

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
9 OCTOBER 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Organisational Change Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Monday, 9 October 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Dave Mackie (Chairman)

Councillors: Janet Axworthy, Marion Bateman, Ian Dunbar, Mared Eastwood, Tudor Jones, Brian Lloyd, Mike Reece, Paul Shotton and David Wisinger

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Kevin Hughes (for Veronica Gay)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: Bernie Attridge and Patrick Heesom

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance; Councillor Billy Mullin, Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Assets; Chief Officer (Organisational Change 1); Chief Officer (Organisational Change 2) and Corporate Finance Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Democratic Services Manager and Community & Education Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

23. FINANCIAL FORECAST AND STAGE ONE OF THE BUDGET 2018/19

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced the report which set out the current financial forecast for 2018/19 and emergent options and financial pressures for the Organisational Change portfolio.

The financial forecast as detailed in section 1.04 of the report had been revised to take into account decisions made as part of the 2017/18 budget, and updated with the latest information on pressures from service portfolios. A settlement at or similar to the 2017/18 financial baseline was used as the basis for calculating the forecast for 2018/19 and no modelling for raised Council Tax levels had been included at this stage.

The Corporate Finance Manager concluded that stage one service portfolio proposals were being presented throughout October to all Overview & Scrutiny Committees for review. The Provisional Settlement for Local Government in Wales was due to be announced on 10 October, 2017. The Final Settlement was expected later in the calendar year and would follow the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget statement which was due to be made on 22 November, 2017.

The Chairman invited the Chief Officer (Organisational Change 1) to present the Resilience Statement and Operating Models for the Organisational Change portfolio.

Organisational Change 1

The Chief Officer outlined the Resilience Statement as appended to the report, which detailed efficiencies which had been made to date and the impacts these efficiencies had on the services within the Organisational Change 1 portfolio. The Chief Officer also detailed the proposed efficiencies for 2018-19 which totalled £416,000, as detailed within the Future Operating Model, shown at Appendix 1. The proposed efficiencies included, continuation of previous year's business plan for Leisure, Libraries and Heritage, to develop an employee owned company.

Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader of the Council, welcomed the Resilience Statements which were being presented to each of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees which were helpful for benchmarking efficiencies to date and highlighting the risks to service areas. He outlined the current funding gap of £11.7M and that the total stage one budget proposals at this stage only amounted to £3M which evidenced the challenged ahead. He also commented on the need to continue to lobby National Government to highlight the impacts of austerity.

The Chairman welcomed the budget consultation process with Overview & Scrutiny Committees which gave Members the opportunity to have an impact on final budget decisions.

Councillor Ian Dunbar thanked officers for the update on the financial position and welcomed the increased visits to Flintshire libraries. He commented on the reduced funding to Theatr Clwyd from the Arts Council for Wales and asked if the Council would have to contribute more as a result of this. The Chief Officer explained that the Arts Council for Wales were also under pressure to find efficiencies and reduce their budget. The Theatr will have to deal with any reduction in funding from the Arts Council for Wales and were currently working on options to maximise income.

In response to a question from Councillor Paul Shotton on service charges, the Chief Officer advised that charges within the leisure service were comparative to other Counties across Wales. He outlined alternative ways in which it would be easier for Aura Leisure to generate more income, including the opportunity to introduce different activities and membership fees.

Councillor Kevin Hughes asked whether it was possible for the Theatr to look for commercial sponsorship as a way of reducing the Council's funding contributions in the future. He also questioned why swimming sessions were free to people aged 60 and above, some of which he was sure wouldn't mind paying. The Chief Officer explained that the Council provided free swimming for people aged 60 and above via Welsh Government funding and agreed that a national debate was needed to assess whether this was affordable in the future. He also advised that the Theatr were focusing on how best to maximise sponsorship and charitable funding on an annual basis.

The Chairman invited the Chief Officer (Organisational Change 2) to present the Resilience Statement and Operating Models for the Organisational Change portfolio.

Organisational Change 2

The Chief Officer outlined the Resilience Statement as appended to the report, which detailed efficiencies which had been made to date and the impacts these efficiencies had on the services within the Organisational Change 2 portfolio. The Chief Officer also detailed the proposed efficiencies for 2018-19 which totalled £286,000 as detailed within the Future Operating Model, shown at Appendix 2. The proposed efficiencies included, the restructure of Corporate Property Maintenance Services and Design and Project Management Services.

Councillor Ian Dunbar welcomed the increase in the number of school meals and the take up of free school meals and asked whether consideration was being given to expanding the work of NEWydd Catering and Cleaning Services to work jointly with the Housing Service on void properties. The Chief Officer confirmed that work on void properties would form part of the future statutory business plan for NEWydd Catering and Cleaning Services.

Councillor Marion Bateman commented on the possible proposals to relocate staff from County Hall and asked whether there were any proposals to relocate staff at Flint Offices. The Chief Officer explained that work had been undertaken to consolidate social services and housing officers at Flint Offices which had allowed for cases to be dealt with in a timelier manner. Consideration was being given to relocating staff from County Hall as the current office space was inefficient with annual running costs of around £1.5M.

Councillor Tudor Jones asked whether consideration had been given to protecting services in communities if community asset transfers failed in the future. The Chief Officer (Organisational Change 1) commented on the two major community asset transfer, namely, Connah's Quay Swimming Pool and Holywell Leisure Centre, and said that the Council had committed to provide funding to them for three years with a view to reducing that funding over the three year period. The budget for 2018/19 does not propose a reduction in that funding. He said that it was important to consider if the community asset transfer failed and to ensure revenue and support were on-going to minimise this risk. He advised that both community asset transfers were currently performing well.

Councillor Shotton commented on the terms of reference of the Committee and the creation of this Committee which had been to scrutinise and monitor performance of community asset transfers. He said that the Council was committed to working in partnership with community groups to defend and protect services.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Officers for their work within their portfolios and commented on the positive impact community asset transfers had had in protecting services in communities across Flintshire.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee is satisfied with the approach to the Budget within the Organisational Change portfolios.

24. **MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

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

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.05 pm)

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Chairman