

CABINET
16 JULY 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 16 July 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Aaron Shotton (Chairman)

Councillors: Bernie Attridge (Deputy Leader), Chris Bithell, Christine Jones, Kevin Jones and Billy Mullin

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors: Veronica Gay, Ron Hampson, Patrick Heesom, Dave Mackie, Carolyn Thomas and Arnold Woolley

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Director of Community Services, Director of Environment, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Head of Finance

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance provided copies of a letter signed by the 22 Leaders of local government in Wales which had been sent to the First Minister and Cabinet Members at the Welsh Local Government Association on local government finances prior to their last meeting of Cabinet before the recess. The letter highlighted the understanding by the Leaders of the impact of cuts on the Welsh budget and addressed problems which threatened the sustainability of Welsh public services.

A meeting was requested with the First Minister and Cabinet Members on the concerns detailed in the letter.

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

39. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2013 had been circulated with the agenda.

The Cabinet Member for Education suggested the following amended wording on minute number 31, Response from the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the Call in of a Cabinet Decision:

- 1) 3rd paragraph, second bullet point on the last line – add in the word ‘denominational’ before ‘school’
- 2) 3rd paragraph, last bullet point on the fifth line – replace the words ‘Parents would continue to be supported in their choice of school’ with ‘The children of the same denomination of the school would continue to be supported in their choice of school’

Update

The Leader and Cabinet Member provided an update on the Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/15 to 2018/19. A report had been submitted to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 July 2013 where supportive comments had been received. No recommendations were made.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the above, the minutes be approved as a correct record.

40. A STRATEGY FOR FLINTSHIRE LIBRARIES 2013-16

The Cabinet Member for Education introduced the report which sought approval to implement a Strategy for Flintshire's Libraries 2013-16.

The draft Strategy had been published for public consultation on 7 January 2013 and responses were received from elected Members, Town and Community Council's, schools and individual library users. Many of the comments were supportive and constructive suggestions had been incorporated into the final draft.

A Strategy for Flintshire's Libraries 2013-2016 had been presented to Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 April 2013. The Committee endorsed the strategy and its five key objectives as a blueprint for the current and proposed offer from the Library Service over the next three years.

However, given the Council's revenue and capital pressures it could not be assumed that the service, at that level, was sustainable in the long term. In common with all Council services, it would be subject to future review and possible reprioritisation.

The library service was developing a new shared service under the Flintshire Connects programme at Connah's Quay which would demonstrate that libraries could be at the heart of both communities and the delivery of modern public services.

RESOLVED:

That the Strategy and its five key objectives be endorsed as a blueprint for the current and proposed offer from the Library Service over the next three years.

41. YOUTH SERVICE STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Education introduced an updated Flintshire Youth Service Strategy in order to develop and enhance the service delivered to young people in Flintshire.

The Youth Service Strategy document was focused on the provision of high quality, responsive and accessible services as a universal entitlement with a particular emphasis on the assets. A high quality Youth Service would contribute to improving the quality of life and well-being of Flintshire's young people.

The Director of Lifelong Learning said the future service development needed to be part of a coherent plan, setting out the core values and principles of Youth Work and providing a framework for its direction. The plan would be based on a clear analysis of current needs and wants identified through a review process and engagement with young people shaping service provision across the county and in locations. Particular emphasis would be a review of buildings currently maintained by the Youth Service, many of which were no longer fit for purpose for a modern Youth Service.

Key recommendations for service provision included operating an expanded front line sessional youth work programme. One example was expansion to 2-3 weekly Duke of Edinburgh Open Award Centres, to build on the increase in demand and take up over recent years. Full details of the expanded programme were detailed in the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report be approved and the document be approved as a strategy for the improvement and development of the Youth Service for young people in Flintshire including the vision, strategic priorities, efficient provision and to support further consultation with scrutiny and the relevant service stakeholder groups.

42. FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment introduced the report which sought approval and endorsement of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy prior to formal submission to Welsh Government.

The Council, as a Lead Local Flood Authority, was required to prepare a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, the purpose of which was to address potential flood risks arising from local sources which were those within the boundaries of the Authority area.

An important part of the Local Strategy would be to ensure that communities were aware of what risks existed, were aware of what the County Council and other risk management partners' responsibilities were in terms of flood risk and what communities could do to involve themselves.

