proposal to reduce the contingency built into the Capital Plan from £1m to £0.5m. He referred to the last meeting of the Trustees of Corwen Pavilion and queried the funding source should the Council be required to make a payment for the land in Trust. The Head of Finance and Assets advised that the matter would be assessed once a definite outcome was known and that there were contingencies in both the capital plan and general balances to deal with such circumstances.

Councillor Eryl Williams sought assurances regarding the work of the SIG and consistency of membership. Councillor Thompson-Hill advised that the SIG had no formal decision making powers and that their recommendations were required to go through the usual member process for formal decision. He confirmed that the meeting was regularly attended by its members. The Leader added that the SIG looked in great detail at capital projects and he was confident that their recommendations were sound.

RESOLVED that the projects detailed in Appendix 1 to the report for inclusion in the 2013/14 Capital Plan be supported and recommended to full Council.

9 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Hugh Evans presented the Cabinet Forward Work Programme for consideration. Councillor Eryl Williams advised of the need to await the outcome of the LDP before adoption of the Steering Group and it was agreed to defer that item to the May meeting. It was also agreed to add the regular Finance Report to the June meeting.

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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

10 CAPITAL PLAN

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill presented the confidential report updating Cabinet on the 2012/13 element of the Capital Plan and major projects and seeking Cabinet's recommendation for approval of the future Capital Plan to full Council. A

summary of the total plan and how it was financed (Appendix 1); details of the actual and planned expenditure by each Head of Service (Appendix 2), and a summary of the estimated cost of funding the Corporate Plan (Appendix 3) had been attached to the main report.

Councillor Thompson-Hill guided members through the report elaborating upon the major projects and latest progress and responded to questions as follows –

- reported upon the timescales to move Ysgol Bro Dyfrdwy to a single site and associated funding as part of the wider 21st Century Schools Programme
- referred to the latest negotiations and finalisation of legalities surrounding the relocation of Prestatyn Library and provided assurances that there would be no loss of library facilities for any substantial period during that process
- confirmed that capital receipts normally achieved at or above market valuations, and
- advised that approximately £1.9m had been recommended for schools capital maintenance works.

Councillor Eryl Williams reported upon the criteria in order to access 21st Century Schools funding and responded to a question from Councillor Arwel Roberts regarding progress with the development at Ysgol Glan Clwyd. With regard to capital works he explained the process of prioritising school improvement works in general and following schools review in order to improve standards.

RESOLVED that the latest position on the 2012/13 element of the Capital Plan and the update on major projects be noted and approval of the future Capital Plan be recommended to full Council.

The meeting concluded at 11.25 a.m.