
THE COUNCIL 13/05/10

Present: Councillor W Tudor Owen (Chairman)
Councillor John Gwilym Jones (Vice-chairman)

Councillors: Bob Anderson, Stephen Churchman, Anwen Davies, Dyfed Edwards, Dylan Edwards, Elwyn Edwards, Huw Edwards, Trefor Edwards, T G Ellis, Alan Jones Evans, Alun Wyn Evans, Jean Forsyth, Simon Glyn, Keith Greenly-Jones, Gwen Griffith, Margaret Griffith, E Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, Siân Gwenllïan, Dafydd Ll Hughes, Huw Hughes, Louise Hughes, Sylvia Humphreys, O P Huws, Aeron M Jones, Anne Lloyd Jones, Brian Jones, Charles Wyn Jones, Dai Rees Jones, Dyfrig Jones, Eric Merfyn Jones, Evie Morgan Jones, J R Jones, John Wynn Jones, Linda Wyn Jones, R L Jones, W Penri Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, P.G.Larsen, Dewi Lewis, Dewi Llewelyn, Dilwyn Lloyd, June Marshall, Keith Marshall, J Wynn Meredith, Llinos Merks, Linda Morgan, Dewi Owen, W Roy Owen, Peter Read, Caerwyn Roberts, Glyn Roberts, Ieuan Roberts, John Pugh Roberts, Liz Saville Roberts, Trevor Roberts, W Gareth Roberts, Dyfrig Siencyn, Ioan Thomas, Guto Rhys Thomas, Ann Williams, Gethin Glyn Williams, Gwilym Williams, J.W.Williams, Owain Williams, R H Wyn Williams, and Robert J Wright.

Also present: Harry Thomas (Chief Executive), Dilwyn Williams, Iwan Trefor Jones and Dafydd Lewis (Corporate Directors), Dilys Phillips (Monitoring Officer/Head of Democracy and Legal Department), Geraint George (Head of Strategic and Improvement Department), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Dewi R Jones (Head of Education Department), Aled Davies (Head of Regulatory Department), Gwenan Parry (Head of Customer Care Department), Iwan Evans (Legal Services Manager), Gruffydd Wyn Morris (Planning Service Manager), Rhun ap Iarheit (Senior Solicitor), Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager – Performance and Scrutiny), Dafydd Gibbard (Corporate Property Manager), Geraint Owen (Client Manager – Property and Construction) and Eleri Parry (Senior Committee Officer).

Apologies: Councillors E T Dogan, Christopher Hughes, Arwel Pierce and Dafydd Roberts

1 PRAYER

The meeting was opened with a prayer from Councillor T G Ellis.

The prayer was followed with an announcement from Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones, Chair 2009/10.

2 CHAIRMAN

Councillor W Tudor Owen was elected as Chairman for 2010/2011.

Councillor W Tudor Owen signed a declaration accepting the post of the Chairman of Gwynedd Council for 2010/2011.

3 VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor John Gwilym Jones was elected as Vice-chairman for 2010/2011.

Councillor John Gwilym Jones signed a declaration accepting the post of the Vice-chairman of Gwynedd Council for 2010/2011.

4 MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the Council meeting held on 25 February 2010 as a true record.

5 DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Prior to the committee, a briefing note from the Monitoring Officer had been distributed to members regarding an item before the Council relating to the Members Allowance Scheme.

- (i) All members present declared a personal interest in the item "Members Allowance Scheme". Members were advised that it was not a prejudicial interest. Consequently, they did not withdraw from the meeting and participated in full in the discussion on the item.
- (ii) Councillor Eric Merfyn Jones declared an interest in the item regarding the "Royal Welsh Show" because he was an elected member of the County's Consultative Committee.

The member was of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest, and he withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on the item.

- (iii) The following members declared a personal interest in the item "New School at Yr Hendre" for the reasons noted:-

- Councillor W Tudor Owen because he served on the school's Governing Body;
- Councillor W Roy Owen because he was the Chairman of the school's Governing Body and had been associated with the scheme from the outset.

