

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 MAY 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Room, County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 17 May 2018

PRESENT: Councillor Clive Carver (Chairman)

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Bob Connah, Paul Cunningham, Patrick Heesom, Andrew Holgate, Paul Johnson, Richard Jones, Mike Lowe, Hilary McGill, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect, Andy Williams, and Arnold Woolley

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Andy Dunbobbin for Councillor Dave Hughes

APOLOGIES: Councillors Dave Hughes and Aaron Shotton, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Bernie Attridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing; Councillor Billy Mullin, Cabinet Member for Corporate Management & Assets; Chief Executive; Corporate Finance Manager; Finance Manager - Technical & Capital; and Senior Manager, Human Resources & Organisational Development

IN ATTENDANCE: Democratic Services Manager and Team Leader, Democratic Services

01. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

The Democratic Services Manager gave a reminder that at the Annual General Meeting, Council had resolved that the Conservative group should nominate the Chair of the Committee. The nomination from the group had been for Councillor Clive Carver. On being put to the vote, the nomination was confirmed.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Clive Carver be confirmed as Chairman of the Committee for the municipal year.

(From this point, Councillor Carver chaired the remainder of the meeting)

02. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chairman sought nominations for the appointment of Vice-Chair. Councillor Paul Johnson was nominated by Councillor Paul Cunningham and this was duly seconded. On being put to the vote, the nomination was carried. No further nominations were received.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Paul Johnson be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee for the municipal year.

03. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2018 were submitted.

Matters arising:

Minute number 79 – Councillor Patrick Heesom referred to his previous request for an update on the Flintshire Bridge and other road issues. The Chief Executive explained discussions with Welsh Government over transport investment were on-going.

Councillor Heesom also referred to discussions at a meeting of Community & Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee that had taken place the previous day. He thought that some of the issues belonged to this Committee. The Chief Executive confirmed that an all Member workshop on the Growth bid was scheduled for 12 June.

Councillor Arnold Woolley asked for an update on Out of County placements. The Chief Executive responded that a local and regional action plan were under development and that a report was due to Overview and Scrutiny.

Councillor Richard Jones referred to his comments at the previous meeting that developers should pay for clearance of pests that have been disturbed due to the construction of new developments and this being covered by a Section 106 Agreement. The Chief Executive would follow this up with the relevant Officers in Public Protection.

Minute number 82 – Councillor Arnold Woolley felt that the minute did not reflect the discussion that took place. It was agreed to amend the minute to reflect this.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved, with the addition to minute number 82, 'Councillor Arnold Woolley referred to educational opportunities, time constraints and the future prospects of Welsh learners'.

04. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

05. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Manager presented the Forward Work Programme for consideration and explained that this item would be discussed at the beginning of each meeting as agreed at the planning session which was held before the previous meeting.

Councillor Patrick Heesom asked as this was being discussed at the beginning of the meeting would there be an opportunity for it to be amended following any discussions that took place during the course of the meeting. The Democratic Services Manager responded that it could.

Councillor Richard Jones referred to the Equitable Expenditure Analysis on County Towns from some years previously. It was agreed that he would provide this information to the Corporate Finance Manager in good time before the next meeting. On the same issue, the Chief Executive agreed that the reporting model would include both County Towns and their catchment areas.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved; and
- (b) That the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, should this become necessary.

06. BUDGET PROCESS 2019/20

The Chief Executive provided a verbal update on the budget process for 2019/20. He informed Members that there would be two all-Member workshops in July to discuss stage one of the budget. The intention was for the first workshop to be informative on Council budgets, and the second to explore budget options.

It was emphasised that the budget process was beginning three months earlier than in previous years, so that Members had all the information to make important decisions. The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that the first workshop would take place at 10.30 a.m. on 13 July and the second at 2.00 p.m. on 23 July.

