
THE CABINET, TUESDAY, 03 OCTOBER 2017

Present -

Councillors: Dyfrig L. Siencyn, Mair Rowlands, Craig ab Iago, Gareth Griffith, Peredur Jenkins, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan, W. Gareth Roberts, Gareth Thomas and Ioan Thomas

Also present-

Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services) and Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director), Lowri Haf Evans (Member Support Officer)

- Item 6: Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department)
Item 7: Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department), Ian Jones (Senior Corporate Support Manager), Robin Evans (Project Pool Manager)
Item 8: Dewi W Jones (Council Business Support Service Manager)
Item 9: Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department), Eleri Williams (Information and Online Services Manager)
Item 10: Garem Jackson (Acting Head of Education Department, Owen Owens (Senior Schools Manager)
Item 13: Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment Department), Diane Jones (Education Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

None to note

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

2. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There were no matters arising from overview and scrutiny.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF 5.09.17 and 12.9.17

The Chairman signed the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 5 September and 12 September 2017, as a true record.

5. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING, CULTURE AND LEISURE

The item was submitted by Cllr Craig ab Iago.

RESOLVED

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

It was highlighted that the purpose of the report was to submit the latest information on what had been achieved in the field outlining the latest on those matters that were included in the Strategic Plan, the performance measures and the latest on the savings and cuts schemes.

The Cabinet Member noted that he was a new member of the Cabinet and had been busy familiarising himself with the work of the services. He expressed that a number of the services were going through a period of change and remodelling but that in general, he was happy with the performance. He was eager to see the services continue to succeed despite all the challenges they would face in the near future. He reiterated that his priority for the next period was to ensure interdepartmental collaboration to address poverty and deprivation.

Attention was drawn to the 'Joint effort against Poverty' strategic project and it was noted that good work had been achieved in holding 'Pennywise' events across the County as a way for Gwynedd residents to find out about how make the best of their money.

Concern was expressed about changes to the welfare and benefits system and the changes to Universal Credit (effective from April 2018) that were likely to affect 300+ households in the County. It was reported that sessions had been arranged for front line staff to share information and prepare for those changes.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Did the new responsibilities within the Homelessness Legislation give added pressure on staff's time to keep detailed records of the assessment process add value to the service?
- The performance of the Disabled Facilities Grant was insufficient (despite the consideration given to periods of arranging and erecting extensions).
- In relation to Universal Credit, it was suggested that the concerns should be highlighted to Local Members of Parliament as the arrangements to administrate the credit centrally by the Government could highlight further concerns.
- The Cabinet Member's appetite to work on an interdepartmental level to address poverty was welcomed.
- An update was needed on the Welsh Government perspective on the Tackling Poverty agenda. It appeared that it was no longer a priority
- There was a need to measure the impact of projects such as Exercise Referral and Dementia Go when considering transferring Leisure Centres to a new company managed by the Council.

In response to a comment on the homelessness provision, the Head of Service highlighted that the Government and Partners were making extra demands for information from the Unit. The comment made that there was a need to review the process due to the further increase on the Unit's demands as a result of changes to benefit payments was accepted.

In response to an observation on Tackling Poverty it was noted that the Government was reconsidering the field in its entirety and that the strategies were being reviewed. It was suggested that there would be an announcement from the Government in November 2017.

In response to an observation on the Exercise Referral and Dementia Go projects, it was noted that these projects were very important and that demand was increasing. It was reported that data was being gathered in order to measure the impact. It was highlighted that the service was collaborating through the Departments, but there was a need to convince the Health Service to contribute. It was accepted that the projects did not come under the scope of Leisure Centres. It was reiterated that the money that supported Dementia Go would be ending and it was suggested that there was a need to hold a discussion with Welsh Government to challenge the rules for using the ICP grant funding.

6. PROVISION OF LEISURE FACILITIES - ESTABLISHING A COUNCIL-CONTROLLED COMPANY

The item was submitted by Cllr Craig ab Iago.

RESOLVED

- To recommend that the Full Council approves the business case to establish a Gwynedd Council controlled Company to undertake the provision of leisure facilities.
- To recommend that the Full Council approves the establishment of a Gwynedd Council controlled Company, in accordance with the format outlined within the business case, to undertake the provision of leisure facilities and to draw attention to the observations and considerations of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee held on 26.9.17.
- To approve the business case to agree to release one-off funds of £165k from the Transformation Fund to establish the company.