The members were of the opinion that it was not a prejudicial interest and they participated fully in the discussion on the item.

- (iv) The Head of Strategic and Improvement Department declared an interest in the item regarding "New School at Yr Hendre" as his wife was teacher at the school and he withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on the item.

6 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (i) It was noted that Gwilym Euros Roberts had resigned as a member of Gwynedd Council and that there would be a by-election in the Diffwys and Maenofferen ward, Blaenau Ffestiniog, on 15 July.
- (ii) Condolences were expressed to the following:-

Councillor Siân Gwenllïan on the recent loss of her father-in-law;

The family of Professor Eric Sunderland – Former Vice-chancellor of Bangor University, and former Lord Lieutenant of Gwynedd who had died in March;

The family of Llew ap Gwent who had been killed when climbing in Cwm Idwal last Saturday. Llew was the Co-ordinator of Partneriaeth Penllyn and had worked with the Council on many occasions;

Then condolences were extended to everyone else who had lost loved ones recently and the meeting was invited to stand in silence as a mark of respect and sympathy.

(iii) The following were congratulated:-

Hywel Williams MP and Elfyn Llwyd MP on being re-elected to Westminster;

Councillor Huw Edwards on being elected as Caernarfon Town Mayor for the third time;

The daughter of Councillor Dilwyn Lloyd on winning a competition with the "best bird" in Nefyn Show;

Councillor Alun Wyn Evans on winning the Wales Lapwing Competition 2010, namely a national conservation award;

Bangor City Football Club on winning the Welsh Cup for the third successive year.

(iv) Following the transfer of the Council housing stock to Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd, it was noted that Ffrancon Williams, Chief Executive of CCG would be giving a presentation to the Council immediately following the meeting and all members were invited to attend the presentation.

7 URGENT ITEM

The notice of motion from Councillor Gwen Griffith regarding the abolition of the Cymorth grant fund had not been included on the Council's agenda, however, the Chairman agreed to its inclusion under Section 100B (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, because the information had come to hand after the agenda had been published. The children of Gwynedd would be at a loss should the money be re-directed and the issue required immediate attention.

8 QUESTIONS

Question from Councillor Owain Williams

"Following a statement made by some of the Council officers that there would be a financial saving by doing away with the Area Committees, what evidence or statistics are available to prove this?"

Answer from Councillor J R Jones

"Thank you for the question

In the discussions on the Savings Strategy during 2009, it was noted that changing the Planning Committees to create one County Planning Committee instead of the present three Area Planning Committees and Central Planning Committee would create a saving of £71,761 (savings form D and C1). These savings are attributable to the fact that the number of committees would be halved.

The savings contain the following elements:-

Chairman allowances, members and officers travelling costs, printing and posting of agendas.	£15,737
Half of a Committee Officer's post	£16,248
Translator's post	£39,776
Total	<u>£71,761</u>

Also there is a saving of £33,669 in the Planning Service. By not changing the order of committee system, this saving would be a cut in the Service.

In addition, having one committee would release 33 administrative working hours and 133 solicitor working hours which can otherwise be redirected.

Full details of the analysis are in the appendix distributed to members".

Supplementary Question

"It was reported by a Councillor from Powys Council that the Council had not saved any money when moving to one central planning committee. Therefore, how does Gwynedd Council estimate a saving of £71,761? Also, how was a saving made on the chairperson posts as area chairpersons receive an allowance anyway?"

Answer from the Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer explained that the figures had been appended to the response she had distributed to members. Furthermore, she explained that the Independent Remuneration Panel had decided that the only committees which would attract a Chairperson's allowance would be the Board, scrutiny, pensions, licensing and planning committees, and that an allowance would not be paid to the chairperson of an area committee any more.

9 SCHOOL HOLIDAYS 2010/11

Submitted – the report of the Head of Education Department on the outcome of his enquiries, following the Council's decision for the education officers to revisit discussions in order to act on the Council's wish to enable the parents and children of the area to attend the Royal Welsh Show, Builth Wells in 2011. Also, there was a wish to seek common holiday dates for Wales as a whole.

