

THE CABINET 14/02/17

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig L. Siencyn, Peredur Jenkins, John Wynn Jones, Dafydd Meurig, W. Gareth Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Gareth Thomas, Ioan Thomas and Mandy Williams-Davies

Also present: Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director), Dafydd L. Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Iwan G. Evans (Head of Legal Services)

Item 6: Hawis Jones (Strategic Planning Manager, Performance and Projects)

Item 7 / 8 / 9: Arwyn Thomas (Head of Education Department), Garem Jackson (Gwynedd Area Education Officer), Mai Bere (Assistant Education Improvement Officer)

Item 10: Sioned Ann Owen (Flying Start Service Manager)

Item 11: Rhion Glyn (Senior Business Manager)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Dyfed Edwards.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

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 MEETING HELD ON

The Chairman signed the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 17 January 2017, as a true record.

6. COUNCIL PLAN 2017-18

The item was submitted by Hawis Jones

RESOLVED

To approve the Strategic Plan 2017/18 for submission to the Council on 2 March 2017.

DISCUSSION

This was the Council's Plan which noted the Council's plans for the coming year. The original strategic plan had been approved by the Council in 2013 and this Plan was an extension of that said Plan. This year's plan had a different feature as the Council's day-to-day work had been incorporated within the Plan.

The plan was set in place to link with the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and it demonstrated what the Council was doing to achieve its well-being objectives. It was noted that transformational work was needed in some fields and the improvement plans were to be seen at the end of the plan. It was added that an Equality Assessment had been created.

Matters arising from the discussion:

- One well-being objective was for Gwynedd to be responsible on a Global level - Gwynedd was relatively small but it was possible to play a small part such as welcoming refugees.
- It was a difficult time for Local Government; however the plan had a clear ambition.
- The members looked forward to the outcome of the needs assessment that would form the next plan. The importance of looking at long term projects was emphasised.
- A question was asked as to how the Plan would be shared with Gwynedd residents - would it be through the website or would it be available in various locations?

It was emphasised that the Plan would be available at libraries, leisure centres and at Siop Gwynedd centres in order for residents to view it in various locations. It was suggested that this should be advertised through Newyddion Gwynedd.

7. FUTURE OF EDUCATION PROVISION IN THE BALA CATCHMENT AREA

The item was submitted by Cllr Gareth Thomas

RESOLVED

To consult with the governing bodies of the schools of Berwyn Catchment-area on the option to abandon the proposal to establish a Voluntary Controlled 3-19 Learning Campus (VC, Church in Wales) in the town of Bala, in accordance with section 55 (5) of the 2013 Schools Standards and Organisation Act - with the intention to return to the Cabinet to report on the outcome of the consultation and

make recommendations on the way forward.

DISCUSSION

Cllr Gareth Thomas reminded members of the background of the scheme. It was noted that a consultation period had been held on the proposal, namely to close Ysgol y Berwyn, Ysgol Bro Tegid and Ysgol Beuno Sant and establish a new 3-19 Voluntary Controlled school (VC, Church in Wales), on the existing Ysgol y Berwyn site back in 2015. Although there was objection to the Church School status, a compromise had been reached and the Cabinet had approved the proposal in September 2015.

During July 2016, the Head of Education had held a meeting with Church Officials, and following the meeting the department had received a letter highlighting the right to promote the school and the school site. The letter had been received a day before the meeting of the Cabinet was held in December 2016 and the item had been deferred from the Cabinet meeting.

It was noted that discussions had been held with the community regarding the letter and this had reignited objections to the Church School status. Letters had arrived from the schools' Governing Bodies stating that they did not support the new school with a church status, and additionally more than 1,000 people had signed a petition objecting to the church status. Councillor Gareth Thomas explained that a letter had been received from the Diocese of St Asaph noting the Church's stance.

One of the things to consider was whether or not there was a significant change to the plan. The main change was that the trust between both partners, the community and the Church had been affected. It was noted that there was a need to hold a consultation in order to gather the opinion of the school Governing Bodies on abandoning the option.

