

THE CABINET 21/11/17

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig L. Siencyn, Craig ab Iago, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Peredur Jenkins, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan, Gareth Thomas and Ioan Thomas

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

Item 6: Dewi Wyn Jones (The Council's Business Support Services Manager)

Item 7: Arwel Wyn Owen (Senior Housing and Well-being Manager)

Item 8: Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager)

Item 9: Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager), Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being), Marian Parry Hughes (Head of Children and Supporting Families Department), Aled Gibbard (Senior Operational Manager - Care, Children and Supporting Families Resources), Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department).

1. APOLOGIES

Cabinet members and officers were welcomed to the meeting.
Apologies were received from Cllr. Mair Rowlands and Cllr. W Gareth Roberts

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items to discuss

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There were no matters arising from overview and scrutiny.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 OCTOBER 2017

The Chairman signed the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 24 October 2017, as a true record.

6. CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ON THE PROPOSED PRIORITIES FOR THE COUNCIL PLAN 2018-2023

The item was submitted by Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn

RESOLVED

To approve the consultation document on the Council Plan priorities for 2018-2023 and agree to hold a six-week consultation period on the document from 27 November 2017.

To agree to the arrangements outlined in the report to identify solutions and any resource requirements attached to the priorities with a report back on the findings to the Cabinet in January.

DISCUSSION

Submitted - a report noting that this was a consultation document in order to hold a general consultation on the priorities of the Council plan. As part of the process of drawing up the Council Plan for 2018-23, it was explained that meetings had been held based on the well-being areas to highlight any issues requiring attention in those areas.

They provided details about the timetable for the plan, noting that the timetable was tight. Following the consultation period, a report would be brought back to the Cabinet in January. In the meantime, there would be further work on the priorities to get the opportunity to find solutions and resources, which would be further discussed at the Cabinet.

The Council Plan would be submitted to the Cabinet on 13 February, which will include department business plans, it would then be submitted to the Full Council on 1 March for adoption.

It was noted that the consultation would take place on-line, it would also be available in public places and workshops would be held with groups such as third sector organisations. It was expressed that the Plan noted the Council's aspirations for the next five years, and it was emphasised that it was important that the Plan reflected the right vision.

7. INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING BY STRENGTHENING STRATEGIC CAPACITY

The item was submitted by Cllr. Craig ab Iago

RESOLVED

To approve an allocation of £45,646 per year over the next 3 years (total of

approximately £140,000), as a first call against the council tax premium to be levied against 'second homes' and 'empty homes' which will be applied from April 2018 allowing the Head of Adult, Health and Well-being to appoint an additional officer within the Strategic Housing Unit to support the Council to take full advantage of grant funding allocated by Welsh Government to increase the supply of social and affordable Housing in Gwynedd.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the Cabinet Member was eager for every resident in Gwynedd to have a home. It was emphasised that there was a lack of housing in the county and that Welsh Government had allocated additional capital resources to assist Local Government to provide additional housing.

It was noted that the department currently had one officer but there was a need to appoint an additional officer to take full advantage of the opportunity to receive capital funding from the Government towards housing. Also it was expressed that it was an opportunity to use a percentage of the Council's Tax Premium which could be levied on second homes and empty homes, to ensure a supply of quality housing for the residents of Gwynedd.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that initial discussions had taken place with the Housing Associations to identify how it would be possible to proceed with the opportunity.
- The Council Tax Premium was discussed noting that a percentage of the money had been allocated for housing for Gwynedd's young people, and therefore the plan coincided with this. It was expressed that a prudent estimation had been made of the income from the Tax Premium and that it was around £2.1m.
- It was emphasised there was a need to provide the housing needed by Gwynedd residents, and that housing matters had been raised in discussions with the Local Assembly Member.
- It was expressed in a time of savings that it was necessary to take full advantage of the opportunity

8. REVENUE BUDGET 2017/18 - SECOND QUARTER REVIEW

The report was submitted by Cllr. Peredur Jenkins

RESOLVED

Resolved to:

- Accept the report on the second quarter review of the Revenue Budget (position as at 30 September 2017) and ask the Cabinet Members and the relevant heads of department to take the appropriate steps regarding matters under their leadership/management.
- With the approval of the Head of Environment Department, transfer (£282k) from the Environment Department to the Financial Strategy

Reserve.

- With the approval of the Head of Corporate Support Department, transfer (£54k) from the Corporate Support Department to the Financial Strategy Reserve.
- That (£200k) from the favourable Council Tax receipts, (£800k) from the underspend on Council Tax Reduction, (£406k) savings realised early, (£444k) one-off underspend on bids and (£697k) from favourable conditions on other Council budgets, and transfer it to the Financial Strategy Reserve to assist with unavoidable one-off pressures on the Council's budgets.