The Head of Department expanded upon the outcome of the discussions with the Association of Directors of Education Wales, and on the re-consultation with the various groups.

He emphasised that it would be problematic for schools to identify three school days to replace the days in July. He referred to a possible local solution, by means of a combination of reclaiming days by holding evening hours INSET sessions, parents using their entitlement to request additional holidays under alternative arrangements and schools to consider organising trips to the show. During discussions with head teachers, he

explained that he had noted that individual schools could submit an application to the Authority to vary the annual holiday pattern. Such a request could be supported should the school and the Governing Body accept responsibility for organising three school days to replace the days in July.

He explained further that he had received information regarding the dates of the Show in future, and that it was likely that there would be a similar situation in approximately six years, but it was hoped that there would be a common national procedure in place by that time which would respect the national events.

- (i) In reference to suggestions regarding a local solution, the Education Portfolio Leader suggested that the Authority committed to approve any request by an individual school to release staff and pupils of the County to attend the Royal Welsh in 2011, provided that they accepted the responsibility for arranging three school days to replace the days in July.
- (ii) Councillor John Pughe Roberts, the proposer of the original notice, explained that the former Caernarvonshire, namely part of Gwynedd and part of Conwy, would be sponsoring the Royal Welsh Show in 2011. He noted that attempts were being made across the County to raise money to promote the Show and to seek to ensure a prosperous and memorable festival, and it would disrupt many Gwynedd residents if the schools would not close until 20 July.

He emphasised that the Show in Builth Wells was the largest of its kind in Europe and that it was a shop window for the agricultural industry in Wales. It was important to many Gwynedd families and was an important part of the education and development of the county's children and young people.

He proposed an amendment that the schools of Gwynedd, like other schools in mid and south Wales, closed on Friday 16 July 2011.

- (iii) The situation was discussed in detail and a lengthy opportunity was given to members to express their views on the issue.

All members were in agreement that there was a need to establish a common national procedure and for that procedure to respect national events, including the Royal Welsh Show, Builth Wells. Meanwhile, many members were eager to seek a local solution to the situation by means of a combination of arrangements that had been outlined in the Head of Department's report.

Others expressed concern that local arrangements would mean that some rural schools would be unable to cope because of a lack of staff and that the only way of resolving the situation was to change the dates and close all schools in the county on 16 July.

Others emphasised that changing the dates late in the day would cause problems to schools that had planned based on the existing arrangements and it was emphasised that a local solution was available.

A vote was taken on the amendment that Gwynedd schools closed on Friday 16 July 2011 and it was passed.

RESOLVED that all Gwynedd schools close on 16 July 2011, instead of 20 July, and that three days should be found to replace the dates.

11 POLITICAL BALANCE

Submitted – the report of the Head of Democracy and Legal Department regarding the Council's political balance and associated issues.

It was reported that the Council was required to ensure that the constitution of its committees and sub-committees reflected the strength of the Council's various political groups.

It was explained that the Complaints Committee and the Charities Sub-committee had been abolished by now and as a result, there had been a reduction in the number of seats on the Council's committees. Also, the number of Llais Gwynedd Group members had reduced and as a result, there was a need to amend the allocation of seats. It was noted also that the Business Group had agreed to the proposed allocation.

In addition, it was explained that a member of the same political group as the chairman of the Board could not be the chair or vice-chair of the Principal Scrutiny Committee or Audit Committee and the Business Group had agreed to the proposed allocation of the chairpersonships and vice-chairpersonships of the main committees.

