

CABINET

18 JULY 2022

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price (Chair)

Councillors (In Person):

L.D. Evans

P.M. Hughes

G.H. John

A. Lenny

E.G. Thomas

A. Vaughan Owen

Councillors (Virtually):

G. Davies.

Also in attendance (Virtually):

Councillors D. Cundy and R. James.

The following Officers were in attendance (In Person):

W. Walters, Chief Executive;

C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services;

G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services;

L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law;

N. Daniel, Head of ICT and Corporate Policy;

S. Pilliner, Head of Transportation & Highways;

A. Williams, Head of Waste and Environmental Services;

D. Hockenull, Marketing and Media Manager;

S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator;

J. Owens, Democratic Services Officer [Observer];

J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer [Minute taker].

The following Officers were in attendance (Virtually):

J. Morgan, Head of Homes & Safer Communities;

S. Davies, Head of Access to Education;

I.R. Llewelyn, Forward Planning Manager;

S. Walters, Economic Development Manager;

M. Evans Thomas, Principal Democratic Services Officer.

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen, SA31 1JP and remotely:- 10:00am - 11:25am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Davies and J. Tremlett.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interests.

3. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON THE 4TH JULY 2022

As provided for by Protocol, the Leader invited Councillor Dot Jones to ask her prepared question in respect of this item.

Question by Councillor Dot Jones;

In respect of Minute number 9, Cabinet Advisory Panels, *“What was the conclusion of the task and finish of the advisory group for school transport?”*

Response by Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services:

“This Panel was intended to be set up just prior to the commencement of the COVID Pandemic in 2020 following a report to the Executive Board on 25th January 2020 on a national change to the Public Service Vehicle Access Regulations which affected services provided by commercial operators for school journeys. Executive Board resolved to:

- 1) Make an amendment be to the Authority’s Spare Seats Police to waive the current annual £50 charge, effective form 1st September 2019;
- 2) Continue to pursue the Welsh Government and the Department of Transport for a change in the application of the Public Services Vehicle Access Regulations to allow bus operators to continue using coaches on school bus routes operated on a commercial basis;
- 3) An Executive Board Advisory Panel be established comprising of 6 members, on a cross-party basis, together with the Executive Board member for Environment to look at all issues relating to Home to School Transport and to report back to the Executive Board.

Following the meeting in January 2020, it generated a national dialogue between the Welsh Government and the UK Government. The Minister of Economy and Transport issued a statement to confirm the Welsh Government had requested a blanket exemption for school transport services and had also written to the Department of Transport to seek further clarity around existing and future exemptions.

However, with the COVID Pandemic hitting the country in March 2020, the advisory panel did not meet, and further national work was undertaken. The Welsh Government commenced a review of the Learner Travel Measure in 2020 and extended the review in 2021. In March 2022, the Welsh Government announced that: “There was not time within the current administration to begin a formal process to change the Measure before the pre-election period begins. Therefore, options for next steps would need to be considered in the next Senedd term.”

Given the Learner Travel Measure provides the basis for school transport provision, it is appropriate to await the outcome of the national review when this is picked up during this Senedd term. Clearly, proposals from the national review will be subject to consultation and progress through the usual democratic process.

As a Council, we need to be pressing the Welsh Government on what the next steps are in terms of the review of the school transport distances and if changes are made, that additional funding is provided to Councils across Wales in order to provide additional capacity.

I am aware that the Leader is hoping to meet with the Deputy Minister for Climate Change Lee Waters, to discuss the matter. I would also point out that I am keen to work with the Labour Group in order to find a way forward on this important agenda and would welcome a meeting with you Councillor Jones to discuss the matter in more depth, if agreeable.”

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 4th July 2022 be signed as a correct record.

4. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE BY MEMBERS

The Chair advised that no questions on notice had been submitted by members.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

6. CABINET VISION STATEMENT 2022 – 2027

The Cabinet considered a report which appended Cabinet Vision Statement 2022 – 2027. The Leader, in presenting the 5-year vision statement explained that following the Local Government Elections (May 2022), the new Cabinet had committed to publishing a vision statement ahead of the Corporate Strategy which was due for publication in the Autumn.

