

THE CABINET 19/07/22

Present-

Councillors: Nia Jeffreys, Craig ab Iago, Beca Brown, Berwyn Parry Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Menna Jones, Dafydd Meurig and Dilwyn Morgan.

Also present-

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services), Siân Pugh (Group Accountant - Corporate and Projects) and Annes Siôn (Democracy Team Leader).

Item 6: Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department), Gwern ap Rhisiart (Dwyfor/Meirion Area Education Officer) and Rhys Gyn (Head of the Welsh Language Immersion Education System).

Item 7-9: Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department), Dylan Griffiths (Economic Development Programmes Manager) and Esyllt Rhys (Regeneration Programme Manager).

Items 11 and 12: Gareth Jones (Assistant Head of Environment Department)

Item 13: Steffan Jones (Head of Highways and Municipal Department) and Huw Williams (Head of Gwynedd Consultancy)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Dyfrig Siencyn and Ioan Thomas.

Cabinet members and officers were welcomed to the meeting.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There were no matters arising from overview and scrutiny.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 14 AND 28 JUNE 2022

The Chair accepted the minutes of the meetings held on 14 and 28 June 2022 as a true record.

6. WELSH GOVERNMENT'S WELSH-MEDIUM EDUCATION CAPITAL GRANT PROJECTS

The report was submitted by Cllr Beca Brown

DECISION

It was agreed to proceed to submit full business cases to the Welsh Government to secure funding from the Welsh-medium Education Capital Grant scheme to deliver the purposes of the projects below:

- a) Project 1- Invest over £1.1m to increase capacity and improve the learning environment of Gwynedd Language Centres - the second phase.
- b) Project 2 - Invest over £1.5m in capital funding and £0.3m in revenue funding to increase the capacity of three schools (Llanllechid, Bro Lleu and Chwilog), in order to support Welsh communities of linguistic significance (i.e. the communities with over 70% of Welsh speakers) to thrive.

It was agreed to conduct a statutory consultation on the proposal to increase the capacity of Ysgol Chwiliog to 95, which is an increase of over 25% to the existing capacity, in accordance with the requirements of section 48 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, and report back to the Cabinet following the completion of the consultation.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that this was a request to submit two full business cases to Welsh Government. It was noted that the first was an investment to increase capacity and improve the learning environment of Gwynedd Language Centres, and the second was a capital and revenue application to increase the capacity of three schools within the county in order to support communities with over 70% of Welsh-speakers. It was explained that as the proposal was to increase the capacity of Ysgol Chwilog by over 25% a statutory consultation would need to be held in accordance with the requirements of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

It was noted that Welsh Government had invited Councils to apply for the grant in order to facilitate the growth of Welsh-medium education within Wales and to promote the use of the Welsh language within schools. It was explained in relation to the Language Centres that the investment would be made in order to increase capacity and improve the learning environment by securing strategic locations. In relation to Ysgol Maesincla, it was stated that the existing centre needed to be extended, in Dolgellau the centre needed to be relocated to Ysgol Bro Idris and in terms of Ysgol Bro Cybi, the Centre would be relocated to the

Ysgol y Cymerau site. It was emphasised that there was a lot of exciting work happening within the centres and that the plans would build on the firm foundations already in place.

It was stated that three schools had been identified to increase their capacity - Ysgol Llanllechid, Ysgol Bro Lleu and Ysgol Chwilog) and that this was because the communities had over 70% of Welsh-speakers and that there were plans in place to build more houses in those areas. It was noted that this scheme showed the commitment to Welsh-medium education and to the County's children, and reflected the Council's commitment to developing and ensuring the Welshness of the County's children.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The business cases were welcomed and the need for this investment was noted.
- Members expressed support to the schemes and it was noted that they looked forward to seeing the schemes being realised.

7. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

The report was submitted by Sioned Williams.

DECISION

To grant approval for the Council to undertake the 'lead authority' role for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for the purpose of submitting the 'Regional Investment Plan' required by the UK Government on behalf of the six north Wales counties.

To authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department - in consultation with the Head of Finance Department, the Head of Legal Services and the Chief Executive - to agree with other north Wales counties on administrative arrangements and appropriate action to protect the Council's interests.

To authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department – in consultation with the Leader, the Head of Finance and the Chief Executive – to agree on the content of the 'Regional Investment Plan'.

To authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department - in consultation with the Head of Finance Department, the Head of Legal Services department and the Chief Executive - to establish appropriate arrangements for delivering the programme in Gwynedd.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that this fund had been launched in April this year, and that the region needed to submit a joint bid, after which the funding would be allocated to every county. It was noted that the Gwynedd allocation for the period until March 2025 was £24.4 million. In order to ensure access to the allocation, it is necessary to produce a Regional Investment Plan. It was noted

that this funding came from a fund which was part of a package of fund which had been launched since leaving the European Union. A prospectus had been included which highlighted that a wide range of things would be eligible. It was emphasised that what was being discussed today was the steps that needed to be taken to draw down the money to the county.

It was noted that the department had sought to contact stakeholders across the county. It was explained that the partners were aware that this decision was to make the arrangements to draw down the money to the region and there would be an invitation for partners to propose projects in October.

It was explained that one lead body would be required in the region, and it was noted that Gwynedd had been proposed to undertake this role and submit the bid on behalf of the North. In doing so, Gwynedd would be responsible for the budget for all North Wales counties. It was stressed that discussions were continuing regarding this partnership model together with the appropriate administrative and operational arrangements.

The Monitoring Officer noted that work had commenced on the legal aspect. It was stressed that the model of the Council leading on projects was not uncommon but that work was continuing to look at a model that would work for this programme.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Pride was expressed that Gwynedd was leading on so many regional schemes.
- It was noted that this scheme was complex, and that questions arose regarding the scheme with the change in leadership within the Conservative party. It was also noted that Welsh Government had noted its objection to this scheme.
- The need for Gwynedd Council to work with the UK Government to try to get the funding to ensure the best for the residents of Gwynedd was explained.
- Attention was drawn to 3.8 of the report which noted that £4.2 million of the total had been ringfenced to support adults to improve their numeracy skills, and more details on this were requested. It was explained that the money was to implement the scheme on behalf of the Government, and that discussions were ongoing with partners on how to implement the scheme.

8. SECOND PHASE OF THE ARFOR PROGRAMME

The report was submitted by Sioned Williams.

DECISION

To approve the second phase of the Programme as outlined in the report and authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department – in consultation with the Leader, the Head of Finance and the Chief Executive – to agree on the

content of the final programme.

To agree for Gwynedd Council to lead on the second phase of the ARFOR Programme on behalf of Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire Councils in terms of managing the Welsh Government's financial agreement, realising the joint schemes within the Programme and coordinating/administrating the Programme in its entirety.

To authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department - with the Head of Finance Department and the Head of Legal Services - to review and update the governance arrangements between the four counties and to submit a further report if required.

On the basis of receiving an agreement in principle from the Welsh Government on the second phase of the Programme, to allow to proceed with the appointment of an ARFOR Regional Manager.

To authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department to establish appropriate arrangements for delivering the programme in Gwynedd.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that the scheme was an exciting one to continue to collaborate with councils in the West of Wales. It was noted that this collaboration had arisen from running the scheme over the past two years. It was explained that, two years ago, a sum of £2 million had been invested in a series of projects with the aim of collaborating with businesses to encourage employment opportunities to keep the language and families within communities.

It was explained from the pilot scheme that good work had been done and jobs created in rural communities and beyond. It was stressed that this was the basis for a new scheme which had been agreed as part of a political agreement to fund the second phase of the scheme with a sum of £11 million over a period of three years. It was explained that this would be an opportunity to build on the relationship which had been formed with other counties, to learn from schemes and to focus on the schemes that made a real difference. It was explained that a request had been made for the Council to continue as the lead body for the scheme.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the fact that Gwynedd was leading on so many schemes showed the strength of the Council's departments.

9. THE LEVELLING UP FUND

The report was submitted by Sioned Williams.

DECISION

- a) To support the intention of targeting the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund for the Bywiogi Bangor, Llewyrch o'r Llechi and Ardudwy Green Corridor projects;
- b) To authorise the Head of Finance and the Head of Economy and Community Department and the Head of Environment to agree upon the details of the bids, to sign the applications and the offer letters if successful, for the Gwynedd Levelling Up schemes;
- c) To authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department, the Head of Environment and the Head of Finance to sign the applications and the offer letters when targeting the full funding packages to deliver these schemes.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that this fund was one of the UK Government's funds that was launched in April. It was noted last year that the Council had submitted bids but that Gwynedd had been placed in priority 3 band - the lowest of all the bands. It was further explained that the allocation had changed following a case made by the Council highlighting Gwynedd's situation and that by now the Council was a priority 1 area. It was noted that this had been a trigger to review the situation and that three cases had been identified to be submitted.

