

THE CABINET TUESDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2020

Present -

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

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 6: Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department) and Bethan Griffith

Item 7: Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department), Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Service Manager), Llywela Owain (Senior Scrutiny and Language Advisor) and Dafydd Iwan (Chairman of the Strategic Group).

Item 8: Alwen Williams (Programme Director) and Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department).

1. APOLOGIES

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

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Declarations of personal interest were received from the following Councillors: Dyfrig Siencyn, Nia Jeffreys, Catrin Wager, Gareth Thomas, Dilwyn Morgan, Ioan Thomas and Cemlyn Williams as their children or grandchildren received school meals. It was not a prejudicial interest, and they were able to be present for the item.

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 3 NOVEMBER 2020

The Chair accepted the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2020 as a

true record.

6. SCHOOL MEAL CHARGE

The report was presented by Cllr Cemlyn Williams

DECISION

Not to raise primary, special and all-through schools' meal price in January 2021, and to commission the Head of Education Department to look at a long-term policy for the price of school meals and to report back to the Cabinet.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that although it was a brief report, it spoke volumes about the Council's priorities. It was noted that the costs of providing school meals had increased in 2020/21, and to meet those costs, the price of school meals would need to be increased to £2.60, an increase of 4%. Attention was drawn to Appendix 1 which compared Gwynedd school meal prices with the remainder of Wales highlighting the fact that Gwynedd was the fifth highest county in terms of school meal prices.

It was expressed that without increasing the price of school meals, the education department would be under additional pressure to fund the financial deficit. Nevertheless, the challenges that families had been facing over recent months were highlighted along with the Council's priority of reducing inequality.

It was expressed that this report was now submitted every year. The need to look at the matter in the long-term was noted and that further work was needed to look at the price of school meals.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The report was welcomed and it was noted that the decision not to increase the price was to be welcomed. Sadness was expressed that there had to be an income target for school meals whilst 1 in every 3 children lived in poverty. It was emphasised that for some children, this was the only hot meal they ate during the day.
- The need to look at the matter in the long-term was noted and to go a step further perhaps and to aim to provide free school meals for every child..
- It was expressed that a number of children were eligible for free school meals noting that the process might be a barrier for some. The need to promote free school meals was highlighted. Attention was drawn to free school meals arrangements noting that further work was needed to ensure that all those who were eligible were receiving it.
- It was noted that it would be great to be able to offer everyone free school meals. However, there was a need to consider long-term plans for the future.
- It was expressed that the department had flexibility this year in moving forward but there was a need to look at the budget when considering

options.

7. HUNANIAITH

The report was presented by Cllr Nia Jeffreys.

DECISION

The need to undertake further work to consider possible options in the future for Hunaniaith, the Gwynedd Language Initiative, was agreed.

Establish a task force of Council officers to identify the necessary steps that need to be followed to create a robust business case for the possible options.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the Welsh language was very close to the Cabinet member's heart. It was expressed that Hunaniaith carried out excellent work in safeguarding the Welsh language and the Welsh Language Charter had highlighted this good work. It was emphasised that it was now time to reconsider the focus and to move from working strategically to working within the community.

It was noted that a Strategic Group had been looking at the situation and had commissioned Cwmni Iaith to proceed with the task of reviewing Hunaniaith's work. It was expressed that the company's report was interesting and exciting and that it acknowledged the good work that had been achieved. It was added that the report provided a firm foundation to proceed and recommended creating a taskforce to discuss and plan work to move forward and to work effectively and efficiently.

The Chairman of the Strategic Group added that the report of Cwmni Iaith was comprehensive and balanced and he highlighted the three options in the report. Support for option 3 was noted, namely to create an independent entity. It was explained that this had financial and staffing implications. The need to proceed was noted and to reduce pressure on the Council along with an opportunity to add crucial funding for the initiative to extend its work within communities. The need for the taskforce to work to a tight schedule was emphasised in order for the work to progress.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted there was a need for the language initiative to work within the community and to be sustainable to continue with the good work that Hunaniaith was doing. It was emphasised that this was an opportunity to build on the good work and not to get rid of Hunaniaith.
- Attention was drawn to the arrangement for funding Hunaniaith with 70% of the budget coming from the Government and 30% from Gwynedd Council. As the budget from the Government was grant funded, it was currently difficult to plan for the future.
- There was support for looking at the situation noting that it was timely to

proceed and to give Hunaniaith the opportunity to stand on its own two feet.

- Creating a small entity within the community was supported. Years ago, it had been noted that it was a good idea for the language initiative to operate within the Council but that it now needed to evolve.
- Gratitude was expressed for the Hunaniaith Teams' hard work.
- It was emphasised that much work was needed before an option could be chosen but there was a need to consider the best way forward.
- It was emphasised that good work had already been achieved but there was a need to look at good examples from the work of other language initiatives and to proceed within a tight timetable.

