

**THE CABINET 19/02/19**

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**Present-**

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

**Also present:** Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director) and Annes Siôn (Member Support Officer).

Item 5: Dewi Wyn Jones (The Council's Business Support Service Manager)

Item 8: Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager)

Item 11: Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department) and Robin Evans (Project Manager)

**1. APOLOGIES**

Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.  
No apologies were received.

**2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

Councillor Gareth Thomas declared a personal interest during Item 8 - 2019/20 Budget, when it became clear that the Libraries Service savings were being discussed, because his son-in-law worked for the service. The Councillor did not believe that it was a prejudicial 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 15, 22 AND 29 JANUARY**

The Chair signed the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 15, 22 and 29 January, as a true record.

**6. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL PLAN 2018-23**

The report was submitted by Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn

**RESOLVED**

To approve the 2018-23 Council Plan (2019/20 Review) for submission to the Full Council on 7 March

## **DISCUSSION**

The report was submitted and it was noted that the Council Plan had been adopted as the Council's five-year Plan in March last year. It was expressed that members had been given the opportunity to consider the content of the Plan, and it was noted that some changes had been made following a review of the Plan.

Attention was drawn to projects that had either been completed or transferred to become part of the day to day work of departments, which included transforming the schools system, corporate parenting and realising savings. It was added that new schemes had been added under Improvement Priority 1 Create a Viable and Prosperous Economy, namely the Economy and Community Department's Town Centre Promotion Scheme and Apprenticeships Scheme. It was expressed that the Post-16 Provision and Ysgol Treforthyr Catchment Area had been added under Improvement Priority 2 - Ensure that every pupil has the opportunity to reach his or her potential, by the Education Department.

It was noted that some plans had changed, and Priority 3 was elaborated upon, namely Reducing inequality within the County, and it was reiterated that the Tackling Poverty scheme had now been amended. In order to ensure that the emphasis was placed on the preventative field and the support offered in order to include every department, the title of the scheme was now called Supporting the Well-being of People. Attention was drawn to a change in the title of Reducing the Pay Gap between Women and Men in Leadership. It was noted that work continued on Suitable and Affordable Houses and on Identifying and Promoting Housing Schemes and Initiatives, but under the new title, Housing Strategy for the People of Gwynedd, in Priority Field 4, namely Access to Suitable Housing.

It was expressed that the plans could be seen in the Council's work programmes, but despite this, the plans depended upon Council resources as a result of the current financial squeeze. It was added that the Plan would be submitted to the Full Council on 7 March, following the decision of the Cabinet.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Attention was drawn to minor changes to the report, and it was noted that the document was live and would be reviewed. It was added that the page that showed the Council's ambition and priorities emphasised the Council's priorities for the coming years

## **7. NORTH WALES CARERS STRATEGY**

The item was submitted by Cllr W. Gareth Roberts

### **RESOLVED**

Accept the Carers' Strategy and ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to monitor the Council's performance against the measures within the strategy.

## DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that the Strategy had been drawn up as a result of the Health and Social Care climate following the introduction of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. It was added that the North Wales Regional Partnership Board had prioritised carers to ensure that the region fulfilled the requirements included within the Act. It was expressed that the Strategy had been written by the Partnership, but that each authority needed to accept it independently.

It was added that the Strategy noted what carers should expect to receive as support, along with the service provided to carers by working in partnership with social services and health services. It was added that there were no financial implications to the Strategy, but by escalating services, the costs may increase, but this would not be as a direct result of the Strategy.

The Corporate Director added that the field had escalated to become a priority field following the population assessment. It was reiterated that this was the first Strategy to have had such a good representation of carers as part of the process, and they were thanked for their work in creating the document. It was expressed that the consultation had taken place with carers for older people or for disabled people, but there was a need to ensure that the voices of young carers were also heard, and work needed to be done to ensure this. It was noted that there would be obstacles along the journey, but that the Strategy put carers at the centre of what all services offered, and more preventative work would be done to plan before emergencies arose.

### Observations arising from the discussion

- It was asked how the Strategy would be implemented, and it was noted that there would not be much change to the service available, but that further consideration needed to be given to how evidence would be gathered so that the performance measures would be in-keeping with the Strategy. It was added that close collaboration was needed with the Health field as that was where many carers were identified.
- The Strategy was welcomed, noting how excellent it was that everyone was committing to the same standards.
- The performance measure was discussed, noting that the measures would be in-keeping with the mindset of Ffordd Gwynedd, and it would be discussed in performance challenge meetings within the Children and Families Department; Adults, Health and Well-being Department; and the Education Department

