

THE CABINET 13/12/16

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig L. Siencyn, Peredur Jenkins, John Wynn Jones, Dafydd Meurig, W. Gareth Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Gareth Thomas, Ioan Thomas and Mandy Williams-Davies

Also present: Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director), Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director), Dafydd L. Edwards (Head of Finance), Iwan G. Evans (Head of Legal Service), Dafydd Gibbard (Corporate Property Senior Manager), Rhion Glyn (Senior Executive Officer), Dafydd Wyn Williams (Interim Head of Regulatory) and Arwyn Thomas (Head of Education)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillor Dyfed Edwards.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

As a consequence of the nature of Item 10, all members present declared an interest. As it was not a prejudicial interest, members would have the right to participate in the discussion and to vote on the matter.

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 22ND NOVEMBER 2016

The Chairman signed the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 22 November 2016, as a true record.

6. THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION PROVISION IN YSGOL Y BERWYN CATCHMENT AREA

The report was presented by Cllr Gareth Thomas.

RESOLVED

To defer the consideration of recommendations in the report to consider the latest correspondence received from the Church in Wales as well as the legal opinion received.

To allow time for officers to hold further local discussions.

DISCUSSION

The Cabinet Member for Education presented the situation following the recent correspondence with the Church in Wales. He noted that the Cabinet had made a decision on 2 June 2015 to close Ysgol Bro Tegid, Ysgol Beuno Sant and Ysgol y Berwyn and for a Welsh Medium 3-19 Learning Campus with Voluntary Controlled (VC), Church in Wales status, to be opened in their place. The plan had been progressing with the impact already being seen in Bala, with the cultural resources and 3G pitch being used. It was emphasised that it was a matter of governance that was under consideration here, and that the plan was continuing.

In September 2016, the Head of Education Department met with the Diocese in order to provide them with an update on the plan. Shortly after the meeting, a threatening letter had been received from the legal representatives of the Diocese, referring to two main points. Firstly: *“The Diocese of St Asaph will not be able to consider such a school so promoted as a Church in Wales school.”* And secondly: *“For a local authority to force site trustees into a position where their private value is unnecessarily reverted is most improper.”* The Cabinet Member noted that the situation was still developing, with the Education Department in talks with the Diocese.

The Monitoring Officer noted that the legal process had been followed appropriately. He had sought a further explanation on some points noted, and he emphasised the importance of considering this advice once it would be received.

Comments arising:

- Astonishment that the Church's correspondence had not given any consideration to the children's Education, as this was central to the plan.
- Frustration due to the delay in the project and the benefits stemming from it.
- Disbelief at the developments, emphasising that this was a matter of governance, which would not slow-down the construction work in any way.
- That information regarding the situation needed to be shared in the local area.

7. MATTER ARISING FROM THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - FURTHER EFFICIENCY SAVINGS

The report was presented by Cllr Dafydd Meurig.

RESOLVED

To accept the implementation programme for the savings discussed at the Council Cabinet on 12 July 2016, and to meet the amount of £278,000 within alternative schemes noted in part 3.7 - 3.18 of the report.

DISCUSSION

The Cabinet Member for Resources noted that the report had been previously submitted to the Cabinet and that it had gone through the Scrutiny process in the meantime. He also noted that this was a scheme that met the need for efficiency savings in the Regulatory Department, but that it achieved the aim in an alternative way to what had been intended originally. Originally, the intention had been to wind-up the Pest Control Service; however, after Scrutiny had called in the decision, a decision had been made to revisit the situation. After reviewing the decision, it was concluded that the service could increase its income to meet the required savings.

8. CO-LOCATING SERVICES

The report was presented by Cllr Dafydd Meurig.

RESOLVED

To commission the Corporate Property Service to assess the Property portfolio at specific locations across the County, with the aim of trying to identify opportunities for co-locating services in order to make the most efficient use of Council buildings.

DISCUSSION

The Cabinet Member for Resources noted that the Property Service had been working since 2008 on reducing the number of buildings owned by the Council. This work had become more difficult as the property portfolio reduced; therefore, when looking at opportunities to make the most efficient use of Council buildings, the Property Service would look for opportunities to co-locate services.

