

THE CABINET TUESDAY, 18 JULY 2017

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig L. Siencyn, Mair Rowlands, Craig ab Iago, Peredur Jenkins, Dafydd Meurig, W. Gareth Roberts and Gareth Thomas

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

Item 6: Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department) Marian Parry Hughes (Head of Children and Supporting Families Department), Steve Barnard (Organisational Development Manager), Meinir Williams (Service Improvement Officer).

Item 7: Garem Jackson (Acting Head of Education Department), Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager).

Item 8 and 9: Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager).

1. APOLOGIES

Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr. Ioan Thomas, Cllr. Gareth Griffiths and Cllr. Dilwyn Morgan.

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 Chair signed the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 27 June 2017, as a true record.

6. REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PROCEDURES

The item was submitted by Cllr. Mair Rowlands

RESOLVED

To accept the annual report of the Council's Complaints and Service Improvement

arrangements (Corporate and Social Services Adults and Children Procedures).

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and it was noted that three complaints reports could be seen in the appendices. It was emphasised that there were specific reasons for producing separate reports, but that they needed to be considered together in order to obtain a full picture of the Council's complaints situation.

It was noted that the number of complaints received by the Council had fallen, and was continuing to fall as the numbers had reduced again during the first quarter of 2017/18. It was emphasised that a change in culture and in the way complaints were dealt with, had been the reason for the reduction. In addition to this, the Complaints Coordination Team (Corporate) were working with departments to attempt to find a way of improving and learning from complaints.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that it was valuable to have a team that worked independently to any other service and that they focused on solving problems. The work of analysing the problems was emphasised and a change in culture in the departments was reflected in the reduction in the number of complaints.
- The most obvious reason for the complaints was a lack of response; it was asked what was being done to improve this. It was noted that work was still in progress to improve performance and, whilst the departments were gradually changing, there was room for improvement.
- The corporate system's report was presented to the Corporate Management Team every quarter, and the Service Improvement Officer, on one hand, worked as an agent for residents but on the other hand, assisted the departments to consider whether there needed to be a change in arrangements to ensure that the same complaint was not received again.
- It was emphasised that complaints in the Children and Supporting Families Department were resolved during Stage 1 at manager level, and that no complaints had progressed to Stage 2 in the past two years.

7. SAVING STRATEGY 2018/19 ONWARDS

The report was submitted by Cllr Peredur Jenkins

RESOLVED

To accept the procedure noted in Appendix 1 of the report in order to plan further savings from 2019/20 onwards.

DISCUSSION

It was noted that as it was a new Council term, it was important to ensure that we had a system to identify any financial deficits which would be likely to appear in the future. It was emphasised that Gwynedd Council had been praised by external organisations for their forward planning work. Savings planning would need to begin for 2018/19 and beyond, although the Finance Department would not be aware of the settlement until late October.

Work had been completed by the Head of the Finance Department, in which he noted 46,600 possible scenarios; this gave the Council an opportunity to plan based on information and probability. It was emphasised that, during the past 12 years, the Council had harvested £62m of savings, and because of this, it was obvious that the task of identifying any possible savings was likely to be much more difficult from now on.

During the previous period, departments were asked to identify efficiency savings opportunities and work was undertaken to discover cuts by identifying the possibilities and asking the public which services they wished to retain. All the plans resulted in a series of 10 buckets, and cuts were implemented by cutting buckets one to four. One option was to repeat the procedure if cuts would be needed, depending on buckets five to ten.

Another option was discussed to consider a range of proposals across all Council services and the impact of those proposals on Gwynedd residents. A definitive timetable would be in line with the aspiration of conducting more pre-scrutiny. The procedure included the Scrutiny Committees from the outset, and the public and all members would be included in the prioritising process.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The new option was favoured as it was a new term and made use of the scrutinising procedure from the outset. One lesson confirmed by our previous arrangement was that planning far enough in advance generally led to less of an impact for residents. However, the point was made that as we were now beginning from a position where the easiest savings had been delivered - future savings would not be painless.
- It was noted that the new option gave more time to plan and focused on the importance of having a broad discussion.

8. REVENUE BUDGET 2017/18 - IDENTIFYING EARLY RISKS

The report was submitted by Cllr. Peredur Jenkins.

RESOLVED

To accept the report and note the budgetary risks identified in early 2017/18 and agree that the Cabinet Members and the relevant heads of department should take appropriate steps regarding the matters under their management.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and it was noted that this was the first quarterly report for 2017/18. It was explained that there was outline per department and brief comments about the main matters where there were significant differences. It was noted that spending tendencies were not very clear again as it was early in the year.

It was confirmed that every cabinet member had received reports from accountants for their particular field. It was noted that the report highlighted five departments that had a tendency to overspend, and it was emphasised that there was a responsibility on every department and cabinet member to control their budget.

Reference was made to the overspend forecast in the field of school transportation, and it was asked what was the intention to cope with this.

It was noted that the department intended to review packages to see whether the need identified at one time continued to be appropriate in order to see whether it was possible to bring the budget under more control. The department would be taking steps to readdress the situation.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that monitoring budgets was a continuous process, and it was noted that the current review was a fore-warning given in order to attempt to solve any

problems before they became too large.

9. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2017/18 - FIRST QUARTER REVIEW

The report was submitted by Cllr Peredur Jenkins

RESOLVED

To accept the report on the first quarter review (30 June 2017 position) of the capital programme, and to approve the revised financing as shown in part 4 of the report, namely an increase of:

- £3,332,000 in various sources to fund actual slippages from 2016/17
- £3,253,000 in the use of grants and contributions
- £55,000 in the use of revenue contributions
- £956,000 in the use of renewal funds and others
- £428,000 in the use of the capital fund

DISCUSSION

The quarterly report was presented in order to submit the capital programme and to approve the relevant financing sources. It was noted that they predicted a capital programme of £46,725,000 for the next three years.

It was noted that the main conclusions were firm plans to invest £32.7m during the year and that £5.8m had been drawn from specific grants. In addition, it was noted that an additional £3.3m of proposed expenditure had been re-profiled from 2016/17 to 2017/18.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Although this is a technical report, it was important to note that this money made a difference to the lives of Gwynedd residents.
- It was noted that there was a significant fall in the proposed programme between 2017/18 and 2019/20 as there was no certainty which grants would be available, and what impact Brexit would have on the Council's budgets and grants.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.00 pm

CHAIRMAN