

THE CABINET 2/04/19

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig L. Siencyn, Dafydd Meurig, Craig ab Iago, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Dilwyn Morgan, Gareth Thomas and Ioan Thomas, Cemlyn Williams and Catrin Wager

Also present:

Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services), Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager), Annes Sion (Members Support Officer)

Items 6, 7 and 8: Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department), Debbie Jones (Education Corporate Services Officer), Gwern ap Rhisiart (Gwynedd Area Education Officer)

Items 9 and 10: Caren Rees Williams (Principal Capital and Management Accountant)

1. APOLOGIES

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

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of 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 12 MARCH

The Chairman signed the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 12 March 2019, as a true record.

6. RESTRUCTURING OF GWYNEDD LANGUAGE CENTRES

The item was submitted by Cllr Gareth Thomas

RESOLVED

Resolved to:

- i. Implement a teacher and assistant staffing structure pilot, increasing the teacher : pupil ratio at one Language Centre for a year, and to monitor it closely to identify whether it affects the quality of the education and the children's attainment.
- ii. Remove the TLR allowance for teachers at every Language Centre, and incorporate the after-care as part of the core Language Centres provision, thus abolishing the existing after-care post.
- iii. Enable more time to consider the pilot findings, to approve funding to bridge the gap that will continue to exist after implementing ii above until the findings of the pilot are known.

DISCUSSION

Submitted - the report noting there would be a need to decide how the Council would address the need to reduce the Language Centres' budget by £96,000. Attention was drawn to the fact that the language centres were achieving outstanding work.

It was added that an internal consultation had been held with staff, unions and at various Council meetings. The background of the Language Centres was explained noting that they had been funded by a grant from the Welsh Language Board, with the Council providing match funding. It was expressed that when the Welsh Language Board had been abolished, the Welsh Government's Welsh in Education Grant had gone on to fund the Centres. It was added that Welsh Government had brought 11 of the education grants together under the heading of the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) and this included the Welsh in Education Grant. It was expressed that the Education Improvement Grant had been cut every year since 2014/15, and by taking inflation into account, the cut was 34% in real terms, but it was added that over the years, the Language Centres had received full protection throughout all of these cuts. It was expressed that in 2018/19 that a cut of 10% had been made to the Welsh Government's Education Improvement Grant, leading to a £61,000 deficit in the Welsh Language Centres' budgets. It was noted that the Council had been able to bridge this deficit for this year.

Attention was drawn to the Foundation Phase which had seen a reduction of 32% since 2014/15 which equated to £1.2 million or approximately 70 classroom assistants. It was expressed that the work of immersing Foundation Phase children in the Welsh language was outstanding. It was expressed that the Welsh Government's settlement for this year was neutral, however it was a cut in real terms given inflation in salaries and pensions. Consequently, it was noted that the reorganisation was needed in order to be cost efficient.

It was expressed that an internal consultation had been carried out, in line with

Human Resources guidelines. A list of organisations and individuals the Cabinet Member and the Education Department had received correspondence from in relation to the Language Centres was noted, namely Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, Cylch yr Iaith, Popeth Cymraeg, CYDAG, RhAG, Town and Community Councils, Merched y Wawr branches, along with a vast number of individuals. Attention was drawn to three areas of concern that had arisen in this correspondence, namely objecting to the change, changing demography and the quality of the education (in the event of changing the structure).

The Head of Education and the Education Corporate Services Officer noted the current situation noting the staffing structure for the five Welsh Language Centres across the county, namely 4 primary centres and one secondary centre and drawing attention to the number of pupils attending the centres. They expanded upon the consultation process and emphasised that it was not a public consultation, rather an internal process of consulting with staff and unions only, because of the possibility of a change to their terms of employment. The options that were consulted upon were noted, and the department had drawn up criteria for the options.

A summary of the Unions' observations was provided noting the need for teachers to be specialists in order to ensure effective language immersion, to be able to plan lively, carefully structured lessons and the need to lead the centres in each other's absence. In addition, the Union had asked for clarity on some points in the context of the restructuring, suggesting the need to trial the teacher : assistant ratio for 16 children first, before making any decisions. It was expressed that the Dolgellau Language Centre, which was currently staffed by a Teacher and an Assistant had submitted their observations individually noting that they had been operating on an Option 2 basis for 16 years, and with great success. It was expressed that they were full and at times they had more than full capacity and were able to deliver the requirements of the course with a Teacher and an Assistant.

Attention was drawn that following the consultation on the four options that a further consultation had been held following a procedure from Human Resources on the option noted below:

Option under Consideration

- Every Language Centre to remain open.
- One non-contact Leader for all Language Centres, with the ability to teach at any of the Language Centres as required.
- A staffing structure of a Teacher and Level 4 Assistant at every Language Centre.
- After-care provision to become a part of the core provision of every Language Centre.

A summary was provided of the observations made by the unions on behalf of the Language Centre staff on the option in question noting that some educational issues included the need to consider arrangements relating to the number of children educated in a classroom. The Unions' observations regarding the role and responsibilities of the teacher and the management of the centres were provided, including a consideration of TLR responsibility payments. Additionally, there was the need to consider the possible challenges regarding the role of the

Leader in being responsible for the primary and secondary provision and any differences between the two curriculums was noted.

