

THE CABINET 10/03/20

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig L. Siencyn, Craig ab Iago, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Ioan Thomas, Gareth Thomas and Catrin Wager, along with Hefin Underwood (Local Member – item 6) and Dylan Fernley (Local Member – item 9).

Also present-

Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services), Dewi Morgan (Assistant Head of Finance) and Annes Sion (Democratic Services Team Leader).

Item 6: Roland Evans (Assistant Head of Culture, Economy and Community) and Nia Gruffydd (Libraries Service Manager).

Item 7: Garem Jackson (Head of the Education Department), Debbie Ann Jones (Education Corporate Services Officer) and Hedd Tomos (Modernisation Unit Manager).

Item 8: Delyth Gadlys (Equalities Officer)

Item 9: Dafydd Gibbard (Head of the Housing and Property Department) and Catrin Thomas (Assistant Head of Supporting Families).

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were received by Cll. Dafydd Meurig, Cllr. Dilwyn Morgan and Cllr. Cemlyn Williams.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Cllr Catrin Wager and Cllr Ioan Thomas declared a personal interest to item 7 – Post-16 Education as both were governors for Arfon secondary schools

3. URGENT MATTERS

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 18 FEBRUARY

The Chair signed the minutes of the meetings held on 18 February 2020, as a true record.

6. INVEST TO SAVE SCHEME - NEUADD DWYFOR

Submitted by Cllr. Gareth Thomas

DECISION

Resolved to:

- Support the principle of developing a capital investment project to save a maximum value of up to £779,314 in Neuadd Dwyfor in order to improve the provision and facilities, to improve opportunities to raise income and ensure user safety;
- Recognise the risk of losing income as a result of closing the Neuadd during the construction work if it goes ahead;
- Support the allocation of a one-off contribution from the Council's Transformation fund for the investment - namely up to £570,000 (capital);
- Support the re-profiling of savings as agreed originally for the profile outlined in table 8.1;
- Support the submission of applications to external bodies in an attempt to reduce the Council's contribution and to maximise the Council's investment value;
- Support the task of identifying and collaborating with local partnerships and organisations that could support the Neuadd to reach the full saving target of £100,000 in the medium term after the investment - by setting them a challenge to reduce the financial deficit and to assist the Council to make a permanent saving of £100,000 in the budget by 2025.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, in which it was noted that the building housed a theatre, cinema and library in Pwllheli and that no substantial investment had been made in the building or its resources since 1996. It was reported that attempts had been made in 2013-14 to transfer the Hall to another organisation, but no agreement could be reached due to the high refurbishment costs.

It was noted that the decision entailed an investment in the building, and that a portion of the funding had been confirmed. It was added that this funding would improve facilities and generate opportunities to work with other partners in the area.

It was noted that building also housed the Library, and that historically the management of the building and the library had been performed by two separate post-holders. It was emphasised that since December, both teams now reported to the same manager. The Assistant Head of Culture highlighted that consultation work had taken place in order to ascertain the aspirations of local residents, and that this consultation had formed the basis of the business plan. The Libraries Service Manager added that the changes introduced, and those hoped to be made, would ensure that the whole building operated more efficiently, with teams working closer together and the possibility arising to extend the library's opening hours.

The Local Member reported that the building was used for much more than the cinema, and that the Council's investment in the building provided a way forward.

He added that should the Council decide to close Neuadd Dwyfor, there would be substantial costs involved in the maintenance of the building. He added that the National Eisteddfod would be held in the area in 2021, and that use would be made of the building during the week. He emphasised that Neuadd Dwyfor was much-loved by residents of the area, and that there was value in retaining and investing in it.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was reported that many young people were employed as staff in Neuadd Dwyfor, and that opportunities were provided for them. The importance of regeneration in the area was emphasised.
- It was noted that the plan was an exciting one and that the building was an important local facility. It was noted that this was an exciting time to change the mindset around the building and the use made of it, and that it was especially good that the department drew comparisons between the building and the Storyhouse development in Chester.
- In terms of funding, it was enquired whether grants or external funding could be obtained. It was noted that discussions had been held with the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Arts Council of Wales, but that the Arts Council's capital funding had all been committed for the year. It was stated that revenue support could be obtained in order to facilitate matters over the transition period. It was reported that they had discussed a bid to the National Lottery Community Fund; however, three other bids had been submitted in Pwllheli and as such there was strong competition. It was noted that the scheme did not qualify for a Visit Wales grant.
- It was highlighted that if major renovations were to be made to the building, there would be a need to revisit the equality impact assessment.
- It was noted that support was required from local people - if the Council were to show confidence in the venture and make the investment, then the local people in turn would need to show confidence in the building. It was reported that the 'Friends of Neuadd Dwyfor' group had been established, and it was hoped that local residents would lend their support. It was added that the department hoped, in making this investment, that savings could be achieved in the medium term, and a significant resource in Llŷn would be safeguarded

7. POST-16 EDUCATION

The report was presented by Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn.

