

THE CABINET 18/05/21

Present-

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

Also present:

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department) and Annes Sion (Democracy Team Leader).

Item 6: Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department) and Gwern ap Rhisiart (Dwyfor/Meirionnydd Area Education Officer).

Item 7: Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department)

Item 8: Steffan Jones (Head of Highways and Municipal Department) and Peter Simpson (Streetscene Manager)

Item 9: Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department) and Meinir Owen (Senior Projects Practitioner)

Items 11 and 12: Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager).

1. APOLOGIES

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

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

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 20 APRIL 2021

The Chair accepted the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2021 as a true record.

6. NEW SCHOOL IN CRICIETH

The report was submitted by Cllr Cemlyn Williams.

DECISION

To confirm finally the proposal made through a statutory notice, to increase the capacity of Ysgol Treferthyr to 150 and relocate the school to an alternative site referred to as the A497 site on 1 September 2023, in accordance with Section 53 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the requirements of the Schools Organisation Code 11/2018.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that it was a pleasure to present it. It was noted that it was a report back to the Cabinet following the objection period for increasing the capacity of Ysgol Treferthyr and to relocate to an alternative site. It was stressed that this scheme was a substantial investment in the area and that it was a part of the Education Modernisation programme.

Attention was drawn to the Plaid Cymru Manifesto for the 2017 Local Government election which highlighted the need to improve education resources within the county. It was noted that this scheme complied with the vision within the manifesto.

The Head of Education Department added that this scheme was an exciting one and the need for investment in the area was highlighted.

The Education Officer noted that this item had been discussed many times at the Cabinet and that this decision would be the final statutory step. It was noted that, back in January, the Cabinet had decided to start an objection period and that, during the period, no objections had been received. It was emphasised that Welsh Government had agreed with the scheme's business case and confirmed a contribution of £3.174m towards the £5m Scheme.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The report was welcomed and it was noted that the lack of objection highlighted the strength of the conversation held locally. It was asked whether there would be a call-in period. It was noted that there was a call-in period with specific criteria but that the department did not anticipate any specific problems.
- It was noted that increasing the numbers was a good decision as numbers tended to increase following the construction of a new school.
- In response to a question, it was noted that the new school would open in September 2023, but that initial planning stages would start during the summer.

7. APPRENTICESHIPS SCHEME AND "CYNLLUN YFORY" SCHEME FOR MANAGERS AND EXPERTS

The report was submitted by Cllr Nia Jeffreys

DECISION

To commit £1.1m of one-off funding from the Covid-19 grant receipt to fund the Apprenticeships scheme, as well as the “Cynllun Yfory” Scheme for managers and experts.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting the decision to commit £1.1m to fund the Apprenticeships Scheme, as well as the “Cynllun Yfory” Scheme for managers and experts. It was highlighted that these schemes not only developed the skills of individuals but also assisted to develop the workforce for the future.

It was noted two years ago that the Council had earmarked an amount to fund the Apprenticeships Scheme, and with this money, it had been possible to appoint 35 apprentices and nine of these had been appointed to posts within the Council. It was expressed that this scheme had been a success and had realised more than what was planned two years ago. It was noted that the scheme had tried to encourage not only young people to take part in the scheme but also older people. It was noted that there was a shortage of bilingual apprenticeship provision in the county, and that this aspect was at the forefront of the scheme. It was highlighted that the apprenticeships opportunities were in specific locations in order to ensure the future of services.

It was also noted that the funding would contribute also to the "Cynllun Yfory" scheme for managers and experts. It was noted that it was a scheme for graduates which provided jobs in key locations. It was emphasised that this scheme had existed for some years and had proven its worth, and it was explained that it was in-keeping with the members' vision.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that funding this scheme was essential in order to create sustainable communities.
- The report was welcomed, and it was asked whether the apprenticeships would lead to permanent posts within the Council. It was noted that nine had received permanent posts and eight continued on the apprenticeships scheme. It was noted that it was a popular scheme and that the number of candidates for the electrician apprentice post and within the information technology field were high.
- Both schemes were positive and there were fully supported. It was asked whether there was support for the unsuccessful candidates. It was also asked if there was a lot of interest, whether it would be possible create more opportunities within the field. It was noted that there was a relationship with providers and that they were confident that it would be possible to hold a dialogue to guide individuals who were unsuccessful.
- Attention was drawn to the slogan - *Tai, Gwaith, Iaith* (Housing, Employment, Language) - and it was stressed that the housing action plan was in place for the housing aspect, and that there was a need to provide support to be able to offer jobs through the medium of Welsh to individuals within the county.

8. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER - DOG CONTROL

The report was submitted by Cllr Catrin Wager.

DECISION

To approve the undertaking of the process of considering the introduction of a new Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in relation to dog control throughout the county, in accordance with the draft Proposed Order.

To authorise the Head of Highways and Municipal Department to undertake a consultation process for a period of 28 days, starting on 24 May 2021, with the matter to return to Cabinet for decision as to whether a dog control PSPO should be introduced, as well as any associated delegations.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that the paper was asking for permission to commence a public consultation on dog control within the county. It was stressed that there were very strong feelings about dogs and that the regulations needed to respect the wide range of feelings about dogs. It was stressed that many individuals took dog control very seriously but that dog fouling had become unacceptable. The campaigns held by the Council to seek to reduce the occurrence of dog fouling on streets were highlighted.

It was stressed that regulations had been in place for some time, and it was explained that this would be a new order as a result of legislative changes; the nature of the regulations would not change. It was reported that there were very few changes, with the exception of some beaches, specifically amending boundaries in Tywyn, Abersoch, Y Friog and Cricieth. It was noted that there would be some changes for the entire county, specifically keeping dogs on leads and picking up dog mess. It was noted that a fine could be imposed for not picking up dog mess and for not paying fines on time there was a possibility of court proceedings.

It was explained that there was a general feeling, specifically after a year of many people walking more in their local areas, that there was a great deal of dog mess seen on the streets. The need for clean and tidy communities was stressed, and citizens were asked to take the time to voice their opinions.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was stressed that there was a lot of interest in this field among citizens and the importance of commencing the consultation. The timeline was highlighted, noting that the department would report back to the Cabinet in July in order to move on to issue the Order.
- It was emphasised that this field was very important to local people and that the past year had highlighted the problem but that this report highlighted the Council's intention to do something about it.

9. HOSTING AUTHORITY FOR THE SPORT NORTH WALES PARTNERSHIP

The report was submitted by Cllr Gareth Thomas

DECISION

To agree for Gwynedd Council to act as the host authority for the Sport North Wales Partnership.

To delegate the power to the Head of Economy and Community Department in consultation with the Head of Legal Services and Head of Finance Department to agree and complete a revised joint-working agreement.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and it was noted that, back in December, the Cabinet had approved being a part of the Partnership. It was noted that, when the decision had been made, it was intended for Conwy Council to act as host authority. By now, it was noted that Conwy Council had failed to meet the requirements in terms of the host authority element, and that there was a request for Gwynedd Council to take that role instead.

It was stressed that the Council was host authority for the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and GwE, but that hosting the Partnership would involve much less work for Council officers. The decision sought was noted.

Observations arising from the discussion

- As the Council was host for a range of schemes across north Wales, a question was asked about the volume of work involved with hosting. The Head of Finance Department noted that this scheme was on a much smaller scale, and that it was not a joint-committee as it was an informal partnership. Although there was work to do to allocate the grant, it was on a much smaller scale in terms of annual accounts.
- It was noted that as the Council hosted so many schemes, there was room to congratulate the Council for being successful with this work. It was added that Gwynedd was leading on several schemes and that we needed to take pride in that, but the need to monitor this and ensure that it did not affect the day-to-day work of the Council was stressed.

10. CARE INSPECTORATE WALES ASSURANCE AUDIT LETTER

The report was submitted by Cllr Dafydd Meurig and Cllr Dilwyn Morgan.