DISCUSSION

A report was submitted to outline the basis for establishing a Council Controlled Company to provide leisure facilities within the County. It was reiterated that this was an opportunity to achieve efficiency savings without affecting the people of Gwynedd. A number of possible options had been identified and legal advice sought on the associated risks associated with the models. It was noted that establishing a new Council controlled company would secure the continuation of the existing service and realise the savings requirement in full.

Attention was drawn to the table in the report that summarised an evaluation of the options and although it appeared that creating a controlled company was not the best option, this was the choice that would protect the cultural risks in relation to the Welsh language and other Council principles. It was emphasised that service users and staff would see no difference - there may even be improvements.

Attention was drawn to the observations of Economy and Education Scrutiny Committee (26.9.17) circulated at the meeting. It was noted that the Scrutiny Committee had recommended option 6 as a direction and clearly emphasised that choosing the right Leadership was crucial to the company's success. The need for further scrutiny as the work developed was also noted.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- This step was logical and sensible.
- The Council would have more control over the leisure services rather than using a private company (although a private company was likely to score higher in terms of savings).
- There was a need to ensure that the Company Board operated as a Board and not a Committee and should be supported.
- There was a need to commend the department for achieving this saving in full.

In response to an observation regarding the process for scoring an external company and their capacity to offer further savings, it was noted that there was a need to consider pension contributions and working conditions that were likely to differ.

In response to a question regarding the process of job advertising, it was not that there was an option for the Council to appoint a Leader that would transfer to the new company, or establish a company first and allow the company Board to make the appointment. It was emphasised again that appointing an effective leader was crucial. It was reiterated that the Board's constitution had not been determined.

7. LOCAL AUTHORITY PERFORMANCE BULLETIN 2016/17

The item was submitted by Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn.

RESOLVED

- To accept and note the information in the Performance Bulletin and ensure that Cabinet members will:
Satisfy themselves that steps are in place to improve the situation, addressing the measures that appear in Table 1: Summary of the performance of national measures Gwynedd 2016/17 (in the report) in the next cycle of performance challenging meetings that will be held in November.
To report back on any observations which summarise the performance context and any action for improvement which has been agreed as part of the individual Members' performance reports in the next reporting cycle in January.

DISCUSSION

It was reported that Welsh Government's Data Unit published a Performance Bulletin for Welsh Local Authorities who compared a restricted set of performance indicators. It was noted that the latest Bulletin had been published on 13 September including information on the performance of a set of performance indicators for 2016-2017. It was reiterated that the report was positive from Gwynedd's point of view.

It was highlighted that some of the measures being considered by the services were not ones that represented the priorities of Gwynedd Council and that they did not measure what mattered to the people of Gwynedd. It was also noted that the Services had their own performance management and measuring arrangements.

Observations arising from the discussion

- A request for Cabinet Members to draw attention to the matters requiring attention in the next cycle of performance challenging meetings.

In response to an observation about conveying to Government the invalidity of some of the measures for Gwynedd, it was noted that Gwynedd needed to choose measures for

the people of Gwynedd and it was agreed that some of the Government's historical measures needed to be reviewed.

8. BUSINESS PLAN - SELF-SERVICE PROJECT

The item was submitted by Cllr Mair Rowlands.

RESOLVED

To approve the Self-Service Project's Business Plan and to release £104,794 of finance from the Transformation Fund in order to complete the work.

DISCUSSION

It was reported that the Self-Service Project was one of the Council's priorities in response to the ever-increasing expectations of customers. The Self-Service resource would enable the public to access a service or information at a time that would be convenient to them.

It was noted that the plan was exciting and that the Business Plan addressed the need with some elements already developed. The next step would be to promote and market the provision after launching the initial pack publicly in November 2017. The provision would be added to in time.

All officers involved with the work of establishing the self-service process were thanked.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Welcomed the plan - the service was likely to facilitate the process for users
- That people now expected this type of service as the custom of using information technology increased

In response to an observation regarding the need to create an account, it was noted that people needed to be encouraged to create an account so that they could follow developments/enquiries. It was reiterated that no account would need to be created in order to use App Gwynedd that would be a part of the service.

9. REALISING THE BREAKFAST CLUB SCHEME

The item was submitted by Cllr Gareth Thomas.

RESOLVED

To charge a fee of £0.80 for the childcare element before the breakfast club, giving a discount to families with three or more children, with these arrangements to commence on 6 November 2017.

DISCUSSION

Following the decision of the Full Council (3.3.16) to cut £100,000 from the Breakfast Club Scheme budget in response to the Government's financial cuts, two options had been considered in order to address this cut. It was reported that 75 of Gwynedd's primary schools offered pre-school childcare with Welsh Government's Free Breakfast Scheme. It was emphasised that the proposal would not have any impact on the current provision.