There was no significant change in the budget forecast to report at this early stage of planning for 2019/20.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

07. BUDGET EFFICIENCY FIRST STAGE TRACKING FOR THE 2018/19 COUNCIL FUND BUDGET

The Corporate Finance Manager provided Members with an update on the early progress made on the implementation of efficiencies included within the 2018/19 Budget. He explained the challenges which the Council had faced in recent years and that £7.970m efficiencies were projected to be achieved in the 2017/18 financial year closing - a success rate of 95% which matched the key performance indicator set.

It was projected that £6.182m (71%) of the 2018/19 efficiency total of £8.777m were Green, £2.395m (27%) Amber, and only £0.200m (2%) classified as a Red risk.

The Chief Executive explained that the red risks were relatively small in number and highlighted a number of amber risks. He provided further explanation on good progress that had been made in reducing risks.

Councillor Patrick Heesom referred to the Amber risk 'County Hall Rationalisation' and in particular the demolition of Phases 3 and 4. The Chief Executive responded that this was a key area of work which was on track with a proportion of the workforce to be relocated to Unity House.

The Chairman asked if there was sufficient car parking facilities for staff and whether there would be a charge. The Chief Executive assured Members that there were sufficient car parking facilities and there would be a charge.

It was agreed that a progress report be made to the June or July meeting on the move to Ewloe, with a site visit by the Committee in due course.

Councillor Haydn Bateman asked a question regarding the Amber risk—'Green Waste Service' and could this amount increase. The Chief Executive informed Members that the required number of households had subscribed for this Service and there was a good public response with a low number of complaints received. There had been a peak at Easter and Streetscene were still receiving enquires.

Councillor Hilary McGuill asked questions regarding General Data Protection Regulations and the Green Waste Digital Service – would residents be sent emails regarding new Data Protection Regulations. Whether sports / bowling green clubs be given a reduction or exemption and with the proposed merger of Wrexham and Flintshire Councils, whether Unity House was fit for purpose and worried about the public purse.

The Chief Executive replied to all three questions and in response confirmed that the Green Waste Digital Services would be compliant with the new Regulations, and that any exemption or reduced fee for brown bins for clubs would be considered during a later review. On Unity House phases one and two of County Hall would be lower in occupancy than now once the transition had been completed. If there were to be a future Council merger, Flintshire would be in a good position with a single depot in Alltami, workforce numbers would already be at a minimum, and a 'democracy hub' would be required.

It was suggested the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee be advised to include to monitor car parking and green waste income within their Forward Work Programme.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made on the implementation of efficiencies as part of the budget for 2018/19 be noted.

08. REVENUE CONSEQUENCES OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

The Chief Executive informed Members that the presentation was intended to provide information on the impacts and benefits of the investments within the Capital Programme and included practical examples with a view to using this format for future presentations.

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced the Interim Finance Manager - Capital & Technical to Members. The Finance Manager explained the potential revenue impacts of major capital schemes and highlighted the Investment Section of the 2018/19 Capital Programme to Members. The direct costs were explained, which included borrowing costs, capital and revenue running costs and the direct benefits and income generation that may result in such schemes. There were also some indirect impacts that was difficult to quantify which included customer quality experience and performance.

The Chief Executive explained that a number of examples could have been used, but that it had been decided to use two models in the area of social services. Model 1 – Marleyfield Care Home was a 32 bed establishment which also included a dementia care provision. The direct costs and benefits were explained, including the potential to increase self-funding placements. Indirect benefits included it being less costly to provide in-house provision than to commission external places.

Model 2 – Glanrafon Day Care Centre was a new establishment to be built on the former John Summers High School site. The direct costs and benefits included no borrowing costs as the scheme would not be funded from prudential borrowing, and this would avoid spending £280k on essential repairs on the existing facility. Indirect benefits included in the long term savings of £1.5m and the avoidance on 3 potential Out of County Placements saving £54k per year.

Members welcomed this template and examples provided on how this affected Service Users.

Councillor Hillary McGuill suggested that before the disposal of old equipment it should be assessed to see if this could be used for another purpose or by any clubs. The Chief Executive agreed this was a good point and was sure some equipment could be re-used or sold.