It was highlighted that the relevant reports and recommendations on specific projects and programmes within the report would be presented through the democratic process over the next five years.

The statement provided the direction of travel that this Cabinet wants to focus on to make a difference across the County over the next 5 years. It was reported that work would include liaising with partners to strengthen the economy, increase prosperity, and invest in housing, education, culture, infrastructure, and the environment.

It was reported that the results of the Residents Survey and the Staff Survey would be integral to the development of the Cabinet’s policy platforms going forward. In addition, it was emphasised that in order to further refine the vision statement, a cross-party dialogue with all Members was welcomed and that a number of meetings had already been scheduled over the summer.

Each Cabinet Member present in the meeting was afforded the opportunity to present the vision within their portfolio.

As provided for by Protocol the Leader invited Councillor Rob James to ask his prepared question in respect of this item.

Question by Councillor Rob James:

“Reading the vision document, it reads much like a very long list of to do items or just generic statements such as; work with external bodies and understand what could be done to support residents. Even a Conservative run Council would say that, it is very lacking on detail and it is remarkably similar to the ‘Moving Forward, the Next 5 Years’, I think is known in the Council the 96 point plan. In fact, this is a plan with 113 points, so my main question is mainly; How do we expect the public to give their views on a document when it is lacking in both detail and measurables? It doesn’t say what the future of education you would like it to be, it doesn’t say how you would try to integrate health and social care, it doesn’t say how you will try and build the economy for the future. As Councillor Lenny described it is not ‘pie in the sky’ it doesn’t actually cover anything to do with prosperity or the inflationary pressures that will be placed on the budget or if you would be able to actually deliver on these promises.”

Response by the Leader:

“I think that maybe a fundamental misunderstanding on your part in terms of where we are at, at this point and what role this vision statement plays in feeding into our Corporate Strategy. I would have hoped that the message had been received loud and clear by all Members of this Council, because I had been saying it consistently for the past 2 months. I actually remember meeting you the first time after the election and when we met with yourself, Councillor Dot Jones and Councillor Deryk Cundy, where I stated quite clearly, that the ambition from my perspective was to get to a position in the Autumn with a Corporate Strategy where all views had been taken on board. This is our starting position as a Cabinet, this is what we envisage to be our priorities going forward, but we acknowledge that others may have different ideas. That is why it is important that we take on board the views of residents, through the Residents Survey, the staff, through the Staff Survey and yourselves as Members through the meetings that have already been scheduled or are in the process of scheduled with a range of different Members. So those different views are fed in a measurable and a systematic way that when we get to the Corporate Strategy in the Autumn all those opinions have been taken on board.

That is the process that has been set out and I have been clear over the past two months on what I expect from the different roles of different groups. I think there is discussion here from the Labour Group and yourself as Labour Leader in terms of how you see yourselves feeding into that process and not just initially in terms of the Corporate Strategy but longer term in terms of policy development within this Council. I think you have got a wonderful opportunity to feed in your ideas and your suggestions at a number of different stages, this is the first one.

I will be honest with you, I am a bit disappointed in the question that you have put this morning. I believe it to be lazy. You had the opportunity to possibly put forward some constructive criticism you could have come to this meeting today to asked me as Leader that you do not agree and you need to strengthen X, Y and Z, but you chose not to. You chose the lazy option, and I am sure some would argue that the purpose of the question was simply to provide a peg for Labours press release to the Evening Post, but I do hope that you and the Labour Group gives some serious consideration on how you want to interact with us as the Administration. My offer as I have outlined again, in the introductory statements to this report, the genuine offer of dialogue is there and it will remain there, and it is up to others to take that offer seriously.

I absolutely refute the suggestion that this document lacks vision. It is both ambitious and exciting but also deliverable as Councillor Lenny mentioned there are fiscal pressures facing us, which we are absolutely and acutely aware of and we are determined to work with others to try and overcome those. The vision is there and as a starting point for discussion, I look forward to continuing those discussions with you hopefully in a positive manner over the coming months.”

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Cabinet’s Vision Statement for 2022-2027 be received.

7. FREE PARKING DAYS IN TOWNS

The Cabinet considered a report which contained information in relation to the cost and resource implications of varying the current arrangements of free parking days along with available options to continue the free parking initiative.