The first project was the Bywiogi Bangor project which was a cluster of projects to encourage people in to the centre of Bangor. It was explained that a health hub was central to the scheme which had been tied into other schemes such as establishing a Medical School in the city centre. It was stated that the investment was approximately £40 million and that the bid was for the maximum possible of £20 million.

The second scheme was the Ardudwy Green Corridor. This scheme stemmed from the Head of Environment Department who had looked at observations received regarding the Llanbedr by-pass and had looked at how to incorporate elements of active travel into the scheme. In doing so, there was an opportunity to build on the road infrastructure scheme and to add an active travel route which was an opportunity to improve and encourage alternative methods of travel. It was explained that this bid package was approximately £40 million.

It was explained that the third scheme, Llewyrch o'r Llechi, built on the World Heritage Site designation. It was noted that there was a limit of 3 post codes for the schemes and consequently it was not possible for scheme to cover the entire slate area. But by focusing on the three areas (Llanberis, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Bethesda) it would be possible to look at other funds to realise schemes in the communities which would not be a part of this bid. It was explained that the package was approximately £27 million in order for the communities to take advantage of the site designation and develop specific and different schemes within their areas.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Astonishment was expressed that the department was bidding for such

large amounts and it was asked if the department had the capacity to run all the schemes. It was noted that applying for so many grants highlighted the good work of the department and the need to review the department's staffing was noted. The Cabinet Member and the staff were congratulated for being so prepared and for having mature schemes ready to be submitted.

- It was noted that questions had arisen in terms of this grant and some had mentioned that it would be cancelled. It was noted that the bids were currently open and that the Government had committed a some of money for this round of the grant. It was explained that the department had tried its best to submit strong bids, but that a spending period was a period of three years which put pressure on spending the money and posed a challenge in terms of recruiting for such a short period of time.

10. THE CASE FOR CHANGE: PROVISION OF NURSING PLACEMENTS AS PART OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

The report was submitted by Cllr Dilwyn Morgan

DECISION

The case for change was approved and to ask the Adults, Health and Well-being Department to present an Outline Strategic Business Case by October 2022, to create a public sector partnership development on a site/sites in Gwynedd, in partnership with the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the Cabinet Member was extremely enthusiastic about this item which was very innovative. It was noted that the Council was currently providing approximately 50% of the residential care provision to the county's residents, whilst the independent sector contributed the other half. It was explained that at present, the provision in the nursing sector was provided entirely by the independent sector as it had been illegal for the Council to provide it. It was stated that this was about to change with opportunities now possible.

Appreciation was expressed about the independent sector's contribution to the nursing care field but it was noted that the opportunities to provide in partnership as a Council meant that it was possible to improve the provision for the county's residents. It was explained that, at present, if no nursing placement was available, many people would have to wait for a long time or have to move outside their communities. It was stressed that this report was the start of the journey which highlighted the case for change as well as set out the risks involved with this change. It was noted that this was an opportunity to move on to the next step, which was to create a business case.

The Corporate Director added that one of the main duties of her role was to look after vulnerable people within the county, and that recent years had highlighted

that this element of the provision made it impossible to provide the best care to the residents of Gwynedd. She noted that she was proud that, at her last meeting in the role, she was able to submit this report which was an opportunity to work alongside the independent sector in order to stabilise the market. It was explained that the Council's presence within the residential and home care provision had strengthened the provision and therefore it was hoped that this step would also strengthen the nursing provision within the county. The Health Board was thanked for its willingness to discuss this field in such a challenging time.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Support for the report was expressed as well as gratitude for the work.
- Morwena Edwards was thanked for her leadership in this work and for all her work in recent years as Corporate Director.

11. FUTURE OF THE JOINT PLANNING POLICY UNIT (GWYNEDD AND ANGLESEY)

The report was submitted by Cllr Dafydd Meurig

DECISION

It was agreed to:

- 1) To extend the current collaboration agreement for the provision of the Joint Planning Policy Service until 31 March 2023;
- 2) That the collaboration agreement, and therefore the Joint Planning Policy Service and the Joint Planning Policy Committee is terminated after 31 March 2023, and that a new Planning Policy Service is created for the Gwynedd planning authority area;
- 3) That the new Planning Policy Service were prepares an Amended Local Development Plan for the Gwynedd planning authority area only;
- 4) That arrangements for supporting and making decisions on the process of preparing an Amended Local Development Plan and relevant planning policy matters are drawn up for the Gwynedd planning authority area;
- 5) To delegate powers to the Head of Environment Department to agree on collaboration arrangements with Anglesey to ensure that the Council continues to meet the statutory requirements (and any associated work), required to monitor the Joint Local Development Plan;
- 6) Since this is a matter of the highest priority, the Cabinet is requested to pre-empt the annual bids process and approve a bid for £70,000 from the permanent revenue budget now, to address the additional cost of establishing the Gwynedd Planning Policy Service.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and the background for the item was noted. It was explained that an agreement had been made between Gwynedd Council and Anglesey Council to establish a Joint Planning Policy Service in 2011. It was noted that the main task for the team was to create the Local Development Plan.

It was highlighted that the scheme had been in existence for over 10 years now and that it would come to an end at the end of the month. It was explained that there were two main options moving on, namely to extend the agreement or end the agreement. It was stated that the main advantage of combining the work of 10 years previously was the sharing of resources.

Discussions had been held regarding the creation of two separate units, which was currently seen as the preferred option. It was explained that in creating the policy specifically for Gwynedd, it would be possible to have 100% ownership of the needs of Gwynedd and adapt the Local Development Plan accordingly. It was stressed that it would not be a straightforward matter to undo the arrangement as there were joint governing arrangements and staff. But as part of the decision, it was asked to extend the existing agreement to the end of March 2023 in order to carry out the necessary work.

It was noted that the same report would be submitted to Anglesey Council today and that they had expressed their desire to create their own unit.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was asked if the Anglesey decision was the same, and it was noted that in moving forward the decisions needed to be exactly the same by both Councils.

12. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The report was submitted by Cllr Dafydd Meurig

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that this was the Cabinet Member's first performance report back as the portfolio leader in the field. It was explained that he was happy on the whole with what he had seen at first glance. Attention was drawn to the Climate Change Emergency Plan noting that the meetings had now restarted and that they were looking at moving from planning to implementing. It was noted that progress had been seen in many of the priorities.

In terms of the department's performance, it was noted that it was very encouraging that there had been an increase in the Planning Service's performance with the average number of days taken to deal with planning applications reducing from 103 to 78. However, it was stressed that further work was needed to reach the statutory timeframe of 56 working days. Another challenge was outlined regarding the number of planning enforcement applications increasing, with 45 received during the first two months of this financial year. It was noted that work was underway to deal with the applications.

It was emphasised that good work was being undertaken by the Public Protection service, with over 90% of the 2180 businesses in Gwynedd being given a food hygiene score of between 3 and 5. In terms of the department's financial situation, it was noted that it was fairly healthy with savings schemes on track to be completed on time.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was asked if the department would tackle the need to ensure active travel routes across the county. It was explained that work was being carried out and that the consultation was currently open, and everyone was encouraged to voice their opinions in it.
- With the Government's announcement regarding the change in speed limit down to 20 miles per hour in some locations, it was asked if the department had enough staff to deal with the change. It was stressed that when it would come into force, the timetable would be challenging and it was noted that a discussion was currently ongoing with the Welsh Local Government Association regarding the capacity needed and the need to ensuring adequate staffing. In terms of staffing within the department, it was highlighted that staff with technical expertise were needed in this department which could be challenging given the linguistic requirements.

13. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND MUNICIPAL AND GWYNEDD CONSULTANCY

The report was submitted by Cllr Berwyn Parry Jones

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, and the former portfolio holder was thanked for her work in recent years. Attention was drawn to the work of the Highways department, further highlighting that the Arfon Team had been appointed for the Clean and Tidy Communities scheme. It was explained that there had been some delay with appointing the other four teams but that they would be in place before the end of summer. In terms of the scheme the change Street Lighting to LED lights, it was noted that there were a few hundred left to do and that the scheme will have been completed before the end of autumn.

The workers were thanked for their hard work during the heatwave which we had been experiencing in recent days. It was stated that there was overspend in the department specifically in the waste service and it was explained that the department had appointed experts to look in detail at the matter and that it would be possible to report back during the autumn.

In terms of Gwynedd Consultancy department, it was stated that this department created a substantial income for the Council. It was noted that a firm work programme was in place for the year with 11 additional posts being advertised. It was stated that the department would reach its income target this year.

Observations arising from the discussion

- A question was asked about how to contact the Clean and Tidy Communities Teams. It was explained that a Project Officer would contact members in order to explained the procedure of getting a team to their area.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.25 pm

CHAIRMAN