RESOLVED:

That the report and Strategy be approved and endorsed.

43. SPEED LIMIT REVIEW

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment provided information on the conclusions of the speed limit review covering the 'A class' and 'B class' road network within the Authority, and sought support and endorsement for the implementation of the remedial measures set out within the documentation.

All highway authorities had been requested to review, in accordance with the guidance, the speed limits of all their A and B roads, and implement any changes by 31 December 2014. Feedback from the consultation was detailed in Appendix A to the report, together with the response from officers on the requests and comments received. Plans detailing the extent of the 38 proposed changes were detailed in Appendix B to the report.

The proposed changes could not all be undertaken at the same time and the criteria in order to assist prioritisation was:

- Road traffic collision history
- A review of the layout and configuration of the road, to identify other safety measures that could be introduced
- Recommendations provided by the North Wales Police, through statistical information on routes with the highest casualty rates

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposals set out in Appendix A be supported and endorsed; and
- (b) That the Director, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, reviews comments raised by Members and be given authority to make amendments where it is deemed appropriate to do so.

44. VIBRANT AND VIABLE PLACES

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance updated Members on the invitation from Welsh Government (WG) to submit a bid for funding under the Vibrant and Viable Places programme.

On 15 May 2013, WG launched the Vibrant and Viable Places programme, the aims of which were:

- To revitalise and promote the sustainable development of town centres, coastal communities and Communities First clusters, making the most of their green infrastructure, heritage and historic character;
- To build sustainable and vibrant communities that are more prosperous, better educated and healthier;
- To tackle poverty by creating jobs, encouraging skills development and helping people into work;
- To encourage wider investment in housing; and
- To deliver strategic, regionally important projects of significant scale

The deadline for first stage bids was 12 July 2013. A request for an extension to align with the Cabinet meeting had not been granted. As a result, a draft bid had been submitted in accordance with the deadline, with reference to the fact it would be considered at this meeting.

A short-list of up to twelve proposals would be produced. Short-listed areas would then be asked to submit fully worked-up proposals by 4 November

2013, based on the Treasury Five Case Business Model with project delivery expected to begin in April 2014.

The potential fit of each town in Flintshire against the criteria issued by WG was detailed in Appendix 2. The Chief Executive said Deeside offered the strongest case against the criteria which had the highest weighting and matched other towns in all the remaining criteria.

Deeside was considered to offer the most compelling option for WG due to the size of the community it embraced, the potential scale of the regeneration activity and investment anticipated. Delivering the programme in Deeside would offer WG the opportunity to use the programme to play a key catalysing role in releasing major housing, employment and regeneration investment. The Deeside proposal offered considerable benefits locally, to Flintshire and to the wider sub-region.

RESOLVED:

That approval be given to submit a bid to Welsh Government Vibrant and Viable Places programme to support the strategic regeneration programme in Deeside.

45. DELIVERING HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN FLINTSHIRE WITHOUT THE REQUIREMENT FOR PUBLIC GRANT SUBSIDY.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance outlined the range of optional financial models available to the Council to facilitate housing development in Flintshire without the requirement for public grant subsidy.

The information would assist Cabinet to make informed choices when considering housing development opportunities across Flintshire to meet the needs identified within the agreed Local Housing Strategy.

The Council needed to ensure that the right types of housing offered in the right locations were delivered to meet the needs of existing households. The report provided the outcome of initial work undertaken and full details on all of the considerations.

The Leader added that Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee would play an important role in developing new models of financing affordable homes and maintaining the progress towards achieving that aim.

RESOLVED:

That the variety of financial models available to the Council to facilitate housing development in Flintshire without the requirement for public grant subsidy be noted and the framework for making future decisions for specific schemes to meet its housing objectives be drawn upon.

46. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2012/13 (OUTTURN)

The Head of Finance provided information on the Council Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn for 2012/13 (subject to audit) and the

impact on the respective level of reserves at 31 March 2013. The figures had been included in the Draft Statement of Accounts 2012/13 which would be reported to Audit Committee on 17 July, 2013.

The significant in-year variances at final outturn for the Council Fund and the HRA were detailed in Appendices 2-8. The significant changes for the Council Fund from Month 12 were detailed in Appendix 1.