It was expressed that discussions had been held at the Welsh Language Committee, the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee and at the Full Council and the main concerns were noted including concern about losing specialist teachers; the impact of increasing the teacher : pupil ratio on the quality of the education and children's attainment; along with the lack of evidence to show that the changes consulted upon would not have a negative impact on the provision. It was emphasised there were three proposals that would address the concerns:

- I. It would be possible to maintain the current staffing situation and address some of the deficit by changing the staff's terms of employment, i.e. remove the teachers' TLR, remove the leadership tier in relation to terms of employment at every Language Centre, and incorporate the after-care as a part of the core provision of the Language Centres, thus abolishing the existing after-care post.
- II. A pilot could be held of the staffing structure of a teacher and assistant, increasing the teacher : pupil ratio at one Language Centre only for a period, and for it to be closely monitored.
- III. Implement any of the options consulted upon and meet the financial deficit in full.

It was noted that options I and II would not meet the budget shortfall in full, and there would be a need to find the shortfall every year if option I was chosen. In relation to option II it was noted that bridging funding would be required.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was asked how the Teacher : Pupil Language Centres' ratio compared with the ratio in schools. It was expressed that following the Grant cuts the ratio was higher in schools, and it was noted that Estyn had noted that Gwynedd schools were maintaining standards of education despite the higher ratio.
- It was emphasised that Gwynedd Council had to make the decision to cut the grant to the Welsh Language Centre but it was the Welsh Government that was cutting grants. It was expressed that these cuts made the Councillors question whether the Government was serious about its target of a million Welsh speakers. It was added that there was a need to press on the Education Minister and the Welsh Language Minister to end cuts to school grants. It was expressed that the Department and the Cabinet Member had been lobbying and holding regular conversations with the Ministers but that so far there was no mention of any more money being available. It was reiterated that it was heart-breaking that the Government was offering additional money with one hand and then cutting grants with the other.
- It was emphasised that the Cabinet was not prepared to support any option that enabled any of the Language Centres to be closed, noting, that they did not want the level of quality to fall either.
- After-care was discussed noting that the after-care work varied from Primary to Secondary. It was expressed in relation to Secondary that after-care work was part of the Centre's core provision. It was reiterated

- that concerns had been raised about the lack of after-care contact with pupils within the Primary Centres.
- The new Language Centre in Bangor was discussed noting that money had been approved for a capital bid to build a new Centre, however there was no revenue funding available to fund it in future. It was added that the application for a new centre emphasising the Council's commitment to the Language Centres.
 - It was asked why the department had not reviewed the provision sooner. It was expressed that the main reason was success in terms of standards and that children were fluent but it was noted that it had become apparent that it would have been sensible for the department to consider the Language Centres over the years.
 - It was asked why teachers of the Language Centres received a TRL allowance in addition to their salaries, and it was explained that this was because it was a historical addition and there was possibly a need to look into the matter further.
 - A discussion was held on Option II asking how the department would monitor the impact. It was noted that there was a need to monitor the Centres as schools and they would be discussed at the Cabinet's performance monitoring meetings which would be discussed at the Cabinet. It was added that there was no specific performance monitoring procedure in place at present.
 - Option III was discussed expressing the need to disregard it although this was the only option that met the financial deficit. It was expressed that it was not wise to change the Teacher : Pupil ratio without first holding a pilot scheme.
 - It was asked that if it were decided to go for a pilot scheme, how much money would be needed to bridge the financial gap. It was expressed that it would be possible for the Council to find the money to bridge the temporary gap but there would be a need to be explicit on what the structure would be.
 - It was expressed that it would be possible to use some elements of option I to specifically abolish the after-care post and to incorporate the function in the core provision of the Language Centres and to abolish TLR allowance for every Teacher. It was anticipated that this would be a saving of approximately £45,000 a year.
 - A discussion was held on combining some elements of Option I and II, noting that if a pilot scheme were needed there would be a need to measure it for a year and then assess the teacher : pupil ratio and whether it would have any impact on the quality of the education and the children's attainment.

7. REVIEW OF THE GWYNEDD STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CONSTITUTION

Submitted by Cllr Gareth Thomas

DECISION

To change the membership of Group A in the constitution as follows:

- Group A - Christianity - keep at 6
Propose to invite one representative from the beliefs
Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Sikhism and the Humanists
- Group B - Representation of Teachers and Headteachers - keep at 5
- Group C - Elected Members - keep at 7
- Co-opted - SACRE Committee to retain the right to co-opt members
- There are 3 votes, namely 1 for each Group - the Co-opted members do not have a vote

It was resolved to approve the Humanists' request to join Group A on the Gwynedd SACRE committee.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the Council had not considered the SACRE constitution since 1996. It was added that a letter from the Education Minister in May 2018 had confirmed that it was possible to appoint representatives from non-religious belief systems to Group A to ensure that SACRE reflected the beliefs of the community. It was expressed that a request had been received from Bangor Humanists to join as member(s) of Group A on the Gwynedd SACRE Committee.