The options were to charge a fee for the pre-school childcare element or not to accept children before breakfast.

Attention was drawn to the outcomes of the consultation and an outline was given on how the £0.80 fee had been considered. It was also reiterated that offering a free breakfast was a statutory duty.

Observations from the discussion:

- That the proposal was to be welcomed, but the scheme needed to be monitored to ensure that it responded to the need and to the number who would use it.
- That the total number of responders to the consultation was encouraging.
- That the solution was good.
- Welcomed the discount for families with 3 or more children
- That the recommendation coincided with what had been noted in the consultation. It showed that the background research and the substantial consultation prior to submitting the report had ensured that the scheme was on the right track.

10. CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION - PERFORMANCE REPORT

The item was submitted by Cllr Gareth Thomas.

RESOLVED

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

It was highlighted that the purpose of the report was to submit the latest information on what had been achieved in the field outlining the latest on those matters that were included in the Strategic Plan, the performance measures and the latest on the savings and cuts schemes.

It was reported that good progress had been made in the majority of the Strategic Plan's projects and that some fields required particular attention from the Department in order to improve performance. The main priorities for the coming months would be to raise the standards of the foundation phase, improve the standards of key stage 4 in specific subjects and improve the standard of the post-16 provision.

Reference was made to the success of the County Quality Board (CQB) that monitored the quality and performances of schools on every level. It was noted the CQB was increasingly proving its worth. Attention was also drawn to further work that needed to be completed to refine the Leadership and Management Improvement project. It was noted that the Department had been requested to consider a comprehensive training programme which mapped the offer of Welsh Government, GwE and Gwynedd Council so that appropriate training was available for leaders.

An update was provided on the Programme for a Network of Viable Schools for the Future noting that a meeting was being held in Bala 4.10.17, to discuss the school's status (the construction work and expenditure continued as per the schedule). Attention was also drawn to the work of the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion provision being implemented jointly with Anglesey.

It was noted that it was difficult to measure the GCSE results of 2017 against 2016 due to changes in the examination process and the specification. However, it was noted that it

was possible to compare on a regional level. It was reiterated that the statistics could change again after some papers would be re-marked.

It was reported that the attendance of Gwynedd Secondary children was the best in Wales.

In response to a question regarding the CQB, it was highlighted that the members of the board were the Council's Area Education Officers and GwE's Challenge Adviser, and that they were accountable to the Head of Education Department and the Cabinet Member. It was noted that there was good collaboration and that the relationship had developed. Nevertheless, a challenge was posed as one school had fallen into special measures recently and why this had not been brought to the attention of the CQB. It was noted that every effort was being made to restore this situation.

11. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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 12, Section 4, Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972. It was asked for the item to remain excluded 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.

The report includes information relating to contract details and sales procedures which are not evident at this time. The information is considered exempt in accordance with category 14 because it is information relating to an individual's personal business or financial matters.

12. LAND IN LLANRUG

The item was submitted by Cllr Gareth Thomas.

The Local Member for Llanrug was welcomed to the meeting - Councillor Charles Jones.

RESOLVED

To confirm the decision made on 28 March 2017 to delegate powers to the Head of Regulatory Department, in consultation with the Head of Education Department, to purchase a plot of land in Llanrug and following the purchase, to take appropriate control of the site, in accordance with the report.

DISCUSSION

Following a request for additional information about the numbers in the Brynrefail catchment area schools, a decision on the matter had been deferred at the Cabinet's meeting on 19.9.17. Now, as the information regarding class sizes had been shared with the Members, the discussion could be recommenced. The land remained available to buy (in case it would be required for development in the near future). It was noted that this was a one-off opportunity to buy land to improve some of the school's resources.

Observations from the discussion:

- That a long-term investment was needed to upgrade the site as it was not possible to build a school from scratch.
- That the existing building was sub-standard and thus a long-term investment was needed.
- That the current site was very restricted - the schoolyard was insufficient for the number of children.
- Capacity was not a matter that required consideration - the quality of the buildings was the problem.

- That the site was insufficient if the catchment area's provision needed to be reorganised.
- That the evidence was not sufficient.
- That there were revenue costs associated with the costs of maintaining the land.
- That purchasing the land would satisfy one of the school's needs.
- That the price was high.

It was noted that there was a need to emphasise that purchasing the land did not raise the hopes of local residents as this was only a response to the opportunity.

. The meeting commenced at 1.00 p.m. and concluded at 3.45 p.m.

CHAIR