

**CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**15 MARCH 2018**

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 15 March 2018

**PRESENT: Councillor Clive Carver (Chairman)**

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

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors: Christine Jones and David Wisinger attended as observers

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance; Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Assets, Chief Executive; and Finance Manager.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer

**72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None were received.

**73. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2018 were submitted.

**Matters arising:**

Minute number 66 - Councillor Paul Cunningham referred to discussion which had taken place around the Flintshire bridge inspection and asked if there was any progress to report. The Chief Executive responded that the Council was in discussion with the Welsh Government and the outcome would be reported back to the Committee when known.

Councillor Arnold Woolley commented on the issue of potholes in roads and asked if information could be provided on the total cost of repairs in Flintshire. He asked if the funding from Welsh Government (WG) to support local highway improvements would be sufficient to cover the cost or whether there was a 'gap' that the Authority would need to fund. The Chief Executive advised that some of this work was funded by the Council as routine maintenance, with the road conditions post-winter being assessed by the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) and his team, and that work was being prioritised to address the most urgent repairs. He also referred to the 'one off' funding of £1.472m the Authority had received from the WG to support local highway improvements.

The Leader referred to ongoing work through the WLGA and reported that Flintshire, along with other authorities, had made a bid to the WG for extra funding for winter weather road damage. He said that details of the Flintshire bid (of £200k or more) would be circulated in due course.

Councillor Woolley referred to the request by Councillor Paul Johnson to ask if any additional funding could be sought from the WG to repair rural roads damaged by diverted traffic as a result of work along the A55. The Chief Executive explained that this was part of ongoing discussions around the future of the Flintshire bridge with the WG, and that the outcome would be reported back in due course.

Councillor Woolley referred to the proposal by Councillor Richard Jones that the Committee receive a report outlining the effects of the capital expenditure (new schemes for approval) and asked when this would be made available to the Committee. The Democratic Services Manager said that this would be for the April meeting.

Councillor Hilary McGuill expressed concern around the need for repeat repairs to road surfaces due to the same pot holes recurring. She questioned whether this could be due to the materials used or whether the work undertaken was not to the standard required. Members commented on the repair work undertaken by contactors on behalf of utility companies and asked if the work was inspected on completion. The Chief Executive acknowledged the points made and said that this was a matter for further consideration by the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Richard Jones reiterated the concerns expressed by Councillor McGuill and said that repairs should last longer than a few weeks.

Councillor Dave Hughes congratulated the Streetscene team on the work undertaken to repair pot holes particularly as a result of current adverse weather conditions and said in some cases an urgent repair was carried out until a permanent repair could be done.

Minute No.68 – Councillor Richard Jones said he had not yet received a response to his request for clarification on the comparative figures for agency worker spend and non-school turnover from the previous year. The Democratic Services Manager commented that this information would be included in the next quarterly report.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman as an accurate record; and
- (b) That the Committee's concerns at recurring pot holes and damage to road surfaces because of utilities 'dropped iron works be sent to the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration as part of their work programme.

#### **74. QUARTER 3 COUNCIL PLAN 2017/18 MONITORING REPORT**

The Chief Executive introduced the Quarter 3 Council Plan 2017/18 Monitoring Report. He provided background information and advised that the monitoring report for the 2017/18 Council Plan was a positive report, with 81% of activities being assessed as making good progress, and 69% likely to achieve the desired outcome. Performance Indicators showed good progress with 84% meeting or near to period target. Risks were also being successfully managed with the majority being assessed as moderate (67%) or minor (10%).

The Chief Executive reported on the performance indicators which showed a red status for current performance against target and the following major risks for the Committee as detailed in the report.

Priority: Serving Council – the scale of the financial challenge

Priority: Supportive Council – availability of sufficient funding to resource key priorities.

The Chief Executive also reminded the committee that in future, as the lead Overview & Scrutiny committee for monitoring performance, they would be receiving all of the quarterly reports, instead of those specifically relating to issues within the committee's service remit.

The Democratic Services Manager advised that an 'Understanding of Performance Reports' workshop for all Members was to be organised for late June/early July, to link to the Council Plan out-turn report to Council on 19<sup>th</sup> June

Councillor Arnold Wooley asked that in future reports also detailed areas of under performance and said this would have assisted with an understanding of the figures presented in paragraph 1.04 of the report. He also referred to the figures presented in paragraph 1.06 of the report relating to the analysis of current performance and said these did not reconcile with the figures in paragraph 1.04. The Chief Executive provided clarification and said he would provide more information to members on the breakdown.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Committee notes the Quarter 3 Council Plan 2017/18 Monitoring report; and
- (b) That as the lead committee for performance issues, the Committee reaffirmed its request to receive all Council Plan quarterly information for 2018/19 and thereafter.

