

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 17 January 2018

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors D Wilcox (Chair), P Cockeram, G Giles, D Harvey, R Jeavons, D Mayer, J Mudd, R Truman and M Whitcutt

1 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2017 were approved as a true record.

2 School Reorganisation Proposal - Removal of Learning Resource Base Provision at Llanwern High School - Final Decision

Councillors Harvey and Truman declared a non-prejudicial interest in this item as local authority representatives on the governing body of Llanwern High School.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills presented the report, asking Cabinet to approve the school reorganisation proposal to permanently remove the Learning Resource Base provision currently at Llanwern High School with effect from April 2018.

For this item, Cabinet was sitting in its role as the Local Determination Panel under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code.

Because an objection was to this proposal was received during the statutory consultation stage, the final determination could not be taken by the Cabinet Member, but had to be referred to full Cabinet as the Local Determination Panel under these regulations.

It was confirmed that there were no young people in this Learning Resource Base at present, as all pupils had been moved to either alternative small group provisions in host schools, or small nurture groups which were more suitable to their specific needs.

The closure was linked to budget savings from 2017/18 and carry over to 2018/19. However the main focus of the change was to achieve better value for money and improved, sustainable support through re-integration to mainstream and placement in other settings for this particular group of pupils.

Cabinet Members spoke in support of the proposal, highlighting the positive moves for previous LRB pupils to alternative settings, and that alternative employment had been offered to all affected staff. It was noted that no complaints or objections had been received from pupils or their families, and officers were commended for the extent of the consultation which provided a strong evidence base for this decision.

Decision:

To approve the school reorganisation proposal “to permanently remove the Learning Resource Base provision currently at Llanwern High School with effect from April 2018”.

3 Verified Key Stage 4 and 5 Pupil Outcomes

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills presented the report which provided analysis of the performance data for Key Stage 4 and 5 results in 2016/17.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that there had been significant revisions to examinations over the preceding two years, which resulted in a different focus on the skills, knowledge and understanding being tested. All GCSE and A levels had been affected in some way but the most predominant changes had come through the Maths and English GCSE, with specific focus on a new Numeracy Paper, a second Science GCSE and the counting of English Language (only) in the Level 2 Inclusive Measure.

Newport was exceptionally well prepared for these changes and implemented support for its secondary schools over that two year period. It was confirmed that this support was continuing and learning points had been taken from the 16/17 pupil outcomes.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that this support and planning had produced some outstanding results, particularly noting that this was the first time in history that Newport had achieved over the Welsh average for the Level 2 Inclusive or the Maths Level 2 Indicators. In all other indicators, the gap between the all Wales average and Newport had reduced and national ranking had subsequently improved.

Although this report focused on all Wales comparisons, it was reported that Newport had also performed strongly in its regional position.

In conclusion, the Cabinet Member noted the ongoing room for improvement, and the continuing ambition of the service and wider Council to create a learning, working and thriving city. The paper noted some of the ongoing challenges in the figures, including the variance between secondary school performances within the city. It was confirmed that the reduction in variation was a key priority for Education Services this academic year.

In commenting upon the report, the Leader and Cabinet Members congratulated pupils and staff on the excellent results achieved, in the face of some significant challenges. Members also noted the areas for improvement, including the increased gender gap. The increased gap for those pupils in receipt of free school meals was also noted, which the Leader linked with the poverty agenda.

The Leader commended Estyn for introducing a new system for reporting key stage 5 results, highlighting the importance of sixth form education and the difference that can make to pupils' futures. Cabinet Members also noted the ongoing partnership working between the authority, the EAS and schools, centered around high aspirations, constructive challenge and positive effort.

Decisions:

1. To acknowledge the position regarding pupil performance and progress made.
2. To consider any issues arising that the Cabinet may wish to draw to the attention of the Chief Education Officer.

4 Revenue Budget Monitor

The Chair of Cabinet presented the latest revenue budget monitor, reporting the forecast on the Council's revenue budget at the end of November.

As was reported to Cabinet in November, the Council was seeing significant and unprecedented demand in social care and special education services, which was an issue for Councils across Wales, and the UK. However Cabinet were asked to note that the position was being managed within the overall budget, and actions previously agreed by Cabinet had helped to keep this under control, for example the non-essential spend restrictions.

Since the last report the overall position had improved, and thanks were extended to senior managers and their teams for their work here to date. It was noted that, whilst there were inherent risks in these forecasts, not least in these demand-led areas, there were also opportunities for the position to improve further towards the end of the financial year, and senior members and officers would be keeping a close eye on this.