RESOLVED

- (i) **To note and accept the Council's following amended political balance:-**

Plaid Cymru	35
Independent	18
Llais Gwynedd	12
Liberal Democrats	5
Labour	4
Vacant Seat	1

- (ii) **to adopt the allocation outlined in the table noted below**

COUNCIL BOARD AND PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	Liberal Democrats	Labour
Council Board	7	4	2	1	1
Principal Scrutiny Committee	7	4	2	1	1

OTHER SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	Liberal Democrats	Labour
Development	7	4	3	1	
Environment	7	3	3	1	1
Children and	7	3	3	1	1

Young People					
Care	7	4	2	1	1

OTHER COMMITTEES

	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	Liberal Democrats	Labour
Audit	8	4	3		
Pensions	2	2	Vacant Seat	1	1
Central Planning	5	3	1	1	1
Central Licensing	5	3	2	1	
Employment Appeals	3	1	1	1	1
Human Resources	6	2	2	1	
SACRE	3	2	1	1	
Local Joint Committee	6	2	2		1
Special Education Joint Committee	3	2	1		1
Language	3	2	2		

(iii) to adopt the allocation of chairpersonships and vice-chairpersonships in accordance with the table noted below:-

	Committee	Chairman	Vice-chairman
1	Council Board	Plaid Cymru	Plaid Cymru
2	Principal Scrutiny Committee	Liberal Democrats	Independent
3	Children and Young People	Independent	Labour
4	Environment	Liberal Democrats	Plaid Cymru
5	Care	Llais Gwynedd	Plaid Cymru
6	Development	Plaid Cymru	Plaid Cymru
7	Audit	Independent	Llais Gwynedd
8	Central Planning	Plaid Cymru	Llais Gwynedd
9	Central Licensing	Independent	Plaid Cymru

10	Pensions	Labour	Plaid Cymru
11	Human Resources	Independent	Plaid Cymru
12	Employment Appeals	Plaid Cymru	Independent
13	Arfon Area	Plaid Cymru	Independent
14	Dwyfor Area	Llais Gwynedd	Plaid Cymru
15	Meirionnydd Area	Plaid Cymru	Llais Gwynedd

12 MEMBERS ALLOWANCE SCHEME

Submitted - the report of the Head of Democracy and Legal Department on the Members Allowance Scheme.

- (i) It was reported that the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales had been published in February 2010 and that the Council had to amend its allowances scheme in order to comply with the Panel's decision.

Reference was made to the key issues, namely the Council's decision not to earmark additional money for members allowances in the 2010/11 budget; to abolish the allowance for vice-chairpersons except for the vice-chairperson of the Council; to retain the historical difference between the allowances of the chairpersons of various committees; minor amendments for claiming a Care allowance; to increase the allowance for stays in London and to continue to refer to the payment as an "allowance" rather than a "salary".

There was a saving of £20,448 in the budget as a result of abolishing allowances for vice-chairpersons, and the Principal Scrutiny Committee had recommended that the money should be recycled in order to close some of the substantial deficit in the allowances of Board members. Also, as there was a considerable deficit between the allowances of Gwynedd and the maximums recommended by the Panel, and a substantial financial deficit in the budget, it was explained that the Principal Scrutiny Committee had recommended that attention should be given to this element when setting the budget for 2011/12.

- (ii) A number of members expressed great discontent because no allowance would be paid to the chairpersons of area committees and concern was expressed that the new arrangements would undermine the status of the area committees and would be a threat to their future. Also, many members were discontent that the chairpersons of other committees were losing their allowance.

Further objection was expressed to the decision of the Independent Panel to abolish allowances for vice-chairpersons, and emphasis was placed on the fact that some vice-chairpersons worked incredibly hard and that further attention should be given to the issue.

The Monitoring Officer explained that Council members and officers had submitted observations and had expressed disappointment to the Independent Panel regarding the situation. Also, similar observations had been submitted from other councils and correspondence had been sent to the WLGA, however, the Panel was not prepared to reconsider the situation. She explained further that she had sent a letter to the Panel again at the request of the Principal Scrutiny Committee and she pledged that she would distribute a copy of the response to members when it would be received.

The Head of Department emphasised further that the Council was not entitled to set allowances outside the categories noted by the Panel and that there was a need to have an Allowance Scheme in place in order to pay members in 2010/11.

RESOLVED to adopt the Members Allowance Scheme for 2010/11.

13 REVISIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Submitted - the report of the Head of Democracy and Legal Department.