## 8. 2018/19 BUDGET

The item was submitted by Cllr Peredur Jenkins

## DECISION

1. To recommend to the Council (at its meeting on 7 March 2019) that:

1. A budget of £248,013,890 should be established for 2019/20, funded by a £176,551,790 Government Grant and £71,462,100 Council Tax income, that has been increased by 5.8%.
2. £18,316,130 should be added to the capital programme for spending in 2019/20 in order to establish a capital programme with a value of £34,991,250 by 2019/20 to be funded from the sources noted in Appendix 4 of the report.
2. To approve proceeding to implement the saving schemes list in Appendix 3, with the exception of eight schemes, namely:
  - (a) Scheme 4.4 - Free parking over Christmas
  - (b) Scheme 4.19 - Charge a fee for damaged bins
  - (c) Scheme 6.2 - Libraries Service for Schools
  - (d) Scheme 6.11 - Reduce the Mobile Library
  - (e) Scheme 6.16 - Grants to the Arts
  - (f) Scheme 6.17 - Libraries' Books Fund
  - (g) Scheme 6.22 - Women's Aid
  - (h) Scheme 6.25 - Youth Justice Servicein order to set up the budget recommended to the full Council.
3. Note the Medium Term Financial Strategy

## DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the context of the budget was the desperately poor settlement that all authorities had received from the Government. It was added that the British Government's austerity policy was ongoing, and ensuring tight control and careful financial planning were critical in ensuring services for the residents of Gwynedd.

It was expressed that it was becoming increasingly difficult to submit a financial balance sheet annually, and it was added that a budget that imposed savings and increased the Council Tax was not something to be proud of. However, it was added that pride could be taken in having one of the best financial arrangements in Wales, as this ensured that the impact of all this on the residents of Gwynedd was kept to a minimum. It was expressed that the Council had two main incomes, namely Welsh Government's Grant and the Council Tax. It was expressed that there was a £13million financial deficit, and two elements would be required to address the deficit, namely a Council Tax increase and savings. It was expressed that the savings had been scrutinised and had received thorough consideration by the members through a series of workshops, and by the public via consultation.

The Head of Finance Department reiterated the reasons for the £13 million financial deficit. It was expressed that Welsh Government's grant increase to local authorities was insufficient to meet the inflation increase of £7.m, and the unavoidable demand on services, which was at £4m. Details were given on the bids, included within Appendix 2, that had a total value of £2.5m, and it was noted that a discussion had been held on these bids, where members agreed

that the expenditure was unavoidable.

The savings were discussed, noting that the Cabinet needed to determine whether all proposed saving schemes (included in Appendix 3) were to be implemented. Details were given on the savings figures to address the the financial deficit, noting that £2.48m in savings had already been approved, there were £2.45m of proposed savings, a further £0.5m in efficiency savings, which brought a total of £5.4m in savings to reduce the deficit. It was added that in order to meet the deficit, the tax would need to increase by 5.5%.

It was explained that in January, a public consultation had been held on the Financial Strategy, and it was added that the responses could be seen in Appendix 11.

Attention was drawn to the budget summary, noting that the budget had been scrutinised by the Audit and Governance Committee. Some responses from the Audit Committee and the Workshops held with members were elaborated upon, noting concerns about the impact of implementing savings and increasing tax for the residents of Gwynedd. Concern was expressed about the tax increase of 5.5% or higher, noting that the people of Gwynedd would need to be assisted to claim tax relief when appropriate. Concerns about the situation the Council would face in a year's time were emphasised, and the need to press Welsh Government to fund local authorities appropriately was noted. It was expressed that the Audit Committee had discussed and noted the risks, but that they were satisfied that the budget should be submitted to the Cabinet and then to the Full Council.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Attention was drawn to a letter that was received from the Federation of Small Businesses noting their concerns about some of the savings that could potentially affect businesses within Gwynedd. It was expressed that these included free parking over the Christmas period and the concern about Barmouth Bridge. It was added that the letter also noted that they thanked the Council for keeping the cuts to the Business Support field to the absolute minimum.
- Attention was drawn to the outcome of the members' workshop and the public consultation on the savings, noting that it was a good idea to revisit some saving schemes. The opinion was expressed that the schemes included in Appendix 12 should certainly not be realised this year, namely
  - Reducing the Women's Aid budget
  - Reducing the Council's contribution to the Youth Justice Service
  - Charging residents a fee for damaged bins
  - Including free parking over Christmas
  - Reducing the Strategic Grants to the Arts

In addition to this, it was proposed that the saving schemes for the Libraries service should not be carried out, namely

- Abolishing the Libraries Service for Schools
- Reducing the Mobile Library Service
- Reduce the library's books fund budget.

The proposal was discussed, noting that if three schemes from the Libraries Service were saved this year, in addition to the five savings in

Appendix 12, the Council Tax would need to be increased by 5.8%, rather than 5.5%.