As the report highlighted, a key focus was now on how to stabilise and manage the demands and lower the future costs pressures on these social care and education budgets. It was recognised that this would take some time, so the authority must manage the risks in these areas in the meantime, whilst continuing to meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents.

In commenting on the report, Cabinet Members highlighted the ongoing challenges associated with budget reductions and austerity measures, and the efforts being made to seek innovative, regional solutions to the issues being faced, particularly in the areas of high overspends. This included repeated lobbying on this issue of Welsh and National Government representatives. Members also noted the continuing professionalism of officers in managing complex budgets and business streams, and keeping the financial position under control in the face of significant challenges.

Decisions:

1. To note the overall budget forecast position and key budget challenges.
2. To note the use of the Council's contingency budget to balance the current level of overspending, previously approved by Cabinet, which will be assessed each month on an ongoing basis.
3. To note that a targeted non-essential spending restriction is already in place as reported previously and re-affirm the need for robust financial management and maximise savings on the non-essential spend restrictions, wherever possible.
4. To note the level of undelivered savings and the risks associated with this.
5. To note the forecast movements in reserves.

5 Capital Monitoring & Additions

The Chair of Cabinet presented the latest update on the capital budget, showing steady progress on the delivery of the Council's capital programme and individual schemes, including the 21st century schools projects. Attention was drawn to the additions since Cabinet's last report on this in November, as detailed on p86 of the agenda:

St Julian's High Building Improvements (£145k)
Glan Llyn Fixtures, Fittings and Furniture (£50k)
Schools Computer Replacements Programme (£116k)
Maplewood Play Area (reduced by £184k)

Otherwise the programme was unchanged and continued to be on track.

Decision:

1. To approve the additions to the Capital Programme requested in the report.
2. To note the capital expenditure position as at November 2017.

3. To note the balance of and approve the allocation of in-year capital receipts.

6 **Improvement Plan 2016-18: Quarter 2 Update**

The Chair of Cabinet presented the update from quarter 2 on delivery of the Improvement Plan objectives, which continued to be delivered on target, with all but one outcome showing as “good” or “excellent”.

Improvement Objective 8 – Improving outcomes for youth justice – continued to show as amber, but it was noted the reasons behind these figures were well understood, with a significant spike in entrants to the youth justice system caused by recent police operations in the city. Although this was a positive in terms of policing and community safety, it had caused a unique increase for the region, and although this was being managed, Members recognised the additional pressure this had caused for the service.

Overall progress continued to be excellent and Cabinet commended officers for the ongoing efforts on this.

Decision:

1. To note the progress made during the second quarter of 2017/18 regarding key actions and measures.
2. To agree that corrective action be taken to address areas of underperformance.

7 **Mid Year Analysis of Performance Indicators**

The Chair of Cabinet presented the update on the Council's performance at the mid-year point.

The report included monthly, quarterly and half yearly data as at 30 September 2017. There were 127 measures being collected in 2017/18, and these included national measures as well as improvement plan and locally set measures.

Overall performance showed that

- 68.29% of service plan measures, where data was available, were meeting or exceeding their targets.
- 73% of the improvement plan measures were meeting or exceeding target, which was an improvement on quarter 1 performance.
- 53.57% of national measures had shown improved performance since the year end data from April 2017.

The Leader highlighted that this report presented a snapshot of performance, demonstrating excellent progress against a challenging background of cuts to council budgets, ambitious targets, and new measures brought about by changes to national reporting requirements. It was also noted that the performance figures only told one side of the performance story, with the authority receiving consistently positive feedback from regulators, and low levels of complaints.

Decision:

1. To note the contents of the report.
2. To receive a further update on the year-end position once the data is available.

3. To take urgent action in conjunction with Heads of Service and Directors to address areas of poor performance.

8 **Risk Register**

The Chair of Cabinet presented the update on the corporate risk register. It was confirmed that none of the risks had changed position since the last update. There were 5 high risks and 9 medium risks.

Cabinet's role in reviewing the register is to ensure risks are being appropriately managed and mitigated against by the senior management team.

The detail and planned mitigating actions for each risk were provided in the report.

Cabinet Members commented upon the format of the report, which they felt was well presented and accessible. Cabinet Members also noted the recent letter received from a local judge, giving positive feedback on our safeguarding arrangements.

Decision:

To note the content of the Corporate Risk Register and request regular updates regarding the planned mitigating actions.

9 **Work Programme**

The Leader presented the Cabinet Work Programme.

Decision:

To agree the updated work programme.