

THE CABINET 19/05/20

Present-

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

Also present:

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

Item 6: Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department) and Gwern ap Rhisiart (Dwyfor/Meirion Area Education Officer)

Item 8: Gareth Jones (Assistant Head of Environment Department) and Dafydd Gareth Jones (Senior Planning, Minerals and Waste Officer)

Item 9: Dafydd Gibbard (Head of Housing and Property Department)

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting. An update was provided regarding the Council's recycling services following an announcement by Welsh Government stating that recycling centres could re-open.

No apologies were received.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

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 28 APRIL 2020

The Chair signed the minutes of the meetings held on 28 April 2020, as a true record.

6. YSGOL LLANAELHAEARN

Submitted by Cllr Cemlyn Williams

DECISION

Resolved to confirm the closure of Ysgol Llanaelhaearn on 31 August 2020, and offer a place for the pupils at Ysgol Bro Plenydd, Y Ffôr from 1 September 2020, in accordance with Section 53 of the School Standards and Organisation Act (Wales) 2013 and the requirements of the Schools Organisation Code 11/2018.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that the Cabinet, on 5 November, had resolved to hold a statutory consultation period in accordance with the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act on the proposal to close Ysgol Llanaelhaearn. It was noted that the statutory period had now ended and that there were no objections to the proposal. It was also noted that the department, as a result, believed that closing the school was the appropriate option. Gratitude was expressed to the community, the governors and parents for the mature and appropriate discussions held, emphasising that it had been a difficult discussion at times.

The Local Member noted that he was very saddened that the school was closing, despite its long and bright history. He expressed that people had to use their local schools if they wanted them to remain open, and he thanked the staff for all their work.

Observations arising from the discussion

— The Local Member was thanked for his objective contribution during the discussions and for his contribution to the discussions.

7. THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON THE 2020/21 BUDGET

The report was submitted by Cllr Ioan Thomas.

DECISION

To note the possible funding gap in the 2020/21 budget and support the efforts of the Leader and officials to ensure appropriate funding options from the Welsh Government.

Due to the financial losses in the first year (2019/20) of Byw'n Iach as a result of Covid-19, and the presumption that there will be further losses which will continue in 2020/21 for the same reason, that the Cabinet confirms

1. That it is willing to provide the necessary financial support to sustain the

services of Cwmni Byw'n Iach initially until the end of the 2020/21 financial year.

2. To authorise the Head of Finance Department in consultation with the Head of Legal Services and the Head of Economy and Community Department and in accordance with the provision in the Agreement with Cwmni Byw'n Iach (Schedule 4) to provide a letter of assurance to the company and agree on conditions and the content of the support.
3. That the Cabinet receives a specific report on the arrangements as part of reports to review the Council's budgets.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that the situation was vulnerable as income had reduced and expenditure had increased during the crisis. It was added that this could be seen in every local authority.

The Head of Finance noted that the British Government had offered to part-fund the loss in income, along with the additional costs, for local authorities in England. It was expressed that various Welsh Government departments were in discussions and it was hoped that an announcement would be made soon. It was reiterated that the Council's loss of income for three months was approximately £5m, and if the crisis situation continued, the loss of income would amount to approximately £10m over six months. It was emphasised that the loss was dependent on the impact of the restrictions during the period.

It was expressed that discussions continued with Welsh Government, and that it was difficult for the Council to plan financially until information had been received from Government about the expected grant amount, and the length of time that the crisis would continue.

A discussion was held on the financial position of Byw'n Iach as a result of the restrictions of the Covid-19 crisis, in 2019/20 and 2020/21, and it was resolved that the Council should offer them support as a result of the impact of the crisis.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that there was a need to call on Welsh Government to step up and support the Council to protect its residents.
- It was emphasised that this period had shown the Council's ability to act quickly to look after its residents, and had highlighted the importance of the provider services.

8. REGIONAL TECHNICAL STATEMENT ON AGGREGATES: SECOND REVIEW DRAFT

The report was presented by Cllr. Gareth Griffith

DECISION

To approve the Second Review of the Regional Technical Statement and to

authorise the Assistant Head of Department to submit confirmation of the Cabinet's approval to Welsh Government.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, and the decision noted. The Assistant Head of Department added that it was required to prepare and review the statements in order to provide a strategy for a sufficient supply of building aggregates for the future. It was noted that the statement recommended how much aggregates that each authority needed to plan for in the Local Development Plans. It was emphasised that when looking at Gwynedd in terms of the statement and on the basis that a reserve supply of aggregates was available and that the department was aware of other areas within the county with an aggregates supply, it was possible that the Council did not need to do anything urgently. It was expressed, in the long-term, that there would be a need to incorporate the recommendations in the statement when reviewing the Joint Local Development Plan during 2021.

It was expressed that a public consultation had been held and that the responses could be seen in appendix 2 of the report

9. HOUSING SERVICE STRUCTURE

The report was presented by Cllr Craig ab Iago

DECISION

To approve funding of the additional net cost of £150,500 by making use of the income generated from the Council Tax Premium on second homes and empty homes, in order to realise the changes to the staffing structure of the Housing Service, as highlighted in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.7 of the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that the housing situation in Gwynedd was at crisis point, as the number of homeless people was increasing, and a high proportion of the county's housing was being used as holiday homes. It was explained that a decision had been made to establish a Housing and Property Department following the Managerial Review held last year. It was emphasised that the department was showing potential and that the officers were eager to make a difference.

It was noted that work had been carried out to consider the structure of the department and that money was required to realise changes to the staffing structure. It was emphasised that the situation could not be changed without the restructuring. It was added that the department had identified savings to the value of £200k by changing suppliers in the property field and it was possible to use this money to fund the restructuring.

The Head of Housing Department added that the department had only been five months old when the Covid-19 crisis struck. It was added that during those five months, the Head of Department had had time to learn about the housing field and identify more options and new schemes. It was noted that the department would need to be ready when returning to normality as there was a strong possibility that the situation would be worse, as the number of homeless people continued to increase during the crisis. He reiterated that the restructuring set out foundations for the future.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was expressed that housing problems were witnessed by every Councillor across the county and support was expressed for the restructuring. The housing emergency in Gwynedd was highlighted, specifically hidden homelessness through overcrowding, emphasising that the situation had worsened during the period of restrictions. One Cabinet Member noted that she objected to the request to fund this by using the Council Tax Premium on empty homes and second homes, as this money was available to obtain housing for local families. Enquiries were made about when the action plan would be available and it was noted that an Action Plan was in place and that it would be shared as soon as possible.
- Reference was made to the irony of the Gwynedd housing crisis, as it did not appear as if there was a housing shortage here. It was noted that using a very small percentage of the Council Tax Premium made valid use of the money.
- Enquiries were made about the 1% that the Council would receive from any savings realised by another authority, if they used the Gwynedd Framework - would this be an annual or one-off payment? It was noted that there was uncertainty at this point as it depended how many counties would be part of the Framework. It was added that more savings could be realised as these savings were for gas supply only.
- The Chief Executive noted that obtaining a Head of Department for the new department was step one and that step two would be to carry out a review to ensure that the department made the best use of the budget available. It was emphasised that there was a very strong case here as a result of the county's housing crisis as 10% of the housing stock was being used as second homes and consequently, no housing supply was available. It was noted that Welsh Government needed to play its part in protecting the tax outputs from the premium. It was expressed that funding the posts from the Council Tax Premium was a wise move, as it would be likely that the savings would be needed in order to avoid service cuts when balancing the Council's budget, as a result of public expenditure in response to the Covid-19 crisis.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.30 pm

CHAIRMAN