Matters arising from the discussion:

- A lifelong learning school was about more than education, it brought the community together, and there was a need to ensure that the community was happy with the development to ensure its success and to get the maximum benefit from a lifelong learning campus.
- As the building work was already in commencement, it was asked whether there was any risk to the funding due to any delay caused by the consultation.
- It was noted that the project's business case was in regard to establishing the school. The Business Plan focused on three things - empty spaces, the condition of the buildings and value for money. Any potential change to the project would involve contacting the Government and the project would be evaluated based on the three things included in the business plan. It is therefore considered that the risk was very low.
- It was emphasised that shadow body would be created to govern the school and it was important to have a cross-section from the schools.

It was noted that there was a legal requirement to consult before proceeding.

8. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-20

The report was submitted by Councillor Gareth Thomas.

RESOLVED

To approve the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for 2017-2020, before the Authority submits it to the Welsh Government for approval.

DISCUSSION

Councillor Gareth Thomas noted that every local authority was required to create a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, as part of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. The Plan had five outcomes:

- More seven year old children educated through the medium of Welsh
- More learners continuing to improve their language skills when transferring from primary to secondary school
- More Numbers who study through the medium of Welsh
- More learners aged 16-19 studying Welsh and subjects through the medium of Welsh
- More learners with enhanced language skills in Welsh.

In addition, Councillor Gareth Thomas noted that the plan would also address attainment standards in Welsh and Welsh as a second language, Welsh-medium provision for learners with additional needs and workforce planning and continuous professional development. He elaborated that the plan had gone through a wide consultation, and the language committee had held a special meeting to discuss the plan as well as a Scrutiny meeting.

Matters arising from the discussion:

- Noting that although the plan was something to take pride in, there were some weaknesses. The aim was to strengthen the language's position in education in Gwynedd.
- There was a need for Gwynedd to be self-critical and push the boundaries as Gwynedd was the measure of success for the rest of the country.
- The importance of offering young people opportunities for the future was emphasised.
- An enquiry was made about monitoring the Plan's performance measures, emphasising whether they were challenging enough and how often they would be revised. Arwyn Thomas explained that a Working Group was looking at the monitoring arrangements as well as a Secondary Group, made up of members from the area's secondary schools. He noted the need to ensure consistency across the county and to offer the same provision across the county.

9. CONSULTATION TO REVISE SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

The report was submitted by Councillor Gareth Thomas.

RESOLVED

In response to the Consultation to Revise School Governance:

- I. That the authority agrees to the proposal that LEA Governors meet the Skills Criteria.
- II. That the Authority agrees that elected members from an LEA should not be disqualified from being a Governor.
- III. That Gwynedd Council states to the Consultation that it is of the opinion that the review is insufficiently far-reaching to create a fit-for-purpose governance system.

DISCUSSION

It was noted that the school governance arrangement was one that had been in place since 1988. The arrangement was based on Governors being stakeholders in the schools. Councillor Gareth Thomas thanked the hundreds of people who volunteered as Governors. The Government had commissioned a task and finish group to look at school governance.

It was emphasised that the group's main recommendation was that a shift was required away from the current stakeholders model towards a stakeholders plus model. It was noted that this would give governing bodies the flexibility and freedom to recruit additional governors based on their required skills.

It was noted that there was mention of associated members being part of the governing body, however they would not be full members despite having a right to vote - it was emphasised that aspects such as this were vague. It was also expressed, when appointing a head teacher or a deputy teacher that an independent person was needed on that specific panel and that the head teacher or the education officer should have a vote on the panel.

It was noted that the Governors' situation had changed in recent years, the responsibilities were very substantial such as disciplinary and redundancy matters and staff appointments.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- Previous arrangements made schools independent, but over recent years the culture had become more of a partnership, and there was possibly a need to extend to catchment-area governing bodies.

