

THE CABINET 3/11/20

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig Siencyn, Dafydd Meurig, Craig ab Iago, Nia Jeffreys, Gareth Griffith, Dilwyn Morgan, Ioan Thomas, Gareth Thomas, Catrin Wager, Cemlyn Williams and Paul Rowlinson (Chair of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee), Dewi 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 Siôn (Democracy Team Leader).

Item 4: Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department) and Gwern ap Rhisiart (Dwyfor/Meirionnydd Area Education Officer).

Item 6: Delyth Williams (Equality Advisor) and Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department).

Item 7: Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department) and Eurig Williams (Human Resources Advisory Services Manager).

Item 8: Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment Department).

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.
No apologies were received.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

A declaration of personal interest was received from Cllr Dewi Roberts as he was a member of the Governing Board of Ysgol Abersoch, however it was not a prejudicial interest so he was present for the item.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

YSGOL ABERSOCH

Submitted by Cllr Paul Rowlinson

DECISION

The Cabinet resolved that its original decision made on 15 September 2020 should not be revised, which was to conduct a statutory consultation in

accordance with the requirements of section 48 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, on the proposed motion 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, and adopt this as its final decision.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that the item was being brought back to the Cabinet following a decision by members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee to call in the decision made to hold a statutory consultation on the proposal to close Ysgol Abersoch. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee provided the rationale and the background behind the decisions of the Scrutiny Committee, as well as the details of the vote at the committee.

The Local Member added that as a result of the pandemic, the period to come was not entirely clear with regards to further restrictions. As a result, he noted that not everyone in the community would have an opportunity to be part of the consultation. He emphasised that closing the school would mean losing a resource in the community and would put the education of the children at risk, as well as the language and culture of the area. He noted that holding the consultation would be unjust and unfair. The Cabinet was asked to defer the consultation for a year so that discussions could hopefully take place at face-to-face meetings. It was asked whether it was fair to continue due to the situation with the Headteacher currently being away from school, and the fact that it would be impossible for the Governors to provide guidance.

The Cabinet Member thanked the Local Member for presenting the current situation. He expressed that the department had been completely respectful towards the Headteacher's situation, noting that the discussions had already been postponed once. It was added that within the Act, Headteachers did not have a statutory role within the consultation.

The Education Officer highlighted the process, noting that informal discussions had been held and were now moving forward to a statutory consultation. It was expressed that sessions would be held virtually, but that sessions would be offered, according to the demand, over the phone for any questions to be asked. He emphasised that any response to the consultation would need to be submitted in writing.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Sympathy was expressed with the concerns of holding a consultation during this time. It was asked whether there would be any implications to postponing the consultation. It was noted that the main implications would be for the children's education. It was expressed that there was a level of uncertainty during the pandemic as there was currently no end in sight. It was added that there were procedures in place to hold them virtually.
- It was emphasised that the most important element when considering the situation was the children's education, and it was emphasised the driver for the work was the Education Principles.
- It was highlighted that the decision to close the school had not yet been made, and that the decision made was to go to a consultation. It was

highlighted that, whilst it was understood that people wished to have face-to-face meetings to discuss, any response to the consultation would need to be given in writing.

- It was asked whether the department was entirely certain that everyone would be able to contribute to the consultation. It was noted that the department would make every attempt to receive contributions from everyone who wished to contribute. It was noted that, with the observations already received, the department would contact them directly to ask whether they would be happy for the observations to be used in the consultation.
- It was noted that the country had now been in a pandemic for months, and if this was postponed for a year, there was no guarantee that we would not be in the same situation in a year. It was emphasised that everyone could participate and it was expressed that the role of the local member would be pivotal to the consultation in order to ensure that everyone's voice was heard. It was noted that it was required to move forward with the decision.
- The need to keep an eye on the consultation was expressed, and the department was asked to provide a regular report on how the process was moving forward.

After weighing up what the Scrutiny Committee had highlighted, the guidance of the officers and the reasons for the original decision, the Cabinet did not consider that the matters raised justified an amendment to the original decision.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2020

The Chair accepted the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020 as a true record.

6. ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2019/20

The report was presented by Cllr. Nia Jeffreys

DECISION

To accept the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that the Council was required to complete a four-year Equality Strategic Plan. It was expressed that this was the final Annual Report for the Equality Plan 2016-20. It was added that this report outlined the work that had been carried out in response to this plan. The objectives of the plan was outlined, noting the main achievements.

The importance of noting the work being done in the long-term, which would continue over the coming years, was noted. It was expressed that the report now highlighted that equality was central to the Council's work. It was noted that the staff figures highlighted whether any further action was required or whether the workforce was diverse. It was emphasised that equality was a responsibility for

everyone, and the Equality Advisor was thanked for her work.

The Head of Corporate Support Department added that ensuring fairness for everyone was one of the Council's priorities within the Council Plan, which emphasised the importance of equality for the Council.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the report was interesting, and attention was drawn to the decreasing percentage of women who were Councillors, and a question was asked as to how this could be increased. It was expressed that efforts were being made to encourage women to become Councillors, but that there was also a role for the political parties. It was emphasised that efforts had been made prior to the 2017 election, and that the Democratic Services Committee's diversity sub-group was looking at and leading the promotion work prior to the 2022 election.
- It was asked how the current situation with Covid and changing our way of working would impact equality and moving forward. It was expressed that some factors had been highlighted, and it was emphasised that the Equality Plan's project group was aware that things needed to be done differently and to engage in a different way.

7. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF

The report was presented by Cllr. Nia Jeffreys

DECISION

To adopt the Code of Conduct for Staff on behalf of the Council as employer.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that the code of conduct was required in order to provide guidance on conduct within the Council. It was expressed that it would drive forward the culture and in accordance with the Statutory Code of Conduct in place by Welsh Government. It was added that the people of Gwynedd were entitled to expect service and conduct of the highest standard from all Council staff and this Code of Conduct explained these standards. It was added that the code would go hand in hand with the job descriptions of every officer working for the Council.

It was emphasised that adopting the code would also provide guidance to managers. It was expressed that the next step would be to create a communication plan and to now proceed with the programme.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the code highlighted the fact that the Council was open to thinking differently, but it was emphasised that the title of the code of conduct might be negative and threatening to staff.
- It was noted that a staff exercise needed to address the code of conduct; however, in practice, it was a positive expectation for staff.

8. APPOINT THREE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OFFICER TO ASSIST WITH WORKING DERIVING FROM THE PANDEMIC

To agree to underwrite the cost of employing three Community Engagement Officers for the Environment Department for an interim period, up to 31 March 2022, allowing the Head of Environment Department to recruit as soon as possible.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, and the decision noted. It was expressed that it was a request to underwrite the cost of appointing three officers to add to the team. It was added that the Engagement Officers would fill the gap that has been highlighted. It was noted that this scheme would lead to a change in culture within the service, and training would be provided which would enable the department to do more.

The Head of Environment Department added that the additional resource would be essential for residents and businesses during the pandemic. It was noted that these officers would respond to the pandemic and to the ever-changing regulations. It was emphasised that the main thing would be to offer a face for the public that would support them through this difficult time, and they would be aware of where to go for support. Through this, it would develop the public protection field, which would assist the department for the future.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Support for the application was shown, and it was emphasised that the gaps were evident. It was asked whether three officers would be sufficient, given the magnitude of the workload.
- The Test, Trace and Protect scheme was discussed as the staff were attempting to contact 100% of the individuals within 24 hours, and they often hit this aim. Moving forward, the service had 18 new staff members who would be working seven days a week. It was added that these contributed towards keeping people safe and that numbers were currently dropping, highlighting control across the county.
- It was noted that there would be a grant to fund part of the cost of the posts this year, with the possibility of claiming a grant to fund the rest; however, in case the grant funding could not be obtained, that the cost would need to be underwritten in order to proceed to employ the three Community Engagement Officers until 31 March 2022.

The meeting commenced at 13:00 and concluded at 14:50

CHAIRMAN