It was reported that the Council’s free parking policy aimed to increase footfall in towns by providing free parking in its pay & display car parks on up to five separate days each year to support events or campaigns in each town. Currently, applications for the free parking days were submitted on-line and must have the support of the appropriate Town Council and Town Centre Management Group. Following internal consultation, the applications were put forward for Cabinet Member approval.

Cabinet noted that based on independent reports commissioned as part of the Council’s Ten Town initiative, representatives of rural towns had sought to increase the number of free parking days over and above the current 5 free-parking days per annum that the Council had in place.

Following consideration of the report and all the options available, it was proposed that the options 5 and 6 of the report be endorsed, this was duly seconded.

As provided for by Protocol the Leader invited Councillor Rob James to put his prepared question in respect of this item.

Question by Councillor Rob James:

"I am sure that the Cabinet would agree with me that it has been a difficult period for local businesses, and I think that free parking has been argued for a long period to be a possible mechanism for boosting local business as support. As you can see from the report there is also a very large variation where Carmarthen Town in particular generated 70% of all parking charges for the entire County. Would the Cabinet be willing to work with us to see if we can develop a proposal for a 1-hour free carparking in selected car parks across the County to ensure that we can support the local businesses as you roll out this pilot. I think a 1-hour free would be a very simplistic policy and would be very much understood by the public, it wouldn't be this discrepancy about different days and different times, and I think it would actually increase footfall into the towns."

Whilst accepting the question on this occasion, the Leader asked that questions be put as submitted in future in accordance with the requirements of the Protocol for Non-Executive Members' Attendance at Formal Cabinet Meetings.

Response by the Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services:

"The Council has continued to support local businesses and town centres over several years, both before, during and beyond the pandemic. In consultation with every town centre the Council has provided five free car parking days to support events, the Council has provided further support with extended periods of free parking throughout weekdays in every town. Free parking is provided in:

- Ammanford – Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 10:00am to 2:00pm
- Carmarthen – Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30pm to 6:00pm
- Llanelli – Monday and Tuesday, 10:00am to 4:00pm
- Llandeilo, Llandovery, Newcastle Emlyn, St Clears – Monday to Wednesday, 10:00am to 2:00pm

On parking charges more generally, this Council's parking charges compare favourably with parking charges in neighbouring Councils:

- Carmarthenshire charges a 4 hour range from £2.40 to a maximum of £3.60
- Swansea for example charge for 4 hours £4.50, if you park in a municipal carpark but £7 for an NCP.
- Neath Port Talbot charge for 3-3 hours at £3.30 increasing to £3.80 afterwards
- Ceredigion £3 for 3 hours, increasing to £3.80

However, we recognise that there is a need to keep our parking charges and policy under review.

The Council's Parking Strategy was last reviewed and approved in 2018, the previous strategy was updated as one of the outcomes of the Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish work in 2016.

I can assure you that as a Cabinet we are keen to work with stakeholders and partners across the County, including with Town Centre BID's businesses, County Councillors, Town and Community Councils and others in order to ensure that our parking strategy is up to date, evidence based and is maximising the economic benefits to towns, whilst also contributing towards the Council's wider objectives around helping to reduce traffic problems, congestion and air quality and investing in our public transport system.

We know that parking demand is influenced by the type and function of land use and the quality of a public transport system. We therefore need to keep in mind and review the availability of public transport as an alternative to cars, in line with the Welsh Government's objectives of reducing car journeys across Wales.

There is a duty on us therefore, to ensure that our Parking Strategy is consistent with the Welsh Government Transport Strategy, and I am keen to ensure that any interventions introduced are proportionate and strike the difficult balance in supporting town centres and businesses, supporting more sustainable decarbonisation objectives.

Again, I am happy to work with the Labour group on this agenda and would be happy to meet with you to discuss your ideas with a possibility of incorporating them in the Corporate Strategy going forward as discussed earlier."

It was clarified that the purpose of the report was in response to a request to the Cabinet particularly in the case of Llandovery and a number of options had been developed as part of the Ten Towns initiative. In addition, it was acknowledged that the economic growth of the town of Llandovery may benefit from the free parking initiative and therefore the proposed option 5 in the recommendations of the report to undertake a pilot scheme for 12 months would gain important relevant information and assess the impact of an extended provision of 12 days in Llandovery.

