

THE CABINET 26/05/20

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig L. Siencyn, Dafydd Meurig, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Dilwyn Morgan, Ioan Thomas, Gareth Thomas, Catrin Wager and Cemlyn Williams

Also present-

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

Item 5: Arwel Owen (Assistant Head of Housing and Property Department)

Item 7: Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department)

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.
An apology were received from Councillor Craig ab Iago.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

3. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair noted that he had agreed to discuss an urgent matter. He was satisfied that the context meant that the matter needed to be considered at this meeting. The members voted on the decision to exclude the press and public as the item was exempt.

URGENT ITEM - THE SITUATION OF A RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME

The report was submitted by Cllr Dafydd Meurig, outlining the circumstances which existed and the options to respond. Consideration was given to the role of stakeholders and the potential role of the Council in the situation.

DECISION

The Cabinet expressed its willingness to fund intervention in accordance with the report, along with practical support to maintain the care home's provision over the current challenging period, in order to protect the residents' welfare.

It was noted that the above decision was subject to reaching an appropriate agreement with a Housing Association and Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board on the conditions of the intervention and contributions.

It was resolved to delegate the right to the Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department, in consultation with the Head of Finance Department and the Head of Legal Services, to agree on terms.

That the work of preparing a business case in accordance with the decision of 18th February 2020 continues, and will be submitted by the end of the financial year.

DISCUSSION

The report was discussed.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There were no matters arising from overview and scrutiny.

5. COVID-19 : RECOVERY

The report was submitted by Dilwyn Williams

DECISION

Resolved to commission the Regeneration Programme Board and Supporting People Board to consider the following -

- the areas which should be given priority in terms of their importance to the people of Gwynedd in the areas for which each Board is responsible, giving appropriate regard to the direction of travel the Boards were considering before the emergency took hold;
- what actions need to be undertaken in those areas of activity in the short term and medium term and to report back to the Cabinet with recommendations,
- in accordance with the Council's Equality Plan, that we consider the needs of specific groups, e.g. people with disabilities, when making decisions in the recovery field.

Along with commissioning the Management Group to consider what corporate issues require consideration in the short and medium term as we move forwards to the “new normal”, and to report to the Cabinet if a need for a decision arises, as relevant.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that there were many lessons to be learned following this period and major challenges would continue if the restrictions continued. It was noted that, although the Council was continuing to try to cope with reacting to the crisis, recovery also needed to be discussed. It was stressed that the journey would be a long one in order to move on to a new

'normal' period for some departments and the new 'normal' may be completely different compared to the past having learned lessons during the crisis period.

It was explained that some fields needed to be prioritised, such as the economy, in order to have a specific focus as there had been a significant impact on the local economy. It was noted that the Government would look at the way forward but that the Council needed to be influencing these plans. It was added that the regional Group that was co-ordinating the reaction to the virus would create a regional Recovery Co-ordination Group which would co-ordinate the recovery but it was stressed that it was a matter for individual organisations to make decisions on what they wished to do. It was noted that the Co-ordination Group had met the previous week and had outlined its remit and objectives involving ensuring a recovery programme across north Wales. It was explained that local aspirations needed to be considered and in that sense it was stressed that the Public Services Board would have a specific role. .

In relation to the arrangements in Gwynedd, various options were outlined and it was explained that it would be possible to ask the Regeneration Programme Board and the Supporting People Board, that had been looking at transforming services, to consider what the Council needed to do enable it to return to the new 'normal'. It was stressed that this would be an opportunity for the Boards to focus on the regeneration and supporting people fields and then report back to the Cabinet to make any decisions.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that it had been a very challenging time that had highlighted different ways of working. It was explained that it was essential for the Council to note what had been learned and what would be used in the new 'normal'.
- It was stressed that the Government needed to give plenty of time to the Local Councils to re-open services in order to be able to focus on and ensure safety.
- It was emphasised that there was a need to prioritise equality as different groups faced different challenges.
- In relation to the Boards, it was noted that there had been mention of creating a Climate Board but that Covid-19 had been highlighted during the development period. It was noted that it was a part of the recovery and that there were plans to hold a virtual workshop with members in order to create a task-force to start to look into the work.
- It was noted that it was good that the new normal had not been defined by the Chief Executive and that the Boards would need to look further than the new normal as aspects such as Post-16 Education would need to look at alternative schemes following the Covid period.
- A question was asked in relation to constitutional issues and any changes in committee procedures. It was noted that a piece of work looking at committees would be submitted to the Business Group.

6. COVID-19 EMERGENCY : POSITION OF THE ADULT, HEALTH AND WELLBEING DEPARTMENT

Submitted by Cllr Dafydd Meurig.

DECISION

To note and accept the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that several residential homes had had high cases of Covid-19. It was emphasised that the department had been eager to be open and transparent about this; however, national guidance had prevented the department from being open about some cases at the beginning of the crisis.

It was also noted that, at the beginning of the crisis, acquiring PPE had been a problem but, by now, the department, with the assistance of the Housing and Property Department, had firm arrangements in place. In terms of testing, it was noted that it had taken time to put arrangements in place as receiving the results had been a problem at the beginning of the crisis. It was added, specifically when looking at care homes, the tests of residents and staff were being done via two different procedures. These arrangements had now been changed and the concerns were reducing. The staff were thanked for their hard work during this period.

The Head of Adults Department added that the situation changed regularly, but that Gwynedd had been one of the first councils to report a high number of cases in residential homes. It was stressed that there was a need to be extremely cautious over the coming period. It was added that the numbers referred to the department were quickly going back to normal following a reduction during the lockdown period. It was stressed that staff had ensured that arrangements were in place to respond to cases and staff had ensured that services continued. It was added that it had been a long time and many staff had not taken leave and this was bound to affect individuals. In planning for the future, it was noted that many lessons had been learned in a short space of time and that work would have to continue in this way in some cases.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The service was thanked for its hard work during the period, specifically the front-line staff.
- Gratitude was expressed for referring to the strain on staff as it had been a strain on everyone within the county. It was asked if mental health work would be escalated. It was noted that the department was currently aware of how much mental health work would need to be done but that the service was trying to create networks and give guidance to people in a difficult time but they were also aware of the major challenges ahead.
- Care staff in the private sector were also thanked, and it was noted that the contact between private residential homes and the Council had improved during this period with regular conversations happening and information being shared. It was added that advantages had been highlighted from developing the relationship, such as more support being available to react to the crisis.

- The Corporate Director added her thanks to the staff within the department, in the private sector as well as other Council departments. It was stressed that they had faced major challenges but that good collaboration had occurred across North Wales. The importance of not reducing the status of the care sector following the crisis was stressed.
- It was emphasised that successes needed to be celebrated while bearing the failures in mind. It was added that they hoped that all levels of government would learn lessons for the future.

The meeting commenced at 1.00pm and concluded at 2.30pm.

CHAIR