

THE CABINET 18/02/20

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig L. Siencyn, Dafydd Meurig, Craig ab Iago, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Dilwyn Morgan, Ioan Thomas and Catrin Wager and Aled Wyn Jones (Local Member – item 6).

Also present-

Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), 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/Meirion Area Education Officer)

Item 7: Dewi Wyn Jones (The Council's Business Support Service Manager) and Bethan Richardson (Business Support Officer)

Item 8: Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager)

Item 9: Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department) and Emma Quaeck (Dementia Go Programme Manager)

Item 11: Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department) and Arwel Owen (Assistant Head - Housing and Well-being)

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting and staff who had been working in all weathers during recent storms were thanked.
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 MEETINGS HELD ON THE 21 AND 28 JANUARY

The Chair signed the minutes of the meetings held on 21 and 28 January 2020, as a true record.

6. YSGOL LLANAELHAEARN

Submitted by Cllr Cemlyn Williams

DECISION

It was resolved to accept the observations received during the statutory consultation period as well as agreeing to:

- i. Approve the proposal to close Ysgol Llanaelhaearn on 31 August 2020, and provide a place for the pupils at Ysgol Bro Plenydd, Y Ffôr from 1 September 2020.
- ii. Approve the publication of statutory notices on the proposal in (i) above in accordance with the requirements of Section 48 of the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.
- iii. Approve the transport arrangements for the transition period only, when free transport will be available for those pupils enrolled at Ysgol Llanaelhaearn currently, to Ysgol Bro Plenydd, Y Ffôr or Ysgol Chwilog specifically, if they live over two miles from the chosen school, or that they receive free transport because of the nature of the roads in accordance with Gwynedd Council's current transport policy.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that the Cabinet had approved a request in December to commence a statutory consultation period on the proposal to close Ysgol Llanaelhaearn in accordance with the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. It was emphasised that the number of pupils had reduced to eight in recent years and that projections were highlighting the probability that numbers would reduce further over the next five years and that this, inevitably, was a prominent factor.

The Head of Education Department noted that seven responses had been received during the consultation period, along with a response from Estyn and that sessions had been arranged with pupils. The Area Officer noted the observations raised by pupils which emphasised that they were saddened that closing the school was an option and that they were eager to attend Ysgol Chwilog rather than Ysgol Bro Plenydd as a result of existing connections with the school. It was reiterated that Ysgol Chwilog and Ysgol Llanaelhaearn had been working closely but that Ysgol Bro Plenydd had been selected as an alternative school as it was geographically closer. It was added that it was possible for Ysgol Bro Plenydd to cope with the additional number of pupils and the school catchment area would be extended as a result. As the pupils were eager to attend Ysgol Chwilog, it was also elaborated that the Department would be willing to pay transport costs for the school's current pupils to attend the school if that was the wish of their parents and whether it would be possible to

register them at the school. In that regard, it was underlined that this would depend on place availability in Ysgol Chwilog, bearing in mind that children from the catchment area would be given priority. Based on the situation as it currently stood, and unless things would change substantially in September, this should not be problematic.

The local member expressed his disappointment and sadness at closing the school. He thanked and praised the staff for providing education to the remaining pupils and to the Governors for attempting to get pupils back to the school. The Education Department was also thanked for the offer to attend Ysgol Chwilog.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was stated that statistics in the report highlighted the challenges that faced the school. The Department was thanked for its engagement work and it was enquired whether the Department would provide transport to both schools. It was explained that transport would be available and that school selection, therefore, depended on the wishes of parents.
- In terms of timetable, it was enquired whether it would be possible for parents to register their children at one of the two schools. It was highlighted that pupils would automatically transfer to Ysgol Bro Plenydd and that it would be up to parents to apply for registration at Ysgol Chwilog.
- Support was expressed for the offer to attend either school so that children could select their school.
- Sadness was noted with regards to closing the school and the School Governors were thanked.

7. COUNCIL PLAN

The report was presented by Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn

DECISION

It was resolved to approve the Gwynedd Council Plan 2018/23 - 2020/21 Review to be submitted to the Council on 5 March 2020, subject to the following:

- Adding clauses to the Housing Department section to note the Council's actions and priorities for the forthcoming year in relation to the provision problem which is being created as a result of the number of holiday homes in the county.
- Revisions to the order of the Education Department's information in the Plan.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that the Council Plan had been originally adopted by the Full Council in 2018. It was added that the Plan would be reviewed annually. It was stated that the Council was attempting to make the Plan coherent for residents and outlined the main projects of the Council for the forthcoming year.