DECISION

It was decided to authorise the department to hold discussions with stakeholders in order to consider the current provision and highlight the key considerations in order to co-identify the direction and opportunities to strengthen the post-16 education provision in Arfon.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, which noted the need for a new post-16 system as a consequence of the Welsh Government's intention to introduce new legislation in 2020. It was added that this would give rise to a discussion in Gwynedd since the foundations of the current system dated back 40 years, and consequently it was a timely juncture at which to take a look at the system. It was emphasised that the focus in particular would be on the Arfon area, where provision continued in schools, although the Department would be looking at provision throughout the county.

It was noted that the report highlighted the case for change, owing to the many differences in standards and variation in specific areas. It was highlighted that the current provision in Arfon was operated through a consortium, and that as a result there would need to be a frank and constructive discussion on the creation of a system for the future. It was added that there was a need to strengthen the opportunities to study each subject through the medium of Welsh.

It was reported that Welsh Government was looking at how it funded the post-16 system, and that a decision had been made that the provision needed to be considered prior to the confirmation of any funding. It was noted that the main driver was the change in the education curriculum, and that a focus would be placed upon further learning and experiences. As a result, it was reported that there was a need to look at the provision in order to continue along this development journey. It was added that there was a need to look at employers' requirements so that specific subjects could be studied in particular fields.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The report was welcomed, and it was noted that it would be customary for the department to approach the Cabinet with options before a consultation was held on those options, but that in this case it intended to hold discussions first before proceeding to develop the options.
- It was expressed that the report noted concerns regarding the current provision, and further clarification was requested. It was explained that the system worked to the best of its ability, but that some schools provided various subjects in other schools, which resulted in pupils travelling from one place to another. It was expressed that there was a need to look into ensuring that the same support and the same courses were provided throughout the county. It was noted that it was an opportunity to create an exciting system that was fit for purpose.
- In terms of the timescale, it was noted that a consultation would be held over the coming months and that a report would come before Cabinet before the end of summer.

8. STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN

Submitted by Cllr. Nia Jeffreys.

DECISION

The document was approved.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, and the decision noted. It was noted that this was not a new report, as it had already been put out to consultation before Christmas. It was reported that the Plan had been written in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. It was added that the Council was passionate about equality and wished to promote it. It was noted that engagement work had been carried out on the Plan, and that amendments had been made following the consultation. It was emphasised that the Plan was robust and would ensure fairness for the people of Gwynedd.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The department and the officer were thanked for their work in looking after the people of Gwynedd. It was added that the Council had a duty to adopt this document.

9. MAESGEIRCHEN INTEGRATED CENTRE

Submitted by Cllr. Craig ab Iago.

DECISION

To work with the community of Maesgeirchen, Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board and Adra to develop a potential plan for an Integrated Centre on the estate for family support provision and services, and to report back with recommendations regarding the way forward.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that it was an exciting initiative which had stemmed from engagement work with Maesgeirchen residents. It was added that the scheme was being led by the Council, but that it would be designed and shaped by listening to the residents' aspirations.

The Local Member added that the Maesgeirchen area was a special place, and although problems existed there were also great strengths to be seen there. It was noted that following the loss of the Social Club, support had been available from Tŷ Cegin along with the school, but that no groups were meeting on the estate, which had given rise to problems. It was reported that the loss of this centre had led to adverse health and social effects on residents. An investment from the National Lottery had meant that two members of staff now worked on the estate, but it was noted that a community centre was needed. It was noted that this scheme was being driven by the needs of the residents, and that the Council could lend its support.

Observations arising from the discussion

- An enquiry was made regarding the financial contribution, and whether the

money was available. It was noted that funding had been earmarked already, but that the budget was not part of the discussion as it would depend on the needs of the residents. It was emphasised that there was a need to undertake an assessment of the needs of the community prior to setting a definite budget, and that this was an integral part of how this Cabinet wished to run the Council. It was emphasised that the scheme highlighted the fact that the Council was supportive of developments built from the ground up.

- It was noted that it was wonderful that the conversation was being held first to gain an understanding of resident's needs, before proceeding to offer options and look into the cost of the scheme.
- It was noted that there was a need for residents to support the development. In terms of timescale, it was noted that no specific timetable had been set, but that discussions had begun in examining the needs of the area.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.05 pm

CHAIRMAN