It was reported that there was a need to amend the Delegation Scheme for Committees and the Delegation Scheme for Officers following the Council's decision to abolish the Complaints Committee, Charities Sub-committee and Non-domestic Rates Sub-committee, along with the abolition of the Introductory Tenancies Review Panel as the housing stock had been transferred. Also, minor additions and amendments were submitted to the list of enactments that had been delegated.

RESOLVED to accept the amendments and to adopt the Delegation Scheme for Committees and Sub-committees and the Delegation Scheme for Officers as part of the Council's constitution.

14 APPOINTMENT OF RESERVE MEMBERS FOR COMMITTEES

Submitted – the report of the Head of Democracy and Legal Department, explaining recommendations made by the Principal Scrutiny Committee in response to a notice of motion to the Council regarding allowing reserve members to replace a standing member who was unable to attend a committee.

The main features of a new procedure of having reserve members for committees were noted.

It was explained that every group would appoint one reserve member for each committee of which they were members. It was emphasised that a member who was unable to attend should inform the Chairman that a reserve member would be delegating on his/her behalf. It was noted that reserve members would be the only ones with a right to act as delegates.

It was reported further on rules that would be associated with the procedure, and it was noted that the Board or Area Committees would not be included within the procedure, and other committees that would not be considered as part of it were listed.

A member noted that the original notice of motion submitted referred to confining the implementation of the reserve member procedure to special circumstances. The member was discontent that there was no reference to any restriction in the Example Procedural Rules and proposed that reserve members should only be permitted to replace a standing member as a result of a long-term illness or family bereavement only. Also, the member proposed that the situation should be reviewed within six months (rather than within 12) and that any additional cost be calculated.

In response, the Chairman of the Principal Scrutiny Committee reported that the scrutiny committee had discussed the situation carefully and had considered a number of factors thoroughly and in detail. He emphasised that the committee had not reached its conclusions lightly and he asked the Council to accept the recommendation of the scrutiny committee as it stood, and he emphasised that there would be an opportunity to scrutinise the situation in detail in 12 months.

An amendment to restrict delegating in committees to special circumstances only, namely long-term illness and family bereavement only, fell.

RESOLVED to approve the recommendations of the Principal Scrutiny Committee and to adopt the Example Procedural Rule.

15 REVIEW OF PLANNING COMMITTEES

- (i) Submitted – the joint report of the Head of Democracy and Legal Department and the Head of Regulatory Department on alternative arrangements for the planning committees.

Following a number of external reports regarding the Council's arrangements in making planning decisions, it was reported that the Chairpersons and Vice-chairpersons Forum had considered alternative arrangements. The Forum had concluded unanimously that the model for a single county planning committee to replace the existing area planning committees and Central Planning Committee could be approved.

- (ii) It was reported on the advantages and disadvantages of the new procedure and the main features of the proposals were listed as follows:-
- One county committee of 15 members based on political balance and area balance (however, Board members would not be eligible to serve on the committee)
 - Local member(s) to be entitled to attend to submit arguments on behalf of electors
 - Local member(s) to continue to be able to refer a matter to committee (rather than being decided by an officer's delegated powers)
 - All committee members to receive training before they are able to serve on the committee
 - The committee to meet every three weeks (15 times a year)
 - Location of the committee to circulate around the areas, i.e., five meetings each in Caernarfon, Pwllheli and Dolgellau, but with a presumption in favour of deciding on the application locally
 - Decisions that are contrary to policy to be deferred for a "cool down" period
 - No right to call decisions to the centre or to refer them higher

It was emphasised that every member of the Council had been invited to an awareness raising session and to have a presentation on the new procedure and had been given an opportunity to ask questions. Also, the issue had been discussed in detail by the Principal Scrutiny Committee and the proposals before the Council had been approved.

- (iii) The Chairman of the Principal Scrutiny Committee reported that there was a presumption in the scrutiny committee that every application would be discussed in the area that was local to that application when practical, but that this was not obvious in the report before the Council. He emphasised that it was important for applications to be heard locally, be that at the request of an applicant, local member or objector, and he noted that the process would not involve a delay in excess of six weeks.