DECISION

To accept the contents of the Assurance Audit Letter issued by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) regarding their findings about Gwynedd Council social services following the audit held on 18-22 January 2021.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that it was presented for information to Cabinet members. It was noted that the audit had been held during January and during the second wave of the pandemic. The audit was welcomed as a means of ensuring standard within the services. It was explained that the letter praised the work of both departments on the whole. Attention was drawn to the main messages in terms of the Adults Department which included the fact that good work was being done in the preventative field but that they would appreciate more investment in the field. The need to improve waiting times for occupational therapy was noted, but it was also noted that the Cabinet had recently agreed to increase the budget within this field to increase the department's resources. It was stressed that the Council had coped well with the pandemic and the timely use of digital methods, distributing the personal protective equipment as well as ensuring that individuals returned home following a hospital stay in a timely manner.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families added that the partnership with the Care Inspectorate was very important and it was explained that the audit looked specifically at safety and well-being. It was noted that it was a good feeling that the letter highlighted issues that the department was aware of and which were part of the work programme. The inspectorate staff were thanked for the way they arranged the audit as well as the staff for assisting them in the middle of a pandemic and the service users for giving their time as well.

The Corporate Director also thanked the heads, managers and staff for being so willing to arrange the audit as well as ensuring that their day-to-day work was prioritised. The Inspectors were thanked for the way they went about their work, ensuring that it was not too much of a burden on staff. It was emphasised that it was good to have a report that did not raise any new issues, and that the majority of the issues had been identified in the work programme. It was noted that the Letter had been sent to the Scrutiny Committee for information also.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that, as this was such a wide-ranging and contentious field, the content of the letter was good. It was added that it was particularly good that the letter identified fields which the departments were already aware of.

11. FINAL ACCOUNTS 2020-21 - REVENUE OUT-TURN

The report was submitted by Cllr Ioan Thomas.

DECISION

1.1 To note the final financial position of the Council's departments for 2020/21.

1.2 To approve the amounts to be carried forward (the "Revised Over/ (Under) Spend" column of the summary in Appendix 1), namely -

DEPARTMENT	£'000
Adults, Health and Well-being	(100)
Children and Families	0
Education	(100)
Economy and Community	(100)
Highways and Municipal	0
Environment	(100)
Gwynedd Consultancy	(64)
Housing and Property	(75)
Corporate Management Team and Legal	(100)
Finance	(86)
Corporate Support	(100)

1.3 To approve the following recommendations and financial virements (as outlined in Appendix 2) -

The Children and Families Department to receive one-off financial assistance of £1,261k to cancel the overspend entirely, given the exceptional circumstances involving the crisis this year. To allow the department to move on to face the challenges of 2021/22.

- In accordance with the Financial Regulations, it is recommended that the usual practice is adhered to in order to allow the Education Department to keep (£100k) of its underspend, and to move (£159k) which is the sum above (£100k), to be used to support the department that has overspent in 2020/21.
- To allow the Housing and Property Department to transfer (£848k) relating to corporate maintenance to the repair and maintenance fund to fund the expenditure in future.
- In accordance with the Financial Regulations, it is recommended that the usual practice is adhered to in order to allow the Corporate Management Team to keep (£100k) of its underspend, and to move (£6k) which is the sum above (£100k), to be used to support the department that has overspent in 2020/21.
- On Corporate budgets:
 - use (£926k) of the Corporate net underspend to assist the Children Department that has overspent in 2020/21.
 - that (£2,047k) of capital schemes that are to be funded from revenue to be transferred to a fund to allow the reprofiling of the resource.
 - that £600k is released from the Council's General Balances.
 - that (£4,000k) is allocated to the Council's Transformation fund to support transformational and one-off work.

- that (£2,519k) is allocated to a fund for recovery arrangements post Covid19.

1.4 To approve the virements from the specific reserves as outlined in Appendix 4 following a review of the funds, harvesting (£170k) from funds to assist the Children Department that has overspent in 2020/21.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that the report elaborated on the Council's expenditure in 2020/21. Attention was drawn to a summary of the final position of all departments seen in the report with the amounts to be carried forward at the end of the financial year in the "Revised Over/ (Under) Spend" column.

The main matters and fields where significant differences were seen were highlighted. It was noted that the financial impact of Covid had been substantial for the Council, with £20m claimed from the hardship fund and Furlough by the end of the year. It was explained that, as a result of receiving numerous other substantial grants associated with Covid-19 late in the financial year, this meant that the financial position of 2020/21 had been transformed by the end of the year. It was noted that five departments had been overspending before allocating the compensation grants for Covid-19 from Welsh Government, but after the allocation of grants, it was only the Children and Supporting Families Department that was overspending finally. Nevertheless, it was noted that a reduction in the overspend to £1.3 million was due to savings worth £688k that would not have been possible to achieve being deleted as well as receiving a Covid grant.

