

THE CABINET 15/09/20

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 Dewi Wyn Roberts (Local Member).

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

Item 6: Dewi Wyn Jones (The Council's Business Support Service Manager) and Bethan Richardson (Business Support Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.
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. YSGOL ABERSOCH

Submitted by Cllr Cemlyn Williams

DECISION

Permission was granted to hold a statutory consultation, in accordance with the requirements of section 48 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, on the proposal to close Ysgol Abersoch on 31 August 2021 and to provide a place for the pupils at Ysgol Sarn Bach from 1 September 2021

onwards.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, emphasising that there was no pleasure in bringing a report of this kind to the Cabinet for discussion. It was noted that the Cabinet's duty to ensure good education and experiences for all children in Gwynedd was at the root of this report.

It was emphasised that, in September 2019, the Cabinet had determined to commence discussions with the school's Governors and stakeholders to consider various options following a reduction in the school's pupil numbers. They were thanked for their contribution to the discussion. Attention was drawn to the Fit for Purpose Education Principles accepted by the Cabinet in December 2018, emphasising the two principles that were in-keeping with the report. It was emphasised that the report was comprehensive and that the department would continue to receive further observations during the statutory period.

The Dwyfor/Meirionnydd Area Education Officer added that the discussion held thus far had been looking at potential options in order to ensure a viable provision for the future. He emphasised that work had been carried out by the stakeholders to set up a Cylch Meithrin and to extend childcare in light of the discussion that had been held. The options discussed with the stakeholders were emphasised, noting that work had been carried out to discuss them. It was noted that the option favoured by the Officers was to close the school and move the pupils to Ysgol Sarn Bach. If the decision was approved today, it was noted that the statutory consultation would commence within the coming weeks. It was emphasised that there had been a delay in the process and, consequently, the department would re-visit some of the impact assessments.

The Local Member expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to join the meeting today to contribute to the discussion, which was so important to the ward. He also thanked the department for delaying the process as a result of the Headteacher's personal circumstances. It was emphasised that the Governors had circulated information to the Cabinet Members, and the Local Member noted that he had received many letters of support to the School from all parts of the county. He expressed that the pupil numbers had reduced in a short amount of time and unexpectedly, and that the Education Department had moved to discuss the school very quickly following the reduction in numbers. Since the initial discussion, he noted that the numbers had started to increase and he emphasised the good work of the staff, who had since set up Ti a Fi sessions as well as an Ysgol Feithrin on the school site.

The Local Member expressed his support to changing the school's age range to 3-9 years old, as this would have no impact on Ysgol Sarn Bach. Attention was drawn to the capacity numbers that were included in the report, noting that this number was irrelevant as the school had never had 42 children. He noted that in the current situation, it would be very difficult to hold a fair and prudent consultation as a result of Covid-19, and that it was unfair to continue with the consultation work during this time.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was emphasised that the decision today was whether to proceed to statutory consultation to look at closing the school, and not a decision to close the school.

The importance of obtaining the observations of the local member and the governors was noted, and a question was asked as to how a fair discussion could be ensured during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Education Department noted that the organisation code was clear and did not definitively define how to hold a consultation. It was added that the Department was willing to hold a collective meeting and these would be held virtually. It was noted that observations needed to be submitted in writing, and that the meetings would provide an opportunity for stakeholders, parents, governors and staff to ask questions. It was also expressed that the Education Department was willing to facilitate the local discussions prior to the meetings with the Department should the need arise.

6. GWYNEDD CONCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2019/20

The report was presented by Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn.

DECISION

The Gwynedd Council Performance Report 2019/20 was approved, and to recommend its adoption by the Full Council.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that it highlighted the Council's performance in 2019/20. It was expressed that the report was clear and legible, and highlighted the Council's successes during the period. The Cabinet Members noted the successes in their fields, and they emphasised that the report had been written for the period prior to Covid-19.

