

THE CABINET 17/12/19

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-

Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services), Dewi Morgan (Assistant Head of Finance - Revenue and Risk), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director), and Annes Siôn (Democracy Team Leader).

Item 5 and 6: Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department), Roland Evans (Assistant Head - Culture, Economy and Community Department) and Gareth Jones (Assistant Head, Environment Department)

Item 7: Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager)

Item 8: Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department) and Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Manager)

1. APOLOGIES

Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department).

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 26 NOVEMBER 2019

The Chair signed the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2019, as a true record.

6. SUBMISSION OF THE SLATE LANDSCAPE OF NORTH WEST WALES WORLD HERITAGE SITE NOMINATION

Presented by Cllr Gareth Thomas

DECISION

Resolved to:

- Acknowledge the feedback following the public consultation on the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales Heritage Site Management Plan
- Acknowledge the relevant amendments that have been made to the content of the Management Plan and the Bid to UNESCO in response to the consultation;
- Approve the submission of the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales Heritage Site Full Nomination to the UK Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Paris for the World Heritage Committee's consideration.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and the decision sought was noted. It was added that a public consultation had been held on the Management Plan and that adaptations had been carried out following the consultation.

It was added that there were two parts to the bid submitted to UNESCO, namely the Management Plan and the Full Bid. It was stressed that slate, the culture and the language were part of the landscape conveyed in the bid. It was noted that adaptations had been made to the bid at the last minute and, consequently, the bid was currently only available in English in order to be submitted to UNESCO. It was added that a translation would be available in the new year.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Officers were thanked for their work and it was asked what steps would be taken in terms of the concerns that had been raised in relation to the language and tourism following the consultation. It was acknowledged that the language and culture aspects of the initial bid were weak but that they had now been strengthened. It was added that work would be carried out on the effect of tourism by the Planning Service together with the Language Service.
- It was noted that excessive tourism had been a concern in recent months but that it was important that the bid had responded to the concerns by looking at the impact.
- The public and stakeholders were thanked for taking the time to respond to the consultation.
- It was asked if the social enterprises found throughout the slate areas had been a part of the process. It was noted that they had been a part of the process and also a partner. It was added that they saw the bid as an opportunity.

7. FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION FROM GWYNEDD COUNCIL TO THE LLOYD GEORGE MUSEUM CHARITY

The report was submitted by Cllr Gareth Thomas

DECISION

To contribute £27,000 from the Transformation Fund to the Lloyd George Museum Charity for 2020-21 to allow more time for Trustees to consider the best models for the future.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that the Council had decided to cut the contribution made to the Lloyd George Museum in 2017. It was noted that, following the Council's decision, the Chancellor of the British Government had announced that the financial deficit would be met by the British Government for a bridging period.

It was added that a permanent solution had not been agreed during this period; therefore, the department was requesting an additional year's funding in order to decide on options of how the Museum could move forward.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the Council had two roles in this situation as the Council acted as the Museum's charitable trustee as well as running the museum as one of its services. It was stressed that the report submitted for consideration examined the financial qualities and that a further discussion as 'Trustees' would happen following this decision.
- It was stressed that the resource was such an important one to Wales and the additional year would give an opportunity to engage with the museum more and to find a solution to secure its future.
- It was expressed that a discussion may be needed to see if it would be possible for the Museum to become part of the Slate Plan for the World Heritage Site bid as one of the locations.
- As the bid was in order to secure a long-term solution for the Museum, it was stressed that the appropriate source of funding would be the Transformation Fund.

8. SAVINGS PROPOSALS AND THE COUNCIL BUDGET

Presented by Cllr Ioan Thomas

DECISION

To accept the latest information received from the Finance Department in relation to what the settlement means, and in order to consult with our fellow members in the workshops in January, that we refrain from using the savings in the four bottom rows of the table in paragraph 13, but that the savings contained in the first line of the table (worth £1.06m of efficiency savings) should be used in order

to meet an element of the additional demands on us and in order for us to consider a more reasonable Council Tax increase.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that we had now received the draft settlement and that it was better than expected. It was noted that, although the settlement covered inflation, it did not reach the level required in order to fund the additional demands on departments.