It was expressed when considering the request of the Humanists to join as a member of Group A, that it was timely to give consideration to other beliefs to cover the variety of beliefs in Gwynedd on the SACRE committee.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Attention was drawn to the fact that the number of beliefs outside Christianity that were members of SACRE was very low, but it was expressed that SACRE reflected the situation across the county.

8. BEGIN LOCAL DISCUSSIONS ON OPENING A NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL IN CRICIETH

The report was submitted by Cllr Gareth Thomas

DECISION

Resolved

- a) To approve the right to commence local discussions in order to identify options for the construction of a new primary school in Cricieth, due to the poor condition of Ysgol Treferthyr's existing buildings.
- b) To approve the inclusion of Ysgol Llanystumdwy in the local discussions

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting the need to approve the right to commence local discussions in order to identify options for the construction of a new primary school in Cricieth, and to authorise including Ysgol Llanystumdwy in the discussions.

It was expressed that the Ysgol Trefferthyr building was in poor condition and the surveys had identified several issues in terms of significant defects in the construction which had designated the school in category C in terms of its condition. It was added that Welsh Government had now commenced its second phase of the 21st Century Schools Programme (Band B) which would begin in April 2019. It was expressed that the Council had submitted an application following the prioritisation exercise noting that improving primary provision in Cricieth had been identified in this application. It was noted that the department had learnt from the first wave of the 21st Century Schools Programme (Band A), that after constructing new buildings for schools, their numbers tended to increase. Consequently, it was noted that the number of pupils included in the applications would be based on the pupil numbers of the school catchment rather than the numbers at the school when the application was drawn up.

It was noted that Ysgol Llanystumdwy was attended by a number of children from the Cricieth catchment-area and it was noted that initial discussions had been held with the Governing Body, Staff and Parents to discuss the possible impact of building a new school. As a result of these discussions, it was expressed that the Governors had noted they were eager to be part of the discussions.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was asked whether including the catchment-area schools in the discussions added to the statutory process. It was noted that holding the discussions with Ysgol Llanystumdwy would add to the work, as there would be a need to follow the Schools' Organisation Code.
- Councillor Gareth Thomas was thanked for his work in his role as the Cabinet Member for Education and the Education Department's staff were also thanked.

9. FURTHER EFFICIENCY SAVINGS 2019/20

Submitted by Cllr Ioan Thomas

DECISION

Resolved to utilise £1,666,560 from the Transformation Fund to repay the loan used to carry out the LED lamps saving scheme and to bridge the period for delivering the scheme to take the whole of the £184, 500 saving into account in 2019/20.

DISCUSSION

Submitted - the report noting that the matter being discussed today was a relatively technical matter. It was expressed that he was eager for the Cabinet to agree to utilise £1,666,560 from the Transformation Fund to repay the loan used to carry out the LED lamps saving scheme and to bridge the period for delivering the scheme to take the whole of the £184, 500 saving into account in 2019/20.

It was expressed that the Council's Financial Strategy was based on delivering a series of savings to limit the Council Tax increase to 5.8%. It was added in order to limit this increase the strategy envisaged the need to find further efficiency savings of £500,000. It was expressed that changing the procedure for repaying the scheme to install LED lamps in the remainder of the county's street lights was one way of finding further efficiency savings.

It was noted that the intention for the time being was to obtain a loan from Salix to fund the work and to repay the loan from the savings that would be realised. It was expressed that there was a difference between the savings that would be delivered and the repayment profile and it would be possible to realise £45,900 from next year's saving in light of this difference however it would increase significantly after repaying the loan in full in 2032/33. It was reiterated that the Scheme would be realised over a three year period and there would be a need to bridge the delivery phase to obtain the saving in full from 1 April 2019 and £1.39m would therefore be required as repayment and £0.28m required for the bridging period

10. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2019/2, 2020/21 AND 2021/22

Submitted by Cllr Ioan Thomas

DECISION

The schemes shown in Appendix A were included in the capital programme for the three year period 2019/20; 2020/21 and 2021/22.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting the need to set the schemes for the Council's capital programme for the next three years. It was expressed that the Council had adopted an Assets Plan for the next 10 years on 7 March. It was reiterated that normally, the capital programme was included in the report on the budget but as the Council had not yet adopted the Assets Plan, it was had not been possible to do this in detail.

It was noted that consultation had taken place with the departments to establish the likely profile for the individual schemes within the Assets Plan, and therefore it was recommended that the Cabinet approved including the schemes in the programme in the next three years.

It was expressed that the amount for 2019/20 did not correspond to the £11.728m noted in the report for the budget. It was added that the reason for this was that the schemes were not advanced enough to commence until 2021/22. Consequently, it was noted that re-profiling work had been done to coincide with the spending and the budget will be amended.

11. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The item was submitted by Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn

DECISION

The Forward Work Programme included with the meeting papers was approved.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.50 pm

CHAIRMAN