The consultation had looked at the framework and had tried to change the framework gradually rather than making one big change. It was felt that the framework was not radical enough or far-reaching enough.

10. EXTEND CHILD CARE FOR 3-4 YEAR OLDS IN WALES TO 30 HOURS AND

IMPLEMENT THE STATUTORY REQUIREMENT OF THE CHILD CARE ARCT 2006

The report was submitted by Cllr Mair Rowlands.

RESOLVED

- I. To designate the Bangor, Dolgellau, Ffestiniog and Porthmadog Well-being areas as pilot areas in Gwynedd that will implement the childcare offer during 2017-18.
- II. To commit to receiving grant resources to undertake the pilot (subject to the number of children participating in the pilot the amount available from the Government to Gwynedd and Anglesey is £1,869,719).
- III. To agree to establish a Gwynedd and Anglesey Childcare Unit for 2017-18.
- IV. As the Government has increased the number of children who will participate in the pilot after the report was published in the Cabinet agenda, to delegate powers to the Cabinet Member to designate more areas to the scheme based on the areas that currently have the least provision.

DISCUSSION

Welsh Government had committed to providing 30 hours per week of early years education and free childcare for working parents of three to four year olds. It was noted that Gwynedd and Anglesey had been chosen to become early joint adopters.

It was noted that since the last report, the number of children participating in the project in 2017/18 would be up to 1,200. Discussions were currently being held with Anglesey to see if it was possible to achieve these numbers. So far, four areas had been selected as well-being areas, namely Bangor, Porthmadog, Dolgellau and Ffestiniog. It was expressed that the chosen areas were varying wards, which would prove the need in these areas and enable the Council to meet that need. This project was one for more privileged areas as it was targeted at working people.

It was noted that a procedure was needed for determining how the areas could be extended to reach the additional number of children Welsh Government was now asking us to reach. It was noted that finding provision would be a challenge in some areas, and consequently it was important that the Council selected areas that would prove our ability in delivering the concept. Otherwise, there was a danger that the Government would reach the conclusion that there were no problems in delivering in rural areas as result of not choosing the most difficult areas. It was emphasised that Gwynedd had applied for the pilot in order to highlight rural needs to the Government.

Matters arising from the discussion:

- It was noted that this was specifically for working parents - and if they worked a minimum of 16 hours they were eligible to receive 30 hours of

- childcare to enable them to attend training also.
- It was emphasised how difficult it was for officers to do their work when the targets were frequently changing.
 - Communication with the parents was important so that they were able to make the most of the pilot scheme.

11. NORTH WALES POPULATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

The item was submitted by Cllr Mair Rowlands.

RESOLVED

To recommend that the Full Council approves the North Wales Population Needs Assessment report produced as a requirement of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

DISCUSSION

It was noted that this work was regional, and that the Regional Steering Group had been responsible for coordinating the assessment. This had been done by strategically leading engagement and establishing technical and specific groups according to the need. The assessment was a record of how things were now, it did not note the work plans and these would be published following the assessment.

It was expressed that the work on the assessment was commendable, and it crystallized the region's care needs. Dilwyn Williams noted that the Social Services Act noted that an assessment of the Gwynedd area was needed in order to respond to the requirements of the act. Going through the full report, the assessment of Gwynedd's situation was included here and there but it was emphasised that the next step would be to ask for a clearer report of the situation in Gwynedd specifically.

Matters arising from the discussion:

It was noted that this had highlighted that regional working could be confusing

12. REVENUE BUDGET 2016-17 - THIRD QUARTER REVIEW

The report was submitted by Cllr Peredur Jenkins.

RESOLVED

- I. To accept the report on the third quarter review of the Revenue Budget (position as at 31 December 2016) and consider the latest financial

position regarding the budgets of each department/service, and ask the Cabinet Members and the relevant heads of department to take appropriate steps regarding matters under their leadership/management.