Attention was drawn to two new items that had been added to the Plan - Work of the Climate Change Scheme and the Housing and Property Service. It was stated that these fields addressed responsibilities in the climate change field and showed the substantial prioritisation done by the Council in the Housing Field.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The addition from the Housing and Property department was welcomed and it was emphasised that the field was challenging as a high number of houses in the county were holiday homes. It was reiterated that a clause needed to be added to the section noting their priorities for the coming year in terms of the problem being created in terms of supply in light of the number of holiday homes in the county.
- Pride was expressed that climate change could be seen in the Plan and challenges faced by Gwynedd Consultancy to protect communities were highlighted. It was emphasised that the Highways Department was also maximising recycling, reducing the amount of litter sent to landfill and attempting to reduce the creation of waste through different schemes. It was added that the Climate Change Group covered all departments and explored ways to move forward.
- The information of the Education Department in the report was discussed. It was noted that if you looked at it as a citizen that the information did not mention much about the work of the schools themselves, starting with the schools improvement service. In order to ensure clarity, it was emphasised that the Education Department's plan needed to be amended.
- Attention was drawn to Priority 8 - Businesses Receiving Support to Prosper, and it was enquired whether this work was undertaken on a daily basis. It was stated that supporting businesses was day to day work but that it had been maximised as the future was uncertain as a result of Brexit.
- It was emphasised that the report provided a clear picture of the Council's work and highlighted a clear direction.
- It was highlighted that the document was ultimately being created for residents and while it clearly highlighted what we did to serve Gwynedd residents, it did not clearly highlight how good we were at delivering this as this appeared in our Performance Report. It was also noted that the wording of the document needed to be examined in future to ensure clear Welsh. It was added there was hope that it would be possible to combine the Council Plan and the Performance Report next year so that it was possible to ensure that we had a plan noting what we do for Gwynedd residents and how good we do it - namely, matters that will be of interest to residents.
- The incorporation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act in the document was welcomed.
- Staff of the Council's Business Support Service were thanked for their work in creating the Council Plan.

8. 2020/21 BUDGET

Submitted by Cllr Ioan Thomas

DECISION

Resolved to:

- a) Recommend to the Council (at its meeting on 5 March 2020) that:
 1. A budget of £261,837,750 should be set for 2020/21, to be funded by £187,579,040 of Government Grant and £74,258,710 Council Tax income, with an increase of 3.9%.
 2. A capital programme of £44,247,260 should be established in 2020/21, to be funded from the sources noted in Appendix 4 of the report.
- b) Approve moving forward with implementing the list of savings schemes in Appendix 3, in order to establish the budget recommended to the full Council.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that the budget would be submitted to the Full Council at the beginning of March. It was explained that Gwynedd's draft settlement was one of the highest in Wales and better than what had been anticipated. However, it was stated that the draft settlement was insufficient to meet inflation and additional demand on services. It was noted that the settlement in full would be announced by the Government on 25 February.

Revenue expenditure was discussed drawing attention to the Discontinuation of Specific Grants and noting that the Government funded schemes with grants and then noted that grants would not continue in the following year and that the money would not be transferred to the settlement either. As a result, it was noted that the Council needed to provide the funding. Attention was drawn to the bids seen under the Pressures on Services heading and the Chief Executive was thanked for his work to examine all bids. It was stated that the budget noted that staff collective agreement adjustments would be abolished completely this year. It was noted that the Pension Fund had received better than expected returns in recent years and, as a result, the Council would not need to add as much into the fund next year.

It was explained that savings schemes had been discussed at the Scrutiny Committees over the past few months and it was emphasised that a number of them were contentious. Following these discussions, it was stated that the number of savings schemes had reduced. Attention was drawn to the budget setting table which highlighted the Council's spending needs and that the financial deficit would be met by raising Council tax by 3.9%. As the future was currently so unclear, it was added that there was no need to look further this year and it was recommended for the report to be discussed at the Full Council meeting.