It was added that, in July, the Cabinet had decided upon a strategy of planning to meet a deficit of £2m which would be shared amongst all departments. It was also added that these schemes had been scrutinised by the relevant Scrutiny Committee prior to being submitted to the Cabinet. Nevertheless, it was explained that the settlement was a positive one, but it was stressed that it was still in draft form and only for the coming year. We did not know what would happen in subsequent years.

The Senior Finance Manager added that the final settlement would be announced in February. It was noted that, on average, authorities had received an increase of 4.3% in the grant for the next year but that Gwynedd was a little higher on 4.6%. It was explained that the draft settlement covered the 3.1% inflation but that it did not cover the 2.3% of additional demand on services. It was noted that it was likely that the financial deficit of £3.5 million would still need to be addressed.

The Chief Executive stressed that these figures could change before February, but that the draft highlighted that this settlement would be the best in 10 years for the Council as it covered our inflation requirements. He added that, in order to address the deficit, it would be possible to increase the Tax by 5% or decide to use all the savings proposals from the departments and increase the tax by 2% or any combination between these scenarios. It was noted that a decision was needed on the recommendation to allow the Finance Department to consult on the budget with all councillors in January.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was stressed that grave cuts were seen in the table of savings which would have a major impact on the residents of Gwynedd. It was proposed to use the savings contained in the first line of the table (worth £1.06m of efficiency savings which would not have a substantial impact on the residents of Gwynedd) in order to consider a more reasonable Council Tax increase.
- Pride was expressed that the budget recognised the additional demand on departments as the money was for the most vulnerable people in the county.

9. GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTION (WALES) BILL - NOVEMBER 2019

Presented by Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn

DECISION

To approve the draft response which has been prepared on behalf of the Council to the Consultation on the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill - November 2019, for submission to the Full Council for approval on 19 December 2019.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that the Bill had been published and that there were some elements with which the Council agreed, such as the voting age and the principle of a single transferable vote.

It was noted that the proposal to create a Corporate Joint Committee for the main elements was not acceptable as it was a step towards creating a higher tier of a regional authority. It was added that adding these authorities would distance the decisions from the electors. It was added that regional collaboration such as that seen in the Health field currently worked well as it was happening voluntarily. It was stressed that mandatory collaboration would be ineffective.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the Community Councils should be considered and possibly start to review the system from this level in order to strengthen the foundations before going any further.
- It was noted that this bill was a threat to democracy and added an additional tier where there was little mention of accountability and would take decisions further away from the electorate.
- It was stressed that the relationship between Welsh Government and the authorities needed to be re-examined in order to establish an equal relationship so that Welsh Government would not interfere with decisions at a local level.

10. THE OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL LETTER 2018/19

Presented by Cllr Dafydd Meurig and Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn

DECISION

To receive the Annual Letter of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 2018/19 and the observations noted.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that the letter reported on complaints within the Council. It was added that the report had been submitted to the Cabinet during the summer, reporting on the complaints procedure and the individual cases behind the report's figures. It was explained that there was no typical message or any concerns arising.

However, the Chief Executive noted that problems had arisen with the way we had dealt with the case referred to him where a report had been given by the Ombudsman explaining the background. We had not acted in accordance with the exact wording of that agreed with him. Consequently, he was not satisfied with the Council's response and the Chief Executive met with him in order to explain the situation. The Chief Executive's intention was to review our complaints arrangements when a report would be referred to the Ombudsman in order to ensure appropriate action.

It was added that the Council's complaints procedure encouraged Departments to learn from the complaints and to put themselves in the shoes of the citizens. It was explained that the Ombudsman made the Council work in a different way and, therefore, steps may need to be included in the complaints procedure to insert a corporate procedure when a draft report from the Ombudsman was received so that both procedures worked hand in hand.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.20 pm

CHAIRMAN