- II. To transfer (£115k) from the Regulatory Department to the Council's general balances to fulfil the Council's priorities.
- III. To harvest (£250k) from the favourable Council Tax collections, (£180k) from the Benefits underspend, (£600k) reserve budget, together with (£250k) of the underspend included within 'Other' to the Council's general balances, with £1,055k of the sum (£756k 2017/18 and £299k 2018/19) to be used specifically to finance obligations in the Education field that have already been approved by the Cabinet on 13 December 2016.

DISCUSSION

It was the Cabinet's responsibility to take action, as necessary, in order to secure appropriate control over the Council's budgets (e.g. approval of significant variations or supplementary budgets). Additionally, it was noted that a summary outline of the position of each Department was included in the appendix, and further details of the main issues were to be seen in Appendix 2.

It was explained that a favourable income position was to be seen in the Regulatory Department where there was an underspend in excess of (£100k), and accordingly it was recommended to transfer the underspend to the Council's General Balances. It was also noted that the Corporate Department would transfer underspend from the Council Tax base, Benefits, reserve budget and other headings within the budget to the Council's Balances in order to fulfil the Council's priorities.

The position was acceptable across the departments, with a good commitment to managing finance across the departments. It was emphasised that the reports had been before the Audit Panel the previous week.

Matters arising from the discussion:

Although there was an overspend in the Children's Department, it was a relatively small percentage when looking at the figures in greater detail.

13. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2016/17 - THIRD QUARTER REVIEW

The report was submitted by Cllr Peredur Jenkins.

RESOLVED

To accept the report on the third quarter review (31 December 2016 position) of the capital programme, and approve the revised financing as shown in part 4 of the report, that is:

- An increase of £2.059m in the use of other borrowing
- A decrease of £1.871m in the use of grants and contributions
- A decrease of £0.077m in the use of capital receipts
- An increase of £0.470m in the use of revenue contributions

- An increase of £0.177m in the use of renewal and other reserves

DISCUSSION

It was noted that it was a technical report and was part of the 2016/17 budget monitoring procedure. It was emphasised that firm schemes were in place to invest £31.592m with £8.024m of it being financed by attracting specific grants, it was noted that this was a very substantial amount. All the relevant officers were thanked for their work on attracting these grants in the interests of the people of Gwynedd.

It was noted that £6.040m had been re-profiled from 2016/17 to 2017/18, but it was confirmed that no loss of funding was caused to the Council where schemes had slipped.

Councillor Peredur Jenkins also explained that during the Council term the total investment and capital commitments amounted to £180m, with £82m funded by attracting specific grants and contributions.

The investment was as follows:

- Highway Maintenance - £11.9m
- Street Lighting Renewal: £1.4m
- Pont Briwet- £21.7m
- Storiell, Bangor- £2.1m
- Pwllheli Sailing Academy- £9.1m
- Blaenau Ffestiniog Regeneration - £4.2m
- Caernarfon Town Regeneration - £1.7m
- Waste Plans - £9.7m
- Carbon Management Plans - £6m
- Access to the Coast - £3.5m
- Gwynedd Schools - £58.8m

Matters arising from the discussion:

- High praise for the Council for being able to attract so much investment, and the investment was to be seen across the County.
- There was a need to be proud of the £58.8m invested in education in Gwynedd.

14. 2017/18 BUDGET AND 2017/18 - 2019/20 FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The report was submitted by Cllr Peredur Jenkins.

RESOLVED

- a) To recommend to the Council (at its meeting on 2 March 2017) that:
 - A budget of £231,299,720 should be set for 2017/18, to be funded by £168,963,540 of Government Grant and £62,336,180 of Council Tax income, with an increase of 2.8%.

- Establish a capital programme of £12.015m in 2017/18 and £6.410m in 2018/19 to be funded from sources noted in clause 9.3 of the appendix.
- b) To note the Medium Term Financial Plan in Appendix 4, and adopt the strategy which is in part 15-17 of the Plan.