It was explained that there was a substantial improvement in the Adults Department's situation following savings that would not have been possible to achieve being deleted and slipped as well as general grant receipts in the final months of the year. It was noted that the effect of Covid-19 had had a substantial impact on the Adults, Health and Well-being Department, worth over £4.5 million by the end of the year.

In terms of the Highways and Municipal Department, it was noted that the increase was a combination of reducing expenditure, covid grant and general grants received and savings deleted. It was stressed that the waste field remained the main pressure on the department. It was detailed that the department had faced substantial additional costs relating to complying with regulations as a result of Covid-19 as well as loss of income in the commercial waste field.

It was noted that, with regards to schools balances, that there had been an increase from £4.3m in 2019/20 to £10.7m in 2020/21 as a result of the impact of Covid-19 and various grants received. It was explained that, as a result of a review of the adequacy of the Council's specific reserves at the closure of accounts, £170k of resources had been collected. The decision was noted.

The Head of Finance Department thanked the staff for ensuring that the accounts were closed in a timely manner and whilst working from home. It was stressed that the underspend situation seen across the departments was also seen across

other Welsh authorities. It was noted that, last year, the Council had been fortunate of the funds it had in reserve to fund schemes during the pandemic without certainty about grant funding. However, following the grant funding received, it was now possible for the Council to prioritise schemes from the transformation fund in order to make a difference to the services and citizens of Gwynedd.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The staff of the Department were thanked for their work in ensuring financial stability in Gwynedd.

12. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21 - END OF YEAR REVIEW (31 MARCH 2021 POSITION)

The report was submitted by Cllr Ioan Thomas.

DECISION

To accept the report on the end of year review (31 March 2020 position) of the capital programme.

To note the £27,667,000 spend on the capital programme during the 2020/21 financial year, which will be included in the statutory financial statements for 2020/21.

To approve the revised financing as shown in part 4 of the report, namely:

- £3,000 increase in the use of borrowing
- £10,561,000 increase in the use of grants and contributions
- No change in the use of capital receipts
- £234,000 increase in the use of revenue contributions
- No change in the use of the capital reserve
- £200,000 increase in the use of renewal funds and others

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that its purpose was to present the revised capital programme and to approve the relevant financing sources. It was noted that the report provided an analysis per department of the £114.6m capital programme for the three years between 2020/21 - 2022/23. It was added that the report detailed the sources to fund the net increase of approximately £11m since the previous review.

It was noted that the Council had succeeded in spending £27.7m in 2020/21 on capital programmes, and £18.2m had been funded through specific grants. It was explained that the impact of Covid-19 and the lockdown could be seen clearly. It was added that £14.1m had been reported upon in the previous 2020/21 reviews, that a further £19.3m of proposed expenditure had been re-profiled to 2021/22 with the main schemes including the £4.5m 21st Century Schools Programme, £3.3m on Vehicle Renewal, £2.2m on Schools Maintenance which arrived in

March 2021, with specific right for Welsh Government to replace current funds and slip them to the subsequent year and £1.7m for the Aberdyfi Quay scheme.

Attention was drawn to additional grants the Council had managed to attract since the previous review, which included £7.2 million from the Local Transport and Safe Routes Fund, £0.6m Ground-breaking Housing Grant to assist with reducing homelessness and £0.5m Intermediate Care Fund Grant.

The Head of Finance Department noted that the report involved capital schemes. It was added that the performance monitoring procedure would restart imminently and that capital scheme monitoring would be incorporated in this procedure as well.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that it was astounding that the Council would spend £64m on capital schemes over the coming year to invest in the future of the county. Staff were thanked for ensuring that schemes were in place ready for when opportunities arose, and to be so willing to make use of late grants.
- Attention was drawn to some of the schemes behind the figures, specifically the circular economy schemes which highlight the substantial shift from how to deal with waste in a different way and ensuring that resources are re-used and kept in use within communities.

13. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

To approve the Forward Work Programme included with the meeting papers.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.40 pm

CHAIRMAN