The Head of Department explained that the Proposed Model noted that applicants or a local member could apply for a matter to be held back locally, and if the Planning Manager realised that there was a substantial local objection, he would be able to hold an application back following a discussion with the Chairman and the local member.

- (iv) A member noted that he was very supportive of the proposed arrangements and that he agreed that it was important that the public and local member were able to speak at the committee. Nevertheless, he explained that he was concerned that this could lead to long meetings, and officers were asked to address restricting the speaking time.

Another member emphasised that there was a single planning framework in place for Gwynedd as a whole by now and that there was a need to move to a single county planning committee arrangement and ensure consistent decisions across the county.

He noted further that he was of the view that there would be improved local accountability as a local member would be able to express his/her views and could campaign in his/her community in favour or against an application, and could submit arguments on behalf of the electors at the planning committee.

Also, the member was of the view that the expertise of the new committee would be a means of looking at the needs of the county in terms of the economy, the environment and education more strategically, and would lead to decisions that would develop and improve the County.

Another member noted that he welcomed the proposed arrangements, but he was of the opinion that the situation would need to be reviewed within a specific period and he proposed that the Environment Scrutiny Committee should hold a review within 12 months of its commencement regarding how effective the new arrangements were and to consider further changes as required.

- (iii) Some members strongly opposed the proposals before the Council.

Concern was expressed that the new arrangements weakened democracy and would do away with local knowledge and accountability as it would do away with the current regime where every councillor in a particular area dealt with planning applications.

Also, concern was expressed that the proposed arrangements would weaken the area committees.

Other members were dubious as to whether or not the new arrangements would lead to savings in reality.

The Chair of an area committee reported that she had been under the impression that there had been unanimous support to the arrangements by chairpersons and vice-chairpersons and that the observations made by some of them against the proposals before the Council saddened her greatly. She emphasised that the existing procedure was vulnerable. She reminded the Council of the Assembly's rights to withdraw the rights to decide on planning applications away from the Council should its decisions be inconsistent.

With the permission of the proposer and seconder, it was agreed to add to the proposal that the Environment Scrutiny Committee held a review within 12 months of its commencement regarding how effective the new arrangements were and to consider further changes as required.

In accordance with Procedural Rule 19 (6), the following vote was recorded on the above-mentioned amendment:-

In favour: (49) Councillors Bob Anderson, Stephen Churchman, Dyfed Edwards, Dylan Edwards, Elwyn Edwards, Trefor Edwards, T G Ellis, Alan Jones Evans, Alun Wyn Evans, Jean Forsyth, Keith Greenly-Jones, Gwen Griffith, Margaret Griffith, Siân Gwenllïan, Huw Hughes, Sylvia Humphreys, O P Huws, Anne Lloyd Jones, Brian Jones, Charles Wyn Jones, Dai Rees Jones, Dyfrig Jones, Evie Morgan Jones, John Gwilym Jones, J R Jones, John Wynn Jones, Linda Wyn Jones, R L Jones, W Penri Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Dewi Lewis, Dewi Llewelyn, Dilwyn Lloyd, J Wynn Meredith, Linda Morgan, Dewi Owen, W Tudor Owen, Caerwyn Roberts, Glyn Roberts, Ieuan Roberts, John Pugh Roberts, Liz Saville Roberts, Trevor Roberts, W Gareth Roberts, Dyfrig Siencyn, Guto Rhys Thomas, Ann Williams, J.W.Williams and R H Wyn Williams.

Against: (11) Councillors Anwen Davies, Simon Glyn, E Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, Aeron M Jones, P. G. Larsen, Keith Marshall, Llinos Merks, Peter Read, Owain Williams and Robert J Wright.

Abstentions: (6) Councillors Dafydd Ll Hughes, Louise Hughes, Eric Merfyn Jones, W Roy Owen, Gethin Glyn Williams and Gwilym Williams.

Officers and members were thanked for their thorough work in bringing the proposals before the Council and it was noted that the consultative and democratic processes when considering other corporate issues should be emulated.