The Cabinet Members for Adults noted that the report highlighted how the department had responded to the emergency. He added that the department had responded swiftly and positively, and pride was expressed that care workers were now seen as key workers. It was noted that the report highlighted the department's successes and what the Covid-19 situation had forced the department to do.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families expressed that the report provided a fair and accurate outline of the department's work over the year. It was noted that reference to Covid-19 was only made in the final paragraph. It was added that the Department had revisited operational issues and staff were thanked for their hard work.

The Cabinet Member for the Economy and Community noted that the impact of Covid-19 on the economy was astounding. It was emphasised that the

Department's performance prior to Covid was very good and that they were supporting businesses with Brexit. It was expressed that the number of high value jobs had substantially decreased during the past year. The work of the Supporting Communities Service was emphasised.

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Municipal expressed that it was very strange to look back at the department's successes. Attention was drawn to the fact that the department had reached the recycling target of 64.7%. It was noted that the street lighting project had saved over £185,000 thus far, as well as having a positive environmental impact from changing the lights. The challenges facing the department were highlighted, which included flooding actions and the need to respond to the climate emergency.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment drew attention to the public's dissatisfaction with regard to the means of contacting the Planning department and that the service was looking at this. From all of the county's plans, it was noted that 38% of them were applications for affordable housing. It was expressed that the Joint Planning Policy Committee was continuing to meet and that the Countryside Service was still busy. Work that the department was doing with Track, Trace and Protect was highlighted.

In the Budget section, it was noted that the report highlighted the fact that the budget had shrunk since 2015, but that it was under firm control. From the savings' schemes, it was expressed that 16 were slipping and that this was raising concerns for the future. It was emphasised that taxation levels had improved and that the department had assisted 1700 people from the discretionary housing fund. In terms of Information Technology support, it was noted that the number of people working from home had increased from 138 to 1292, and that the service was prepared for changes. The staff were thanked for their hard work.

The Cabinet Member for Housing noted that the department had nearly completed the restructuring of the department, and the housing restructuring plan would be submitted to the Cabinet in due course. It was noted that the Housing Allocation Policy was in place, which prioritised housing for local people compared to the previous system. It was noted that fuel poverty needed to be emphasised to ensure that people were not in small, damp and cold houses.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Support expressed that the number of accidents reported to Health and Safety had decreased from 59 to 51, noting that one of the main reasons for this was the significant increase in manual handling injuries, and this had been the subject of further training within one specific Service. It was highlighted that 17 apprentices had been appointed during the year, and more would be recruited during the coming year.

In terms of the Education Department, it was noted that the report reflected the work in the department and that it was nice to see plans being realised. It was added that it had been a challenge for the department to respond to Covid-19 but that the department had progressed well.

7. COVID-19 - RECOVERY

The report was submitted by Dilwyn Williams

DECISION

To accept the update on the ongoing work to stabilise and rebuild in light of the Covid-19 crisis, and it was agreed to request that the Boards or relevant departments address the further matters that had arisen at the latest workshop on the matter.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that this was an update on what had happened in light of the Cabinet's commission for the boards to consider what needed to be done when moving from the response to the situation to a more stable situation. The fields highlighted by the boards were noted as fields that needed attention.

It was reiterated that the workshop had been held with the Cabinet members and Heads of Department in order to discuss the fields that required attention which did not possibly fall into the remit of the boards. The additional fields noted were highlighted as the following:

- Unemployment
- The Sustainability of Public Transport
- Wider Mental Health and Well-being
- The availability of housing for local people
- Community Resilience and maintain the sense of volunteering
- Working relationship with other bodies
- Public Health
- The sustainability of the care sector
- The sustainability of community resources for the cultural sector
- The Welsh language in virtual meetings
- Food chain supply

It was noted that the Boards or the relevant departments would be required to address the further matters that had arisen, and report back on the work of stabilising and rebuilding for the Cabinet.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The importance of the fact that unemployment was added as a field for discussion was noted, as the wave had not struck here thus far.
- A question was asked as to where the additional items would be discussed. If the matters did not fall under the remit of the boards, the Chief Executive would go to the relevant department to consider what would need to change.
- Gratitude was shown for the guidance and work looking at these fields.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 3.00 pm

CHAIRMAN