For the Council Fund, the outturn position was an underspend of £4.229m compared to the last report at Month 12 which was an underspend of £4.313m. Whilst this was a modest change, the Month 12 position as reported to Cabinet on 18 June 2013 had shown a significant projected movement of £1.979m to that previously reported at Month 11. It was reported that although in some areas the positive improvement reflected the outcome of planned activities and positive budget management, it also raised the issue of interaction between service managers and finance to ensure that variances were identified at an earlier stage and highlighted the need for tighter financial controls, forecasting and timelier reporting.

Following work undertaken by Heads of Service, reasons for the variances could be classified into the following main themes:

1. Grant maximisation – utilising external funding wherever possible
2. Year end recharge issues and accounting treatment
3. Communication of the financial impacts of service commissioning and demand levels
4. Treatment of vacancy savings
5. Difficulties and uncertainties in accurately projecting income

The Corporate Management Team had identified and agreed a range of actions to strengthen budget management and reporting in light of the issues identified.

A brief overview of the year on the General Fund was provided, full details of which were in the report.

The Finance Procedure Rules stated that any Directorate overspend would be carried forward into the following year as a first call on the budget for that year. In view of the overall financial position, it was recommended that the Lifelong Learning overspend of £0.033m be met from overall balances and not carried forward.

Appendix 7 to the report detailed the movements to date on unearmarked reserves and the level of contingency sum available. As a result of those movements the final level of Contingency Reserve was £3.409m.

In Month 11 it was reported that the £0.245m held in the Winter Maintenance Reserve had been utilised to fund the severe weather costs in 2012/13 and it was recommended that £0.250m be allocated from the contingency reserve in 2013/14 to provide funding in that specific reserve for future years to replace the funding utilised.

It was also recommended that the £3.159m held in the contingency reserve be held at this stage and its use considered within the context of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and 2014/15 budget strategy as a key strategic decision.

The final outturn on the HRA was an underspend of £1.076m (£1.047m at Month 12) which resulted in a final closing balance (subject to audit) at 31 March 2013 of £1.931m which at 6.98% of the total expenditure exceeded the recommended minimum level of 3%.

The Head of Finance tabled two additional recommendations to those included in the report, which were agreed (e and f).

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the Council Fund contingency sum as at 31 March 2013 be noted;
- (c) That the final level of balances on the Housing Revenue Account be noted;
- (d) That it be approved that the overspend in Lifelong Learning be met from overall balances and not carried forward as required by finance procedure rules;
- (e) That the reinstatement of the Winter Maintenance Reserve to the value of £0.250m be approved and that it be met from the Contingency Reserve; and
- (f) That it be approved that the £3.159m remaining as at the end of March be held in Contingency Reserve and its use considered within the context of the Medium Term Financial Plan and 2014/15 budget strategy as a key strategic decision.

47. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012/13 (OUTTURN)

The Head of Finance provided information on the capital programme outturn for 2012/13.

The report provided details on how the programme had changed during 2012/13. The previously reported programme total of £38.032m had decreased to £37.196m by way of the inclusion of net increased schemes of £4.494m, identified savings of £0.237m and an adjustment of £0.041m on the previously reported rollover of £3.657m. Those adjustments were offset by a year-end rollover total of £5.134m. Detailed cumulative information on each programme area was detailed in Appendix A to the report.

The value of 2012/13 rollover (Council Fund and HRA) at £8.750 represented an increase of £0.988m on the equivalent 2011/12 figure of £7.762m.

The Head of Finance explained that the report to be submitted in October 2013 contained the first monitoring information for 2013/14 and would be in a simpler format.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the rollover adjustments detailed in paragraph 3.06 of the report be approved; and
- (b) That the report be noted and approved.

48. PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS - ACTUALS 2012/13

The Head of Finance provided Members with 2012/13 (actual) prudential indicator figures as required under the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code).

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and approved.

49. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2013/14

The Head of Finance provided Members with the first available revenue budget monitoring information for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2013/14.

Appendix 1 showed that based on the current forecasts there was a potential positive variation to the 2013/14 Council Fund budget of £1m which would have a £0.540m positive impact on the assumptions already in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Details of the reasons for the variation were detailed in the report.