8. FINAL DEAL AGREEMENT OF THE NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL

The report was presented by Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn.

DECISION

- The Overarching Business Plan was formally confirmed and it was recommended for the Council to approve it as the document that sets out the arrangements for delivering the North Wales Growth Deal as the basis for completing the Final Deal Agreement and acceptance of the Grant Funding Letter with the UK and Welsh Governments.
- The provisions in Governance Agreement 2 were confirmed, which formally involves the executive functions and recommends that the Council approves the provisions involving non-executive functions and that it (the Cabinet) specifically adopts the delegations and the Terms of Reference in "Governance Agreement 2: Appendix 1" as the basis for completing the Final Deal Agreement and acceptance of the Grant Funding Letter with the UK and Welsh Governments.
- Subject to completing Governance Agreement 2, that Gwynedd Council agrees to act as the Host Authority and the Accountable Body and signs the letter of the Grant Funding Proposal on behalf of the Partners through the Chief Finance Officer.
- It was formally confirmed and recommended that the Council approves the method used to calculate the cost of borrowing which is required in principle to facilitate the negative cash flow for the Growth Deal, and to include a provision within the Council Budget to pay this contribution and the established core and supplementary contributions as set out in GA2.
- That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer, be granted delegated authority to agree minor changes to the documents with the Partners as necessary to complete the agreement.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that it was the culmination of three years of hard work on the Growth Plan. The programme team was thanked for working hard to create the documents and the business plans to complete the Final Deal Agreement.

The Programme Manager highlighted the main aim of the Growth Plan to build a thriving, sustainable and robust economy in north Wales. It was expressed that the methods would deliver growth in an inclusive and sustainable way that could be extended in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The funding sources which included investment from the Private Sector and the Public Sector were emphasised.

Attention was drawn to the Growth Plan's regional benefits which included growth in regional prosperity and creating better quality jobs for the labour market. The benefits for Gwynedd specifically were emphasised and they included improving digital connectivity for businesses, residents and visitors; access to innovative research and support with sustainable farming techniques; an investment of £20m in the infrastructure of the Trawsfynydd site and opportunities to develop strategic sites as part of the long-term Land and Property programme.

The Overarching Business Plan was outlined, emphasising that it set out the arrangements for implementing the North Wales Growth Deal, including an overview of the programmes and projects in order to secure the approval of all partners to the Funding requirements to implement the deal. It was added that the Programme Office had consulted with the UK Government and the Welsh Government throughout the process of developing the documents.

In relation to the Final Deal Agreement, it was noted that it was a deal that had been created jointly between the NWEAB and both Governments. It was emphasised that it was currently in draft form and that it would continue to be adapted over the next weeks. It was noted that the Programme Officer had been working hard on the relevant documents, and that the Final Deal Agreement would be secured based on a Portfolio Business Case and Five Programme Business Cases.

The Head of Legal Services noted that Governance Agreement 2 moved the partnership to the implementation phase of the Growth Deal. It was added that it was continuing with the governance model adopted in GA1, namely a Joint-committee supported by a host authority and providing for the Partners' commitments and responsibilities to the partnership. Attention was drawn to arrangements noting that the scrutiny work would be shared between the six local authorities to lighten the burden.

The Head of Finance Department expressed that GA2 was of crucial importance to having an accountable body. The Income and Expenditure were outlined, noting that the expenditure profile would be over approximately six years, with the governments' funding contributions being equal over 15 years, therefore there would be a negative cash flow. However, it was noted that the host authority would facilitate this for the partners and would have made reasonable presumptions before spreading the cost equally over the 15 years of the deal, in order to offer an achievable annual cost. It was added that this would commit the partners to the Growth Deal for 15 years.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Gratitude was expressed for the work and the funding for Parc Glyn Cegin

in Bangor was welcomed. A question was asked in relation to fibre internet connections for companies if it was to be developed for all residents in Gwynedd. It was expressed that mapping work had been carried out to seek out the fibre not-spots and that these areas would be targeted by the growth deal.

- A question was asked in relation to contributions from the two Governments and if this meant that the deal was accountable to both Governments. It was noted that it did mean this, but the deal was also accountable to all councils in the region and to electors. It was emphasised that accountability to the county's residents would be the main priority.
- The report was welcomed as there would be an opportunity to build a stronger economy and an opportunity to create high value jobs that would be crucial for the young people of Gwynedd.
- It was noted that this was the first time that authorities had volunteered to work together to create something for the benefit of the residents. The Head of Finance Department and the Monitoring Officer were thanked for their work.

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

CHAIR