

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 23 May 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 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2018 were approved as a true record.

3 **School Reorganisation Proposal - Glan Llyn**

The Leader of the Council introduced the item, announcing that, for this item, the 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 objections to this proposal were received during the statutory consultation stage, the final determination must be referred to full Cabinet as the Local Determination Panel under these regulations.

The report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, who explained the background to the proposals, the content of the objections received, the authority's responses to these, and the rationale for recommending support of the report's proposals.

The school reorganisation proposal had been carried out in accordance with the statutory School Organisation Code and included a formal consultation period followed by the publication of a statutory notice for the required period of 28 days.

The formal consultation document was prepared outlining a proposed implementation date of September 2018. However the consultation report recommended modifying the implementation date to September 2019, and the statutory proposal was published outlining the revised date. The preferred implementation date therefore was September 2019.

Cabinet Members spoke in support of the proposals, highlighting that the change to the implementation date was based on sound evidence and made for good educational reasons. All affected children had been offered alternative choices and place in schools within a 2 mile radius. The proposals were fully supported as in the best interests of the children involved.

Decision:

To approve the school reorganisation proposal "to establish a new primary school on the Glan Llyn development for pupils aged 3-11 years with effect from September 2019.

4 **Performance Management Strategy**

The Leader of the Council presented the report to agree the Council's performance management strategy.

The performance management strategy supported the delivery of the council's corporate plan by driving a culture of accountability and maximising performance. The strategy emphasised that all employees contributed to the performance of the council through their day to day activities, positively impacting the council's vision. However, the main focus of the strategy was the council's organisational performance in terms of achieving its planned objectives through well considered planning. The strategy put a framework in place that focussed on the aspirations of the corporate plan, set out clear achievable actions within a specified timeframe, and a reviewing and revising process where progress and further actions were clearly monitored and communicated.

There were six main areas of focus in the Performance Management Strategy as outlined in the report: embedding a performance culture; maximising the council's performance; clear roles and accountability; improving data quality; open communication of goals and achievements; and development of the system to maximise its value

Progress against these actions would be reviewed on an annual basis and actions would be revised as necessary to ensure that our short term actions deliver the longer term objectives.

The Leader thanked the Scrutiny Committee for its constructive feedback on the draft strategy, as part of an open and transparent consultation process.

Decision:

To endorse the performance management strategy.

5 Risk Management Strategy

The Leader of the Council presented the Risk Management Strategy for approval by Cabinet.

The Strategy had been reviewed and revised to strengthen existing arrangements and support the delivery of the Corporate Plan. Anticipating and preparing for future challenges, trends, threats and opportunities was an essential part of the council's risk strategy and allowed for better preparedness and the incorporation of mitigation into planned activities and policies. This helped the council to take a longer-term strategic approach, and makes present policy more resilient to future uncertainty.

The Leader thanked the Audit Committee for their input into the draft strategy, particularly noting the comments about the Council's appetite for risk. The Leader also thanked the staff for effective management of the strategy and risk register.

Decision:

To endorse the Corporate Risk Management Strategy.

6 Corporate Risk Register Update

Following on from the previous item, the Leader of the Council presented the latest update of the Corporate Risk Register.

The corporate risk register identified risks that may prevent the council achieving the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan, and enabled the council to continue to provide services to the citizens and communities of Newport. Robust management of these risks was imperative to the realisation of the council's objectives.

The corporate risk register helped the council to ensure that the needs of the present were met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by considering the sustainable development principle set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

There were 14 risks identified in the risk register, made up of 5 high risks and 9 medium risks. The detail and planned mitigating actions for each risk were provided in the report.

Decision:

To consider the contents of the Corporate Risk Register and request regular updates regarding the planned mitigating actions.

7 Revenue Budget Outturn 2017-18

The Leader of the Council presented the outturn report for the revenue budget in 2017-18.

Under difficult circumstances, the Council had managed its revenue budget well and the revenue outturn showed an underspend of £1,299k, representing just 0.7% of the net budget excluding schools and close to the £1.1m reported in January. There were two broad issues that explained this:

- The Council (i) received nearly £1m of unexpected, and welcomed, grants to deal with social care pressures in the year and (ii) due to the collection of a small number, but high value debts owed to the Council, was able to reduce its bad debt provision by c£300k;
- The Council had actually significantly overspent on some key budget areas, mainly demand led social care and special education needs (SEN) but these had been mitigated by better collection of council tax, lower demand for council tax reduction and use of the revenue budget contingency. These had been forecasted and reported throughout at least the second half of the financial year and balanced each other out, in the main.

Whilst the position was positive, there were areas of budget pressures which had been highlighted throughout most of the year, in particular the demand led social care/ SEN budgets where work was on-going to bring forward solutions to bring down spending and stabilise financial management, school budgets and delivery of 17/18 and previous year savings.

Finally, the report made recommendations to earmark the underspend to reserves for future use, mainly to the implementation of a new 'Customer Services' system, short term capacity issues within the StreetScene department and implementation of the Councils agreed Corporate Plan. Spending of the under-spend in these areas was expected to happen over the next 2 years.

Cabinet spoke in support of the report, thanking the officers in the finance team and across the council for their prudent financial management and commitment to achieving a balanced budget.

Decision:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the out-turn position, which is subject to audit and the major variances for the year (paragraphs 1-4);

2. To approve use of the underspend as set out in paragraph 8 of the report; note the other reserve transfers that are included in the outturn and the resulting level of the Council's general and earmarked reserves;
3. Note the school's outturn and the position on the individual and total school reserves and note / comment on the next steps in this area in paragraph 4;
4. Note the worsening financial position for schools as set out in paragraph 4;
5. Note the other areas of budget pressures and challenges in paragraph 4 and note / comments on the actions currently in place to manage these.

8 **Work Programme**

The Leader of the Council presented the latest update to the work programme.

Decision:

To agree the updated work programme.