The final outturn report earlier on the agenda had outlined the reasons why the full projected year 2012/13 end position could not be reported earlier and the range of actions agreed and implemented to strengthen financial control, budget management and reporting from 2013/14 onwards, noting that the Council had decreasing financial flexibility year on year and therefore needed to tighten its reporting and control arrangements.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

50. OUT OF COUNTY PLACEMENTS COMMISSIONING PROJECT - OUTCOMES

The Cabinet Member for Education informed Members on the outcomes of the Out of County (OOC) Placements Commissioning Project.

The project focused on OOC placements and was identified due to increasing demands on the budget allocated to cover that element of the Council's provision. The project board identified the key planned outcomes to be

achieved. Progress and achievements against the key aims / work streams were detailed in the report.

The Director of Lifelong Learning said that the work against the planned outcomes had resulted in a reduction of OOC placements along with a significant reduction in spend against the budget, details of which were included in the report. It also meant that more children and young people with complex needs were being educated and cared for closer to their home communities, supporting family and friendship ties.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the work of the OOC Project be recognised and its completion of role in relation to Planned Outcomes be confirmed; and
- (b) That any further opportunities for development in local provision and practice will be identified through the normal planning and decision making processes, e.g. MTFP, Service Plans and reported to Cabinet.

51. PLAY PROVISION: CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS

The Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Waste and Recycling reported on progress with the identification of sustainable play provision from April 2014 with reference to the maintenance and upgrading of children's play areas.

During 2010/11 *Play Safe and Space Consultancy* undertook a County-wide analysis of 172 fixed equipment play areas, including those maintained by Town and Community Councils, and 26 link sites, including wheeled play areas and multi-use games areas.

The play survey employed a traffic light system, recognised within the Council as the 'RAG' system, to provide an instant overview of each site's survey conclusion. Out of the 172 play areas, 13 sites were identified in the 'Red' category, 141 in 'Amber' and 18 in 'Green'.

The 2010 play survey provided the Council with a considerable evidence base to inform its future investment programme for children's play areas, particularly in relation to the match-funding improvement scheme launched in 2010/11. This match-funding agreement between the Council and Town and Community Councils was in its fourth year and had resulted in more than a third of the current stock of play areas benefiting from upgrading works.

To date, the Council had contributed £413,780 (a match-funded total of £827,560) to enhance fixed play provision via the improvement scheme. A full list of enhancements was provided in Appendix 1 to the report.

However, investment was only being made in sites which were nominated for match-funding by Town and Community Councils. This resulted in a lack of strategic direction, a consequence of which was that only six of the thirteen 'Red' sites had received investment. Seven of the thirteen 'Red' sites had neither received match-funding investment over the past four years nor been decommissioned.

Whilst recognising the benefits of the match-funding approach, and promoting its continuation, play areas remained corporate assets and therefore it was important that the Council targeted its future investment at those sites of greatest need in terms of play deprivation and strategic importance. Should further resources become available then individual play areas which were 'Red' sites may be considered for attention on an equitable basis, outside match-funding criteria.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To consult with Overview and Scrutiny over renewal of the scheme for play area renewal based on the following principles:
- From 2014/15, the County Council aligns its match-funding improvement scheme to the findings of the play survey described in paragraph 2.01 of the report
 - Each Town and Community Council will be invited to express an interest in participating in the match-funding improvement scheme for 2014/15 and beyond. In order to ensure that the County Council's funding is directed at areas of need identified by the condition survey, Leisure Services will identify those play areas which will be in scope ('Red' and 'Amber' sites) and out of scope ('Green' sites). Approval of any proposed scheme will be:
 - Dependent upon the level of capital funding made available by the County Council
 - Based upon a maximum contribution of £10,000 per scheme
 - Determined on a priority basis in accordance with the findings of the play survey with investment targeted to strategically important sites
 - Confined to those play areas identified as red or amber
 - From 2014/15, 10% of the fixed plan match-funding budget will be allocated to meet the ongoing maintenance costs of the fixed play portfolio; and
- (b) That officers will provide a further report on the potential decommissioning of play areas recognised as being in a poor state of repair and of low strategic importance.

52. PLAY DEVELOPMENT: SUMMER PLAY SCHEMES

The Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Waste and Recycling provided information on sustainable play provision from April 2014 on the summer play scheme programme.