The Chairman thanked Officers for the presentation which was a model example of how to present complex information, and it was agreed that a note of appreciation be sent to Susie Lunt for her contribution to developing the new approach.

It was confirmed that an update on the Capital Projects investments would be prepared for July on a similar basis to that used for the Revenue Consequences of Capital Expenditure presentation.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be welcomed and used as the template for further reports on the Capital Programme.

09. WELSH GOVERNMENT LATE UNDERSPEND ALLOCATIONS

The Corporate Finance Manager presented a report on Welsh Government late underspend allocations. It was explained that in the 2017/18 financial year, a number of additional specific grant allocations had been received in the final months and weeks of the final year and that appendix one of the report provided a summary of grants received and included any impact and consequences of the late notifications.

Officers were asked to make a distinction between those schemes where there was an expectation of additional finance being made available at year end and those which were unexpected.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the final three grants listed were unexpected and some of these which related to transportation had been expected but it was uncertain in which year they would be allocated.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing explained that in certain areas Streetscene and school transport plans were in place so that they could be submitted to Welsh Government should any grants become available.

The Corporate Finance Manager added that maximising grant funding was always the intention and that where grant funding was not able to be spent by year end other options would be considered to avoid any loss of grant.

RESOLVED:

That the Welsh Government late underspend allocations be noted.

10. APPRAISALS PROGRESS REPORT

The Chief Executive and Senior Manager, Human Resources and Organisational Development presented a report showing a detailed analysis of completion levels of appraisals across all portfolios.

A breakdown of progress with appraisals within each portfolio showed that Chief Executive's, Organisational Change 1 and 2 had achieved 100%. The Chief Executive expressed his disappointment that not all portfolios had achieved 100%. However, a rate of 86% had been achieved across the Authority which was a marked improvement on the previous year.

The Senior Manager explained that some portfolios has not achieved 100% due to Service reviews being undertaken. It had been made clear to managers within each portfolio that they had to produce a clear project plan and time had been spent in briefing managers to be more proactive. It was agreed that the target of 100% should be kept and not lowered. The Cabinet Member for

Corporate Management & Assets reiterated that the Chief Executive and the Senior Manager had given a clear message to managers that this was done.

Councillor Richard Jones commented that it was disappointing that a completion rate of 100% had not been achieved. In response to a question regarding a number of exemptions - schools based employees, employees in their first six months of employment (new starters) and employees whose appraising manager is/has been absent for a prolonged period, the Chief Executive agreed that Head Teachers would be asked to provide figures and that the exemption for employees whose appraising Manager is/has been absent for a prolonged period would be removed. The Senior Manager explained that new starters had a probation period and were regularly reviewed, so were not covered by this appraisal system.

Following questions from the Chairman, Council Paul Cunningham and Councillor Hilary McGuill, the Senior Manager explained that there was not a set appraisal cycle across the Council; this would vary between each portfolio and was run on a full year. Members were reminded that Managers received automated reminder emails when an employee's annual appraisal was due.

The Chief Executive responded to comments by Councillor Richard Jones on the data to be provided at service rather than portfolio level.

All Chief Officers would be required to produce an action plan to provide assurance on appraisal scheduling and completion for the current year, including the full use of iTrent for record keeping, and a mid-year progress report would be provided to Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the progress report be noted subject to:

- (a) That Head Teachers be requested to provide appraisal data for schools based employees;
- (b) That a progress report on Appraisals be provided annually and with a six month interim report;
- (c) That the exemption for employees whose manager is absent for a prolonged period be removed from the list of exemptions;
- (d) That data be provided at service rather than portfolio level; and
- (e) That it be emphasised to Chief Officers that those whose Portfolio Appraisals performance are less than 80% might be required to appear at the Committee to give account for this if performance did not improve over 2018/19.

11. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 a.m. and ended at 12.08 pm)

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Chairman