- The amendment was seconded, noting that it was difficult to strike the right balance between savings and increasing the Council Tax. The importance of listening to the residents of Gwynedd was expressed.
- Support was expressed to the fact that the Women's Aid budget would not be reduced this year, in addition to the contribution to the Youth Justice Service. It was reiterated that it provided an opportunity to reorganise and look at ways of working more efficiently in order to face the future financial challenge.
- The inflation in teachers' pensions was discussed, and it was noted that a consultation on the matter was being held in England. It was added that there was a need to wait and see the outcomes of this consultation.
- The proposal not to implement some of the saving schemes for the Libraries service was welcomed, specifically the service for Schools, as it extended the choice and packages available to pupils.
- Concern was expressed regarding next year's budgets. It was noted that there was a need to ensure that the economy was thriving.
- The Chief Executive, the Head of Finance Department and the Finance Department were thanked for the work of navigating the Council through the storm it was facing

## **9. ASSET PLAN 2019-29**

The report was submitted by Cllr Peredur Jenkins.

### **DECISION**

- a) To avoid further backlog in our buildings' maintenance work, that we transfer the £1.1m budget set aside to fund loans in the previous asset plan to boost the building maintenance revenue budget
- b) That the Cabinet accept the recommendations made in clauses 28; 30; 32; 35; 40; 43 and 44 of the report
- c) To adopt the Asset Plan (appendix 1 of the report) that incorporates all results noted above.

### **DISCUSSION**

The report was submitted, noting that the existing Asset Plan had now ended and a new Plan needed to be developed for the 2019/20-2029 period. It was noted that discussions had been held on departments in order to note their likely needs over the coming ten years. It was added that a number of the plans involved preventative work, and looked at the long term in accordance with the provision of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales 2015). It was noted that following these discussions, the members had prioritised the plans that were part of the plan.

The Chief Executive added that the report outlined the steps taken in order to create the Asset Plan. It was expressed that the asset plan was in-keeping with the Council plans. It was noted that a number of plans represented red Health and Safety risks and, as a result and in light of the substantial risk to life and to the Council, these would need to be escalated to the list that was intended to be completed, which include the Arfon Leisure / Tennis Centre, Padarn Park and Plas Silyn Leisure Centre. Attention was also drawn to plans that were identified in the amber risk category, either as a result of serious implications, equality matters, or that it meant that the Council would be unable to realise its well-being objectives. It would benefit the Council to attempt to include these plans into the programme as well.

It was noted that the report recommended moving schemes 28 and 31, namely the Provision of Grants in order to fund the Council's Empty Houses Scheme and fund a fourth Extended Supported Housing Scheme, to be considered for funding as part of the prioritisation within the Housing Strategy.

Observations arising from the discussion

Disappointment was expressed that the Council would not be able to fulfil every scheme. It was asked whether there would be re-prioritisation during the ten-year period. It was noted that the previous plan had been reviewed twice during the period, and there would be an opportunity to reconsider and re-prioritise as we moved forward with this Plan.

## **10. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on the following item due to the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 and 16, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

A request was made for the item to be exempt under the following section:

14.10.2 Exempt information – Discretion to Exclude Public (a) The public may be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that confidential information would be disclosed.

The report referred to commercially sensitive conditions that were currently the subject of negotiations with the Byw'n Iach Cyf company and its solicitors. Full publication of the report and Cabinet considerations could undermine the Council's ability to ensure the best conditions to protect its interests. It also involved legal advice on the agreement, and the conditions proposed in terms of the company and taxation issues.

Furthermore, releasing the summary of proposed conditions could allow an independent supplier from the Council to reach conclusions about the financial performance and, in turn, undermine any future procurement arrangements that would leave the Council open to financial risk.

## 11. BYW'N IACH CYF CONTRACT

The report was submitted by Cllr Craig ab Iago

### DECISION

- 1) To accept the report and confirm that the Cabinet is satisfied that the proposed transfer still satisfies the Business Case approved by the Council on 5 October 2017
- 2) To delegate the right to the Head of Economy and Community Department in consultation with the Head of Legal Services and the Head of Finance Department:
  - i) To complete the agreement documents, the Leases and any corresponding or service documentation required for the Service transfer
  - ii) To agree or make any further amendments required to complete the transfer within the Business Case

### DISCUSSION

It was noted that in October 2017, the Cabinet and the Full Council approved the Business Case for the establishment of a Company, limited by guarantee, managed by the Council, to provide leisure facilities in Gwynedd. It was expressed that the Byw'n Iach Cyf. company had now been established with six Company Directors. It was added that the work streams of establishing and transferring the service to operate as a company were reaching a close, and the intention was to transfer the service to the company's responsibility from 1 April 2019.

It was added that the preparation work for this transfer had been ongoing for some months, and the documentation was currently being drawn up. In order to proceed with the transfer, there was a need to confirm that the Business Case remained up-to-date and that the Cabinet was willing to proceed with the transfer. It was expressed that at the time of transfer on 1 April, there would be no immediate change for members of the Centre, and no developments would be seen until later on in the year.

Observations arising from the discussion

- A discussion was held on the relationship between the Council and the Byw'n Iach Company, noting that it was a two-way relationship, and regular discussions would be held.
- A question was asked about service level agreements following the transfer of the service to the new Company, and it was noted that it would be possible to discuss this and be flexible about it.
- The staff were thanked for their hard work.



The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.55 pm

**CHAIRMAN**