Furthermore, in terms of free parking, the Cabinet recognised that there was an inconsistency across the County. Therefore, it was clarified that the proposed option 6 in the recommendations of the report, would be to review the current free parking strategy.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to;

- 7.1 undertake a pilot scheme for 12 months to assess the impact of an extended provision of 12 days in Llandovery.**
- 7.2. undertake a review of the current free car parking strategy across the County, linked to the general parking strategy approved in 2018, with a future report to be considered by Cabinet to confirm the Terms of Reference for the review.**

8. STREET NAMING AND PROPERTY NUMBERING POLICY

In response to the notice of motion and subsequent resolution of the Council on the 13th October 2021 [minute number 9.1 refers], the Cabinet considered a report which outlined information in relation to the Draft Street Naming and Property Naming Policy appended to the report.

The policy provided a framework for Carmarthenshire County Council to operate the Street Naming and Numbering function effectively and efficiently for the benefit of Carmarthenshire residents, emergency services, businesses, and visitors. In addition, the policy ensured that the Council reflected the relevant legislative powers and duties, including The Welsh Language Act 1993, the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, the Well Being of Future Generations Act 2015 and Sections 17 to 19 of the Public Health Act (1925).

It was reported that the aim of the Policy was to provide advice and guidance to developers and existing property owners when considering new developments, property conversions, or single in-fill plots, as well as changing the name of an existing property. It also provided guidance to Community or Town Councils on the legal framework for operation of the Street Naming and Property Numbering function and the protocols for determining official street names and property numbers.

Cabinet Members were pleased to note that the policy recognised the importance of promoting the Welsh Language and in relation to property and street names would promote and adopt a Welsh name that was consistent with the heritage and history of the area.

In addition, Cabinet noted that following Council approval, a full public consultation would be undertaken and that any representations received would be reported back for Council deliberation ahead of the intended adoption of the Policy.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that:

- 8.1 the Draft Street Naming and Property Numbering Policy for a period of public consultation of 28 days be approved;**
- 8.2 any representations received to the consultation, along with officer recommendations, be reported back to the Council for deliberation.**

9. CARMARTHENSHIRE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING (CSCFL) (FORMERLY THE MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME) ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

The Cabinet considered a report on the Carmarthenshire Sustainable Communities for Learning (formerly the Modernisation Education Programme) – Additional Learning Needs. The report sought Cabinet approval on a realignment to the Capital Programme to facilitate urgent works to increase specialist spaces for pupils with Additional Learning Needs / Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

It was reported that an urgent matter in relation to Autistic Spectrum Disorder provision had arisen that required the Cabinet to make an adjustment (virement) to the capital programme in order to address this urgent need.

Cabinet noted that currently there was no provision in the capital allocation specifically for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Band A or B and B of Carmarthenshire's Sustainable Communities for Learning (Formerly Modernising Education Programme) Programme. The total budget cost to carry out the urgent works for September 2022 as outlined in the report was £1.76 million and given that the budget costs were significant, a virement approval was necessary.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that a virement in the capital programme to allow these urgent works to be undertaken as a matter of urgency

10. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS

The Chair advised that there were no items of urgent business.

11. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED, pursuant to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items as the reports contained exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

12. UK GOVERNMENT LEVELLING UP FUND - LLANELLI PROPOSAL

Following the application of the public interest test it was **RESOLVED** pursuant to the Act referred to in minute no. 11 above not to publicise the content of the report as it contained exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) (Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act). The public interest test in respect of this report outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information contained therein as disclosure would risk prejudicing the interests of businesses currently occupying the premises in question and undermine the Council's position when seeking to acquire land for the project.

The Cabinet considered a report which provided information in relation to the Llanelli Constituency and Transport theme funding bids which had been prepared for submission to UK Government's round 2 Levelling Up Programme.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the applications for submission in respect of the Llanelli Constituency and Transport theme, as detailed in the report, for UK Government's round 2 Levelling Up Programme be endorsed.

CHAIR

DATE