The Senior Corporate Property Manager reiterated the observations of the Cabinet Member, and noted that the Property Service intended to work with other partners in order to co-locate services. He also added that the Council's estate had been reduced by 25% since 2008.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- Welcomed the collaboration and common sense, but that there was a need to ensure that the co-locating worked for the communities.

9. TO LEASE THE FORMER BRON Y FOEL SCHOOL, Y FRON

The report was presented by Cllr Dafydd Meurig.

RESOLVED

To use powers under General Disposal Consent (Wales) 2003 to lease the former Bron y Foel School site, Y Fron, directly to Canolfan y Fron for less than market rent, to ensure the provision of social, economic and environmental benefits.

DISCUSSION

The Cabinet Member for Resources noted that the General Disposal Consent (Wales) 2003, allowed the Council to lease property for less than market value and waive the opportunity to dispose of the property and generate a capital return in cases where social, economic or environmental benefits are provided. He noted that the School Building Post-Use policy adopted by the Council Board in 2009 gave communities affected by school organisation plans the first opportunity to present a business plan in order to make community use of the buildings and keep them as part of the community. The value of the building on the open market was approximately £70,000 and a 99 year lease had been offered.

In October 2016, the group received a grant of £945,000 of National Lottery CAT 2 funding. One of the grant's core conditions was that it could not be used to fund the acquisition/lease of a property, and the application succeeded on the basis that the Council would support the project by providing the building.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- Acknowledgement that school organisation could be a painful process to the affected communities, and that it was important to retain a community use for the building.
- That it was excellent news that such an investment had been attracted to Gwynedd, and the group was congratulated for their commitment to the plan.
- That there was concern regarding the sustainability of the business plan, was there assurance that the building would not be returned in a few years?

In response, the Senior Property Service Manager noted that the business plan had been assessed thoroughly by the Property Service, as well as by the National Lottery during the process of awarding the grant.

10. BUDGETARY PRIORITIES AND SECONDARY SCHOOL BUDGETS

The report was presented by Councillor Gareth Thomas.

RESOLVED

- i. That the Cabinet commissions a plan for inclusion in our 2017/18 Strategic Plan to assess where the protection line should be for the Secondary Sector so as to use this information when setting the budget for 2018/19;
- ii. Accepting that discussions have started with stakeholders on assessing the problem, it should be underlined that the new Council needs to consider the results of these discussions early on in the Council's lifetime so as to establish a long term sustainable solution for the Secondary sector;
- iii. So as to buy time for this to happen, that the Cabinet Member for Resources be asked to try and bridge for two years the £298,990 that the Secondary sector is expected to find to be financed from balances;

In order to avoid wasting resources through redundancy and re-employment, that the Cabinet Member for Resources also be asked to consider including bridging finance in his budget for 2017/18 for those schools that would lose money because of the reduction in pupil numbers and to also consider the use of individual school balances in any proposed scheme.

DISCUSSION

The Cabinet Member for Education noted that it had been obvious for some time that a sustainable long-term solution needed to be found to the funding situation of Secondary Education in Gwynedd and that work was in the pipeline to address that. Meanwhile, more schools were aiming for the protection line, and questions were being asked as to whether or not that protection line was in the right place. Therefore, it was timely that a plan had been commissioned to revisit the level of the protection line for the Secondary Sector.

As there was a need to consider the outcomes of discussions on the Secondary sector's future, additional time would be needed to achieve the savings target of the Secondary Sector if that was to be done without exacerbating the situation of Secondary education within the county.

It had also become apparent that the total number of the county's secondary school pupils would fall in 2017/18 but would increase thereafter during the subsequent two years. As funding for individual schools was allocated according to number of pupils, it was therefore prudent to bridge the deficit that would be caused by the reduction in pupil numbers. This meant that it would be possible for individual schools to avoid staff redundancies and reappointments in a fairly short period, avoiding redundancy costs and impact on pupils' education.

He added that education standards had gradually improved since 2012, and that maintaining the funding would allow that improvement to continue.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- That it was a serious situation when pupil numbers fell and schools had to face losing staff and endanger progress in standards.

- That it was better to make early decisions to bridge the deficit before the situation reached crisis-point.
- Was there room for the schools to use their balances to bridge the deficit?

In response, the Head of Finance Department noted that the balance levels of individual schools would be considered when allocating the bridging funding, in order to distribute the funding fairly. He added that there was a cost associated with making staff redundant; therefore, the prudent decision would be to bridge the deficit.