Should the settlement be lower than what had been published, the Head of Finance Department added that there were plans to use reserves in order to manage risk. It was stated that balances would not need to be used this year. It was emphasised that there was a lot of uncertainty regarding the future and a budget was needed by the Chancellor. It was stated that the department would return to the Cabinet in May or June to discuss the 2021/22 budget and it would be possible to use reserves if required. However, it was emphasised that the budget was balanced and that the savings proposed would have the least impact on residents.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the Council had been protecting the Education Department over the past few years noting that this would also continue this year.
- It was stated that the settlement was better than what had been anticipated but it was emphasised that it was a better settlement, not a good one. It was added that savings continued to be made and over the past ten years it was highlighted that the Council had made savings of £68 million. It was elaborated that Cabinet Members were eager to be in a situation where consideration could be given to investing in services for Gwynedd residents instead of looking at savings on an annual basis.
- It was explained that the Council had good financial management and while some authorities were closer to the edge in financial terms, contrary to what had recently been suggested in the Guardian, this was not this Council's case. It was added that the Wales Audit Office was currently undertaking an investigation on how financially sustainable Local Government was.
- The department was thanked for the seminars for members. A bid for Charging Points by the Highways department was elaborated upon. It was noted that the period prior to the end of the financial year was a period where it was possible to apply for many grants by the Government but these had a very tight timetable. It was emphasised that it did not give departments the opportunity to plan their work in the long term.
- Attention was drawn to the bid for Bodfael bridge noting that the bid was for the construction of a new bridge and that this would improve provision for Gwynedd residents.

9. DEMENTIA GO

Submitted by Cllr Dafydd Meurig

DECISION

Resolved to contribute £200,000 from the Transformation Fund to finance two full-time positions (in Pwllheli and Porthmadog) and two 7-hour a week posts (in Tywyn and Caernarfon) to continue the provision of the Community Dementia Go Support Service Scheme until March 2022.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that there was an increase in demand for support for those living with dementia. It was stated that this funding was for a temporary two-year period in order to fund the Dementia Go scheme. It was emphasised that after two years, it was hoped that this work would become the day-to-day work of the department. However, research work was required in order to ensure this, and evidence needed to be gathered to measure the impact of the Scheme.

The Dementia Go Programme Manager added that the scheme held activities across Gwynedd with approximately 110 people participating in them on a weekly basis. It was highlighted that being active was obviously a central part of the work to ensure balance and strength but that support was also a key part. It was stated that activities were an opportunity for people to get together at a comfortable location in their community.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Pride was expressed in seeing the scheme working and to receive a report by the Research and Analytics Service to undertake a full evaluation. It was added that there was great benefit from the scheme and a clear impact on carers and individuals.
- It was emphasised that there was support for the scheme and that members were very hopeful that robust evidence would highlight its impact. Attention was drawn to the fields that would witness an impact in future which included the Health Field as well as the care services. It was enquired whether or not the Health Board was willing to contribute, it was noted that they were supportive of the scheme. It was added that it would be possible to emphasise the benefits to the Health Field by gathering evidence

10. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Submitted by Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn

DECISION

It was 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.

There is an acknowledged public interest in openness in relation to the use of public resources and related financial issues. It is also acknowledged that there

are occasions, in order to protect the financial interests of public authorities that matters related to commercial information need to be discussed without being publicised. The report was specifically regarding the financial matters of other bodies and associated discussions. Publishing commercially sensitive information of this type could be detrimental to the interests of the bodies and the Council. This would be contrary to the wider public interest of securing the best overall outcome. For these reasons, the Monitoring Officer was satisfied that the matter was closed for the public interest.

11. POLISH HOUSING SOCIETY

The report was presented by Cllr Dafydd Meurig

DECISION

Resolved to:

1. Support the proposal to develop a detailed business plan which would suggest options for maintaining the existing care services on the site and consider whether the facilities on the site are viable in the short term and longer term.
2. Subject to receiving a viable business case, to offer financial support in order to safeguard the care and nursing provision on the site, while developing a new building / facilities subject to ensuring a fair contribution from the Health Board.
3. Approve Clwyd Alyn's application to operate in Gwynedd as a Social Housing provider, so that the Penrhos site or elements of the site can be transferred to Clwyd Alyn Housing Association.
4. Support the principle of prudential borrowing, subject to the receipt of a satisfactory, detailed business case.

DISCUSSION

The report was discussed

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 3.20 pm

CHAIRMAN