DISCUSSION

Submitted - a report noting that it was the Cabinet's responsibility to take action, as necessary, in order to secure appropriate control over the Council's budgets. Specific attention was drawn to the departments that were overspending and the relevant Cabinet Members explained the overspend.

Adults, Health and Well-being Department

It was explained that overspend within the department was just over £200k, which was a small percentage of the budget overall although this did not justify the overspend. It was noted that if the savings element were deducted from the overspend that the message was a positive one, however the department continues to work on repackaging the savings plan.

When looking at the Provider Service it was noted that some residential homes spent much more than their budgets. It was acknowledged that there were weaknesses within the Provider Service but that a report had been commissioned that would scrutinise the department to see where adjustments could be made. It was hoped that a report would be submitted in February to provide a better picture of the service. It was emphasised clearly that work needed to be done.

Children and Supporting Families Department

It was expressed that the department acknowledged that it was overspending but could not promise that the overspend would decrease in the short term. Two services were overspending, the Operational Services and the Placements Service.

It was noted that there was an increase in the demand for services and additionally the needs of children were much more severe than they were years ago. It was expressed that internal scrutiny arrangements were in place and they were looking at the services every six weeks. There were plans in the pipeline such as the Children and Supporting Families Strategy. As a result of these plans it was hoped there would be long term changes. The plans would be monitored more often.

Education Department

The main reason behind the Education Department's overspend was transport, and this as a consequence of a reduction in the sale of post-16 transport passes and school taxi transport. When looking at taxi transport it was noted there had been an increase in the demand for various reasons such as children moving into the area and needed to attend the Language Units and children with severe disabilities. Currently, it was not possible for the department to anticipate the number of children moving to the area and was therefore unable to anticipate the costs. It was noted that there was a strict mediation system in place, but a further report was needed to look at the matter.

Highways and Municipal Department

It was noted that there were various reasons for the overspend. It was explained that work had been done for the Highways Agency, but that a reduction in the rate of completing the work and it being internalised by the Agency had caused a reduction in income. The department hoped that it would be possible to carry out more work for the Agency in order to increase the income level.

To ensure that the level of overspend would be reduced, the department would revise and possibly delay road resurfacing work. Additionally, the price of plastic and metals was increasing and consequently this all could mean that the Waste Department's income level would increase.

Observations arising from the discussion

- In discussing the Children and Supporting Families Department it was noted that Children's services' budgets across the north were under pressure. It was expressed that this was a field where collaboration could be possible. There was a need to keep an eye on how much other counties were spending per child to ensure that Gwynedd provided the same level of service as other counties. It was added that this was a national problem and the fact that the children's needs were much more severe compared with other years was frightening in light of so many cuts.
- In discussing the Education Department, it was noted that there was a need for a further discussion on the Environment Department to think of ways to use Council resources to reduce the overspend on transport. It was expressed that there was a need for more financial discipline and a need to see the results of the transport service review during quarter 3.
- It was noted that although some departments were overspending it must be clearly noted that some departments were underspending and that their underspend would be added to the Financial Strategy Fund. It was expressed that there was a need to continue to commit to financial discipline and that discussions were ongoing on future savings.

9. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2017/18 - SECOND QUARTER REVIEW

The report was submitted by Cllr. Peredur Jenkins

RESOLVED

To accept the report on the second quarter review (position as at September 2017) of the capital programme, and approve the revised financing as shown in part 4 of the report, that is:

- £1,121,000 increase in the use of borrowing
- (£389,000) decrease in the use of grants and contributions
- £78,000 increase in the use of capital receipts
- £118,000 increase in the use of revenue contributions
- (£663,000) decrease in the use of renewal and other reserves
- (£48,000) decrease in the use of the capital reserve

DISCUSSION

Submitted - a report noting that the technical report was part of the budget monitoring procedure and its main purpose was to present the revised capital programme and approve the relevant funding sources. It was expressed there had been an increase of £0.217m in the funding sources since the last review. It was explained there were firm plans in place to invest approximately £33.4m in 2017/18 with £5.4m of it funded through grants, which reflected the departments' hard work in attracting grants. Attention was drawn to an increase in other borrowing, and that it did not cause additional liabilities to the Council's revenue budgets, this was a technical change in the government's funding arrangements.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that capital expenditure movements would be noted in the Performance Reports in January and there would be more information about the plans in January.
- The staff of the Finance department were thanked for their detailed budget management work.

The meeting commenced at 13:00 and concluded at 14:00

CHAIRMAN