RESOLVED

(i) to approve the recommendations of the Principal Scrutiny Committee and to adopt the single county planning committee procedure for the Council in accordance with the details in the appendices; and

(ii) that the Environment Scrutiny Committee holds a review within 12 months of its commencement regarding how effective the new arrangements are and to consider further changes as required.

Submitted – the report of the Head of the Strategic and Improvement Department on the review of the Three Year Plan, namely the final year of the existing Plan (2008-2011).

- (i) It was reported that there was a need to review the Plan occasionally in order to be aware of changing issues in order to ensure that the Council was able to respond appropriately to changes.

It was noted that inclusive work had been undertaken in order to identify key factors that needed to be considered when reviewing the Plan, and that consideration had been given to the need to add programmes to the Three Year Plan that would guide the Council towards transformation.

The Council was invited to consider the observations of the Principal Scrutiny Committee on the draft plan which included six Strategic Programmes, namely: *Transforming the Council, Economy and Regeneration, Environment and Infrastructure, Children and Young People, Value for Money and Vulnerable People*, and to approve the final plan.

- (ii) The Leader detailed the review procedure and the Head of Strategic and Improvement Department elaborated upon the arrangements. It was emphasised that the Three Year Plan was essentially important and provided guidance and ownership on the improvement priorities.

He explained that it was intended to build on the collaboration and joint-production when planning the Three Year Plan 2011-14.

- (iv) The Plan and the observations of the Principal Scrutiny Committee were considered.

The Lead Member – Children said that she welcomed greatly the fact that the parenting field had been added as an additional plan under the Early Intervention field.

In response to an enquiry, it was explained that officers were considering arrangements for the Council to provide a mortgage for young people who were purchasing a house under a 106 agreement but it was explained that the issue was a very complex one.

A member expressed concern that work was being given to companies from over the border and that companies were bringing their employees with them. Also, he was concerned because there were no opportunities for unemployed young people to gain access to work experience.

The Chief Executive explained that there was a need to act within the strict procurement procedure and tendering processes. He emphasised that the Council was attempting to ensure that local companies were aware of the opportunities available and that the work was being packaged reasonably to enable them to tender for the work. Also, arrangements were in progress to develop and act upon a programme of projects to offer work experience to unemployed individuals, with particular attention being given to targeting young people.

RESOLVED to approve the introduction of the second review of the Three Year Plan for Year 3 (2010-11).

18 THE NEW SCHOOL AT YR HENDRE

Submitted – a joint report by Iwan Trefor Jones, Corporate Director and Gwenan Parry, Head of Customer Care Department, regarding the budget deficit for developing a new school for the Hendre area, Caernarfon.

It was reported by the Senior Leader – Resources, that the Council had been successful with the grant application from the Assembly's Strategic Capital Investment Fund towards the cost of building a school to replace Ysgol yr Hendre which was in a very poor condition and was too small to satisfy the needs of an increasing number of children.

He explained that the conditions of the grant demanded that the £4.3million had to be spent in full by March. It was emphasised that the timetable was very challenging for such a major scheme and that a usual timetable for such a substantial development would be approximately three years.

By now, detailed plans had been prepared and the technical team suggested that the total cost of the development would likely be approximately £9.2million, namely £2.2million more than the finance available. As a result of the tight timetable for spending the grant, it was noted that the Council needed to agree on how to overcome the deficit if it were to be ensured that the £4.2million of grant funding was not lost.

In response to enquiries, the reasons for the substantial increase in the costs were expanded upon, namely:-

- it had not been possible to obtain full details regarding costs as only three weeks had been allowed for preparing the grant application;
- identification of more substantial archaeological remains than usual on the development site;
- the cost of ensuring suitable access to the site;
- the nature of the site - i.e. long, narrow and lie of land.

It was emphasised that every attempt was being made to reduce the costs. If the Council wished for the development to be realised, it was explained that the only logical option was to seek to create provision within the Corporate Asset Strategy. The Council needed to decide whether or not the plan was of sufficient priority to be included in the Corporate Asset Strategy with new provision being made for it in the Capital Programme for 2011/12.