DISCUSSION

It was noted as a Council that the Welsh Audit Officer praised the Council's financial planning arrangements, however it was noted that it was becoming difficult to anticipate the level of grant received from Welsh Government and it was therefore difficult to plan. Consequently, it was noted that the figures in the medium term financial strategy were the best projection.

A broad consultation on the financial strategy and the Council Tax had been held through 4 seminars with Elected Members and the Audit Committee. It was noted that the consultation had shown that they were in agreement on the budget for the coming year.

Local Government Finance came from two sources - from Welsh Government and Council Tax. The amount received from Welsh Government was currently £169m, 74% of the Council's budget. There was an increase of £1.8m since last year, equating to 1.1%, which was higher than what was seen across Wales, 0.3% on average.

There were additional expenditure requirements of £11m which was unavoidable expenditure including salary inflation, pensions, other inflation, service income adjustments, etc.

As noted in the previous report, £1.1m of corporate underspend had been earmarked for schools, by transferring the money to Council balances. Despite this action, the Council would continue to keep Council balances at the minimum balances suggested last year, which was £4.4m.

The Cabinet Member for Resources proposed to increase Council Tax by 2.8%, which was lower than the percentage noted the previous year. Additionally, it was emphasised that there were no decisions on any further cuts for 2017/18.

It was noted that the report contained capital figures that noted the minimum investment level, but that a detailed review was being undertaken with the Asset Strategy, that would be published during the summer months, and would add to the programme.

Matters arising from the discussion:

- It was expressed that it was difficult to strike the right balance between making savings and increasing Council Tax, and a 2.8% increase was considered to be a fair balance.

15. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The report was submitted by Cllr John Wynn Jones.

RESOLVED

To accept and note the information in the report.

To approve the following alternative profile figures for delivering the Carbon Management Scheme:

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Total
49,740	15,260	40,000	50,000	155,000

DISCUSSION

Cllr John Wynn Jones noted that he was happy with the performance of Environmental services.

He emphasised that the percentage for waste and recycling had increased to 62.2% and this was a substantial increase. In addition to this it was noted that there had been a reduction in the percentage of urban waste sent to landfill from 34.24% in 2015/16 to 27.9%. With fees for garden waste collection service introduced since January, 10,000 had made the payment and it was expected that the number would rise.

In relation to the standard of the roads, there had been a reduction in funding and consequently there had been an element of decline. The Consultancy Department had made a profit of £5,313 this year, and this was one of the department's main measures.

It was noted with the Carbon Management Plan that there was a need to re-profile in order for savings to be realised and the changes have been noted under the 'decision' heading.

16. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE ECONOMY AND COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT

The report was submitted by Cllr Mandy Williams-Davies.

DECISION

To accept the report and approve re-profiling the efficiency savings scheme 'EaCh9a' - Neuadd Buddug (£16,000) from the 2017/18 financial year with £9,330 to be realised in 2018/19 and £6,670 to be realised in 2019/20.

DISCUSSION

In looking at High Value jobs, Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies noted that the digital field was thriving. Referring to Digital Gwynedd, she emphasised that 78% of properties in Gwynedd now had superfast broadband - which was higher than other counties.

It was noted that the World Heritage Site bid would be submitted following the nomination in September 2017. It was emphasised there had been a 30% increase in the number of visits to the Snowdonia Mountains and Coast website, this was as a result of people receiving information via different methods.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Despite the increase in the number of homes with superfast broadband it was important to note that some areas were still without the service, and although there had been development there was still a need to work on the matter.

17. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND REGULATORY

The report was submitted by Cllr Dafydd Meurig.

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

It was emphasised that performance challenging was necessary, and recently he had been challenging officers to ensure they were measuring the right elements. He noted that the statistics were now much clearer but there was a need to push further in order to create graphs that would be useful for people to understand.

The meeting commenced at 13:00 and concluded at 15:35

CHAIRMAN