11. PERFORMANCE REPORT: CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEISURE

The item was presented by Cllr Mair Rowlands.

RESOLVED

To accept and note the information in the report.

To approve the re-profiling of a section of the efficiency savings scheme 'HAM4 - More effective running of facilities' (a total of £256,500), from the 2017/18 to 2018/19 financial year.

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Total
40,000	267,500	75,758	256,500	639,758

DISCUSSION

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Leisure submitted her performance report. She reported that the Families First grant would not be cut for 2017-18. Funding would be available for the transitional period until October 2017, when services would receive an offer to be re-commissioned with a three or four year grant. He noted that general progress had been seen in the performance measures, with an increase in the number of young people who had received accreditations through the services. The work of remodelling youth services had commenced, with the work of engaging with the young people taking place.

The Flying Start Unit had drawn attention to the fact that the performance measures were not necessarily the best way of measuring their performance, specifically BC01, BC02, BC03 and BC04. The unit had been working on new measures that would reflect their performance.

There was concern regarding measure SCC024 and SCC025, with work in progress to convey the importance of the Personal Education Plan amongst schools in order to improve SCC024. An increase had been seen in SCC025 as there were more looked after children in Gwynedd, and work was in progress to improve the recording of statutory visits in light of the increased demand.

She reported that the savings schemes within the Children and Supporting Families department were being delivered on time; however, as there had been an increase in the demand, an overspend of £168,000 was anticipated.

She noted that all the relevant savings schemes for 2016/17 in the Economy and Community Department had been delivered, but that the Leisure Service had experienced difficulties identifying the further savings in the 2017/18 scheme. The solution found was challenging and more time would be needed to deliver the savings in full and avoid an overspend when transforming the service.

12. PERFORMANCE REPORT: CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION

The report was presented by Councillor Gareth Thomas.

RESOLVED

To accept and note the information in the report.

To approve the alternative profile figures below for Scheme P7 Transformation of Additional Learning Needs:

<i>2016/17</i>	<i>2017/18</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>Total</i>
26,238	98,356	436,004	247,863	808,461

DISCUSSION

The Cabinet Member for Education reported that the performance of the Education Department was generally good, in particular in the secondary sector. However, the performance of the primary sector had remained static, in particular in the foundation phase; therefore, it was now time to address the issue in more detail.

The Gwynedd KS4 results had been the best in Wales for four years now, and this was to be praised. In order to maintain these high standards, a County Quality Board had been established so that the Authority and GwE could obtain a comprehensive picture of the performance of the secondary and primary sectors. The implementation of the new model of supporting schools was also coming into fruition: 89.2% of Gwynedd schools were now categorised in the highest awards and none of Gwynedd's schools were in a statutory category.

He noted that there was a need to reconcile and improve performance in the subjects of Mathematics and English, and work had commenced with Bangor University in order to identify prospective teachers and train them.

An element of progress had been made in identifying savings in the department; however, collaboration with Anglesey to deliver the savings of the Transformation of Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Provision scheme had led to a slippage in the timetable due to discussions to enter into a formal partnership. This slippage meant that there was a need to re-profile the savings scheme.

13. PERFORMANCE REPORT: CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES

The report was presented by Cllr Peredur Jenkins.

RESOLVED

To accept and note the information in the report.

To send a letter to Welsh Government requesting that they ensure that any Apprenticeship Levy payments made be returned to the Council in order to employ apprentices.

DISCUSSION

The Cabinet Member for Resources reported that he was generally comfortable with the level of performance in his portfolio.

He noted that Vanguard had come to the Council to hold training and that a Ffordd Gwynedd leader development programme was in progress.

Progress had been made as a result of adopting the IT Strategy, with a focus on developing self-service.

He noted that £7.6 million of efficiency savings schemes were being addressed, and this meant that the Council's strategy and financial position was more robust.

The Council would have to pay an Apprenticeship Levy to the Westminster Government in the future, and this would equate to approximately £600,000 in additional costs. It was unclear how much of this total would be returned to Wales through the Barnett Formula, and that the Assembly had not shared any plans regarding its expenditure with the Council. In an attempt to seek clarity on the issue, a suggestion was made to send a letter to the Assembly requesting further information.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.55 pm

CHAIRMAN