It was explained that there would be a need to revisit the Corporate Asset Strategy later on this year as a result of the likely reduction in the capital allocation to the Council. At that time, there would be a need to reprioritise, taking account of the general deficit because of the financial situation in the public sector and the additional deficit created from committing capital for the Ysgol yr Hendre scheme.

A member expressed grave concern regarding the issue and he suggested that an independent investigation should be undertaken regarding the situation.

Many members were concerned about the increase in costs and the substantial budget deficit. Nevertheless, there was general agreement that there was a need to carry on with the scheme in case the grant was lost. Reference was made to the poor condition of the existing school and it was noted that the Council itself would need to identify a very substantial amount for building a new school soon, should the grant be lost.

It was emphasised that there was a need to investigate the processes thoroughly to see whether or not there were lessons to be learnt on a local and national level, and it was

proposed that the issue should be referred to the scrutiny committee to investigate in detail the reasons for the increase in costs and also to consider whether or not it would have been possible to act differently in order to avoid the increase in costs.

RESOLVED

- (i) **To make provision within the Corporate Asset Strategy to overcome the budget deficit in the development of the new Ysgol yr Hendre, including the required sum in the capital programme for 2011/12. The exact sum will be known once the building contract has been set but at worst this sum could be in the region of £2.2 million.**
- (ii) **To put pressure on the Assembly to offer a greater degree of flexibility in relation to the timescale for spending grant funds in order to avoid this type of situation in the future.**
- (iii) **To support the Leadership Group's recommendation to commission work to look at whether or not there are lessons to be learnt in relation to the local and national arrangements.**
- (iv) **To refer the issue to the Principal Scrutiny Committee to investigate in detail the reasons for the increase in costs and also to consider whether or not it would have been possible to act differently in order to avoid the increase in costs.**

19 NOTICES OF MOTION

- (a) Reported, for information, that the Council at its meeting on 21 January 2010, had decided to defer the discussion on the notice of motion of Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd, namely *"That this Council restricts the responsibility of the Central Planning Committee to discuss planning matters which are relevant to Gwynedd as a whole such as quarrying, mining, flood defences, the energy industry etc. leaving the Area Planning Committees to deal with planning applications relevant to their areas and accountable to the Full Council"* as the Council would be considering the report of the Working Group on arrangements relating to dealing with planning applications.

Because the Council had decided to establish one county planning committee, Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd noted that he wished to withdraw his notice of motion.

RESOLVED to agree to withdraw the notice of motion regarding restricting the responsibility of the Central Planning Committee because the Council had decided to establish one county planning committee.

- (b) Submitted – the following notice of motion received by Councillor Gwen Griffith under Procedural Rule 13 along with an organisational notice under Procedural Rule 13(12) requesting that the matter be discussed at the Council without being referred to the relevant committee first:-

RESOLVED to discuss the proposal at this meeting.

The following motion was proposed and seconded:-

"That this Council writes formally to Mr Carwyn Jones AM, First Minister of Wales, to express grave concern regarding the intention of the Welsh Assembly Government to abolish Cymorth (The Children and Families Fund) in its present form in order to establish a Strategic Fund to support the implementation of the new National Child Poverty Strategy.

Despite the fact that the efforts of the Welsh Assembly Government in addressing child poverty are welcomed, establishing a Strategic Fund would lead to a loss of £1,367,861 for Gwynedd and this, in turn, would have a direct impact on a number of public and voluntary organisations who depend on Cymorth funding to provide services and schemes to some of the most needy children, young people and families in the County. The proposal is also contrary to the promise made by the Welsh Assembly Government to rationalise the grant system by transferring discretionary grants (such as Cymorth) to Local Authority settlements.

The member explained that consultations would be held on the issue soon and that there would be a need to act urgently.

RESOLVED

- (i) to adopt the notice of motion;**
- (ii) to ask the Head of Social Services Department to act on the notice of motion.**

The meeting commenced at 1.00pm and concluded at 4.10pm

CHAIRMAN