

THE CABINET 5/11/19

Present-

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

Also present:

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

Item 5: Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department) and Gwern ap Rhisiart (Dwyfor/Meirion Area Education Officer)

Item 6: Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment Department)

Item 7: Gareth Jones (Assistant Head of Environment Department) and Rebeca Jones (Joint Planning Policy Unit Manager - Gwynedd and Anglesey)

1. APOLOGIES

Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Councillor Catrin Wager.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

It was noted that the changes in item 6 to staff travelling would affect officers present, but they did not need to leave the meeting.

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 15 OCTOBER 2019

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2019, as a true record.

6. YSGOL LLANAELHAEARN

The report was submitted by Cllr Cemlyn Williams

DECISION

It was agreed to begin a period of statutory consultation in accordance with the requirements of section 48 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 on the proposed proposal to close Ysgol Llanaelhaearn on 31 August 2020 and to provide places for pupils at Ysgol Bro Plenydd, Y Ffôr, on 1 September 2020.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that the proposal was to commence a statutory consultation period on the proposal to close Ysgol Llanaelhaearn. It was reiterated that the reason for the decision to commence the statutory period was that the number of pupils had reduced over the years and that there were only eight pupils currently on the register.

It was expressed that the Council had a duty to ensure a high quality education and experiences for every pupil, and considering the low number of children, they were not given fair opportunities in terms of experiences. It was emphasised that this was a request to consider a statutory consultation period, and not a decision to close the school. It was reiterated that the discussions that had been held locally had been dignified and the local member, the governing body and the stakeholders were thanked for discussing the possible options.

The Dwyfor / Meirion Area Education Officer explained the procedure that had been followed in relation to the discussion that had been held locally. The method of proceeding with the proposed proposal was noted.

The Local Members expressed concern and disappointment at the school's situation, and added that the level of education there reached an exceptional standard. He noted that he accepted that the numbers were dropping and consequently, that the cost per child was much higher than the county percentage. He emphasised that closing the school would have a long-term impact on the community but that the consultation held to date with the community had been fair and thorough.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Enquiries were made about the steps that had been taken to date in terms of consulting with local people. It was expressed that discussions had taken place but that the statutory process was slightly different; however, there would be an element of repetition. It was emphasised that many options had been considered before the current proposal had been reached.
- It was noted that there was no necessity to hold the previous discussion to discuss options with the community as the numbers had dropped to fewer than 10 pupils; however, the department had felt that it had a duty to discuss with staff, parents, governors and stakeholders to ensure that the discussions were transparent.

7. GWYNEDD COUNCIL STAFF TRAVEL SAVINGS

The report was submitted by Cllr Gareth Griffith

DECISION

It was agreed to adopt an alternative travel scheme for staff, and reduce the departmental budgets as follows to reflect the agreed levels of the relevant savings (total £117,998) -

Education £9,775
Environment £8,772
Corporate Support £7,064
Finance £2,379
Economy and Community £6,526
Adults £33,183
Children £31,463
Highways and Municipal £3,463
Leadership Team £1,159
Consultancy £13,130
Housing and Property £1,084

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and it was noted that this scheme would be led by the Environment Department but that it affected the work of the entire Council. The background of the item was noted, explaining that it derived from a consultation with specialist consultants called Edge Public Solution in 2014. It was reiterated that the report in 2014 expressed that the 15% saving was possible on the staff travel budget and that the Council had started to plan on this basis.

It was emphasised that the Report in 2014 had not been based on thorough work and consequently that further work had been done by the Council. It was expressed that the department had been looking at different ways of communicating and to emphasise that the most obvious way to make a saving was for staff not to make the journey at all. The various different ways of travelling to different meetings was highlighted, including public transport and pool cars.

It was noted that work had been done to communicate with the departments and there were examples where departments had managed journeys better and had ensured a cost of 35p per mile through pool cars. Attention was drawn to the table in the report which noted the departments' targets. It was explained that some jobs were exempt, such as Home Carers, and that these had been considered in the equation. Therefore, it was expressed that the saving would be approximately £120,000, which was lower than the figure seen in the report in 2014.

Observations arising from the discussion

— It was noted that it was important for some jobs to be exempt, such as

home carers, as they were the backbone of the Council and were jobs that could not be done through technological means.

- The members expressed their thanks for the report and it was accepted that the saving was much lower than the original amount. It was asked why the Council had used external consultants. It was noted that experiences with external consultants were mixed as they sometimes came from a financial approach and thus they provided a more mathematical result which was not a reality in Gwynedd due to its geography. It was added in other cases that external consultants had made the Council think in a different way and had provided new ideas. There was a need to consider the balance between the likely benefit and the cost when considering commissioning consultants as using someone external could, at times, reap benefits, but this was not always the case.
- It was expressed that the Council had planned these savings, but that they would not be achieved, therefore, it was asked whether there would be a need to plan for this. It was noted that reducing the value of this saving would add to the Council's financial deficit by 2020/21; however, it was healthy to plan on a sound financial basis. Furthermore, it was noted that reports were in the pipeline for submission to scrutiny committees with the departments' proposals for potential savings to be realised in 2020/21; however, if the Welsh Government settlement passed on the resources received from the Westminster Government, it was possible that not all of the savings would be required. It was added that the amended savings targets were reasonable and that there would be an actual saving from staff travelling costs, once the correct steps would be in place.

8. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION

Presented by Cllr Gareth Griffith

DECISION

Resolved to:

- Approve the draft response to the consultation on the National Development Framework
- Authorise the Assistant Head in consultation with the Cabinet Member to undertake any amendments arising from the Cabinet's discussions, including editorial and administrative changes
- Authorise the Assistant Head in consultation with the Cabinet Member to create a cover letter highlighting the Cabinet's main points and for this to be submitted with the response by 15 November 2019.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that a discussion had been held after receiving a copy of the first draft of the Framework from Welsh Government. It was added that discussions had also been held with the Isle of Anglesey County Council and that its response to the Framework was essentially the same as

Gwynedd Council's response.

The importance of the framework was emphasised, noting that it dealt with a 20 year period, and therefore it deserved much attention.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the document showed economic growth in the Wrexham and Deeside area but showed a lack of understanding of rural areas and disappointment was expressed regarding the Framework and it was noted that a strong response was needed.
- Attention was drawn to the way the language was being portrayed. It was noted that Welsh Government's lack of understanding of the language was disgraceful, along with the feeling in the Framework that the Welsh language was not a living language.
- It was explained that when the Framework was read, it had sounded like a joke, considering the inconsistencies in the regions of Wales and that this was supposedly the vision for Wales for the coming 20 years. Attention was drawn to a map in the Framework, noting the various projects and regional links that had been omitted from it, and it was noted that the Government needed to restart the work of creating the Framework.
- It was expressed that the Framework had been created to look at the regions and not at the nation. It was added that there was no reference to how to create a nation or how to ensure that each region was connected. Attention was also drawn to the fact that Leeds University had assisted with the creation of the Framework and the question was asked as to why they had to seek help from outside Wales when Universities were available here.
- Questions were asked regarding the response of other counties, and it was noted that the response was similar across the country.
- Sadness was expressed at Welsh Government's lack of vision and that the Framework was preventing the country from achieving its potential. It was added that no reference was made to the rural economy in terms of agriculture, energy and tourism and that there was a need to redraft with a clear vision and ambition.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.00 pm

CHAIRMAN