#### **75. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2017/18 (MONTH 10)**

The Finance Manager introduced a report to provide the revenue budget monitoring report for 2017/18 as at Month 10. She advised that the Revenue

Budget Monitoring report had been presented to Cabinet on 23 January 2018 and was appended to the report.

The Finance Manager explained that the monthly report provided the current revenue budget monitoring position for 2017/18 for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account. The report presented the position based on actual income and expenditure, as at Month 10 of the financial year and projected how the budget would stand at the close of the financial year if all things remained equal.

The Finance Manager reported on the main projected year end position for the Council Fund and the Housing Revenue Account as detailed in the report. She also reported on the main considerations on the Month 10 position and referred to the overall position of the Council Fund, the latest in-year forecast, tracking of in-year risks and emerging issues, winter maintenance, inflation, reserves and balances. The Finance Manager advised that for the Council Fund the projected Contingency Reserve balance as at 31 March 2018 was £8.119m although this reduced to £5.714m when taking account of agreed contributions for the 2018/19 budget. She reported that for the Housing Revenue Account the projected closing balance as at 31 March 2018 was £1.081m.

In response to a question on the efficiencies to be achieved in 2017/18 the Chief Executive provided an update on the current position. He also commented on the two unforeseen budget pressures 2017/18 and 2018/19 :-the pressure on the winter maintenance budget, and the WG withdrawal (from 2018/19) of the Minority Ethnic and Language Grant (MEAG) of around £175K which supported English as a Second Language and traveller learning needs.

On the issue of winter maintenance the Chair asked if the Authority was able to recover the cost of gritting highways. Officers explained that the cost of gritting the A55 was recoverable.

Commenting on the issue of managing risks and emerging issues, Councillor Richard Jones suggested that the WG be lobbied to provide a central source of funds rather than local authorities managing individually. He went on to thank everyone for their efforts during the budget process which had resulted in more money being made available to support schools.

Councillor Jones reiterated his opposition to the change in accounting policy to Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The Chief Executive assured the committee that the Council decision on MRP had now been made based on the advice given.

Referring to the second recommendation on page 42 of the report, Councillor Woolley sought assurance that the Authority had a good overview to ensure any financial issues were identified as early as possible concerning the implementation of different service delivery methods. The Chief Executive responded that both Aura and NEWydd were completing their first year of trading and assured members that close liaison with the Council was taking place. He went on to emphasise that both organisations had effective boards to oversee their activities.

During discussion the cost of out of county placements and the associated and long term costs was raised. Councillor Aaron Shotton commented that there was not enough public sector provision and referred to the historical and cultural issues associated with residential care. He said that more needed to be done across Wales in terms of intervention, funding, and remodelling of provision, and that the Authority also needed to look 'in-house' at the services provided to ensure they continued to be fit for purpose. The Chief Executive added that Welsh Government should maintain a flexible national fund to support councils in need.

Councillor Hilary McGuill commented on the complex and diverse issues around out of county placements and said there was a need for funding to be identified at an early stage.

Councillor Richard Jones suggested that other local authorities be contacted to establish any overspend in education and social care with a view to lobbying the WG for a central fund to be held to address funding needs.

Councillor Paul Johnson referred to the information provided on page 54 of the report concerning pest control and expressed concern that the previous targets had not been realistic. He asked that realistic income targets be set within Pest Control.

Councillor Richard Jones commented on the issue of pest control and asked if local residents or the developer was responsible for paying charges for the removal of pests as a result of development on a site. The Chief Executive responded that this was an interesting idea.

In response to a question from Councillor Haydn Bateman regarding the projected overspend of £2.200m on the Streetscene and transportation portfolio, the Finance Manager advised that a sum of £675K had been credited to the budget as the GHA coaches element of the over-spend. It was confirmed that the Council had retrieved the vehicles which it owned and which were being sold.

The Democratic Services Manager said that during the discussion, he had noted the comments made about out of county placements and how overspending on these across Wales might be better managed, and in addition that realistic income targets be set within Pest Control. He asked whether these should be brought to the attention of the Cabinet as issues about which this committee had concerns.

The Chair asked Members to vote on the recommendation in the report and, when put to the vote, this was carried. Councillor Patrick Heesom asked that it be recorded that he had abstained from the vote.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Committee notes the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2017/18 Month 10 report and confirms on this occasion that the issues which it wishes to have brought to the Cabinet's attention are concerns about out of county placements

and how overspending across Wales might be better controlled and that more realistic income targets should be set for Pest Control.

**76. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Democratic Services Manager presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration. He advised that the following additional items were to be submitted for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 19 April 2018.

- a financial forecast report (which was also to be presented to Cabinet)
- a report on the effects of capital expenditure (new schemes for approval)

It was agreed that the Forward Work Programme as submitted be approved with the amendments listed above.

**RESOLVED:**

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

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

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

(The meeting started at 9.30 a.m. and ended at 10.30 a.m)

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**Chairman**