In response to a reduction in funding from *Families First* (formerly *Cymorth*), and to ensure that the service could operate within budget, all Town and Community Councils had been advised that the number of play schemes available to them during summer 2013 would be limited to a maximum of two each and that summer play scheme provision would be reduced from five weeks to three weeks at locations to be agreed in local consultation.

At its meeting on 1 March 2013, the Council made a one-off allocation of £12,000 for the 2013 summer play scheme to ensure that requests for additional provision by Town and Community Councils could be met on a match-funding basis.

The Director of Lifelong Learning said that plans for 2013 were advanced and the level of take up and impact of the 2013 programme would be evaluated by the Play Unit and would inform the planning for future years.

The availability of grant funding for summer play schemes in 2014/15 and beyond had not been confirmed by *Families First*. However, planning assumptions were based upon continuity of funding.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to consultation with Overview and Scrutiny and confirmation of Families First funding for Summer Play Schemes in 2014/15 and beyond, to confirm the future allocation of grant funding for the provision of summer play schemes on the basis outlined in section 2.02 of the report with the same allocation being offered to each Town and Community Council on the present match-funding basis.

53. PENYFFORD INFANT/JUNIOR SCHOOL AMALGAMATION

The Cabinet Member for Education introduced the report on the amalgamation of Abbots Lane Infants School, Park Crescent Penyffordd, and Penyffordd Junior School, Penymynydd Road, Penyffordd, to form a new all through Primary school using the existing school buildings.

Following the decision of Cabinet, the published notice set out the intention of the Council to close the existing infant and junior schools as of 31 August 2013 and to open the new school, in the existing buildings, on 1 September 2013.

No formal objections had been received during the statutory period which commenced on 10 May 2013 and concluded on 7 June 2013. As a result, the determination of the proposals could be made by the Cabinet of the Council, without reference to the Welsh Ministers.

RESOLVED:

That the proposal to effect an amalgamation of the infant and junior schools to form a new through primary school on the existing two sites from 1 September 2013 be approved.

54. SWIM FLINTSHIRE

The Director of Lifelong Learning provided information on the arrangements for the launch of the new Nofio Clwyd scheme for progression in swimming.

In 2010 it was proposed to end the Council's support for Swim Flintshire as a cost saving measure. At its meeting on 14 December 2010, Executive decided instead to accept offers of £10,000 per annum from Swim Wales and £10,000 from Swim Flintshire with additional support from parents and to continue to support the programme.

The cost of supporting the programme was never included in the Leisure Services annual budget. The shortfall in funding, which was £52,000 in 2012/13, contributed to an unsustainable service overspend which needed to be addressed. The 2013/14 budget strategy was based on the cessation of funding for the current Swim Flintshire programme.

The Council had consulted Swim Flintshire and the National Governing Body, Swim Wales, about alternative approaches to developing elite swimming. This promoted discussions between those parties and local swimming clubs.

Negotiations had been concluded for the creation of a new body, Nofio Clwyd, for the delivery of a progression and elite programme of swimming. The National Governing Body would take the lead role in the programme from the start of the new swimming season in September 2013. Four of the five local swimming clubs had joined Nofio Clwyd.

RESOLVED:

That the new Nofio Clwyd scheme be welcomed and supported and the new partnership be endorsed.

55. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting for the following items by virtue of exempt information under paragraph 15 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

56. YOUTH SERVICE STRATEGY - STAFFING

The Cabinet Member for Education provided details on the recommended updated staffing structure for the Flintshire Youth Services.

RESOLVED:

That the report be approved and the document as a strategy for the improvement and development of the Youth Service staffing structure for the benefit of young people be approved, ensuring efficient provision and further consultation with the relevant groups be supported.

57. LEISURE SERVICES RE-STRUCTURE

The Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Waste and Recycling provided information on the proposals for the restructuring of the Leisure Services to provide a more flexible and effective service.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed changes be approved and delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive, the Director of Lifelong Learning and Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Member, to consider any representations made during the consultation process and agree to implement finalised structures within the budget limits set in the report; and
- (b) That the implementation date of the new structure be aligned to the implementation date of Single Status. This will avoid an immediate budget implication as the cost will rise from the current £5.599m to £6.282m.

58. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were 3 members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 9.30 am and ended at 11.50 am)

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Chairman