

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
12 FEBRUARY 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 12 February 2015

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Curtis (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

Councillors: Clive Carver, Paul Cunningham, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Robin Guest, Ron Hampson, Joe Johnson, Richard Jones, Richard Lloyd, David Roney, Paul Shotton and Arnold Woolley

SUBSTITUTION:

Councillor Haydn Bateman for Marion Bateman

APOLOGY:

Councillor: Carolyn Thomas

CONTRIBUTORS:

Leader of the Council, Chief Executive, Chief Officer (People and Resources), and Corporate Finance Manager

IN ATTENDANCE:

Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

No declarations of interest were made.

71. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 January 2015 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Accuracy

Budget Consultation Process

Councillor Richard Jones referred to his comments on page 5, third paragraph, and said that the figure he had referred to in relation to rate relief was £40m not £40k. It was agreed that this would be amended

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2014/15 (Month 7)

Councillor Jones said that his comments concerning Social Services budget heads had not been included in the minutes. He explained his concern was that on occasions the revised budget heads for these budgets changed without any explanation being provided. The Corporate Finance Manager agreed to report back to Councillor Jones with an explanation.

Matters Arising

Budget Consultation Process

Councillor Paul Shotton asked if a letter had been sent to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee or its equivalent at Wrexham County Borough Council. The Member Engagement Manager confirmed that a letter had been sent but explained there had been no response as yet.

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2014/15 (Month 7)

Councillor Paul Shotton referred to the costs for the former Euticals site in Sandycroft and asked if there was any information about whether the Welsh Government might provide funding for the unique situation. The Chief Executive explained that a meeting of public sector partners would be held during the next few weeks to discuss a plan for decontamination and eventual closure/disposal of the site. He advised that the Authority would be seeking a sizeable contribution towards the cost of removal of the chemicals and disposal of the site. He explained that there were two phases to closure of the site and two options for the eventual disposal of the site. A further report would be made in due course.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the above the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

72. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2014/15 (MONTH 8)

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced a report to provide Members with the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2014/15 (Month 8) report for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which was to be submitted to Cabinet on 17 February 2015.

The Corporate Finance Manager advised that for the Council Fund the projected net in year expenditure was forecast to be £1.014m lower than budget. The projected contingency reserve balance at 31 March 2015 was £3.955m. Appendix 1 detailed the movements since Month 7 with the projected variances occurring for the year to date summarised within appendix 2. Changes in the revised budget over month 7 related to adjustments relating to the single status rebasing exercise. Section 3.06 detailed the efficiencies and it was currently projected that £7.574m of the £8.840m (86%) would be achieved. Details of the workforce efficiencies, voluntary redundancy programme and organisational work on vacancies was provided in paragraph 3.10.

The risks and assumptions were as detailed in Section 5 and the unearmarked reserves were summarised in Section 6. Taking into account the amounts needed to be used from the unearmarked reserves and the current projected outturn at month 8, the projected balance on the contingency reserve at 31 March 2015 was £3.955m and was summarised in appendix 4.

The HRA was projected to have an overall underspend of £0.324m and a projected closing balance at month 8 of £1.490m, which at 4.96% of total expenditure satisfied the prudent approach of ensuring a minimum level of 3%. Appendix 5 detailed the reasons for the significant variances.

The Chief Executive commented on the improved style of reporting on in-year risks following the useful discussions which had taken place at the last meeting of the Committee, and said that the report summarised the current level of concerns. On the issue of risks and assumptions, Councillor Richard Jones welcomed the detail provided and the RAG status, however, he requested that potential costings be included on the risks to enable the Committee to comment on the value. The Chief Executive agreed to improve the format further.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

73. UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PEOPLE STRATEGY 2015 - 18.

The Chief Officer (People and Resources) provided a verbal update and a presentation on developing the next phase of the People Strategy 2015-18. The main points of the presentation were:

- People Strategy successes
- Setting the context for the Strategy
- People Strategy 2015-18 Themes
- People Strategy 2015-18 Priorities
- People Strategy Member workshop – key outcomes
- Professional Management and Leadership – key themes
- Performance and Productivity – key themes
- Policy Practice and Culture – key themes
- Skills and Talent development – key themes
- Next steps in developing the Strategy

The Chairman thanked the Chief Officer for her presentation and invited Members to raise questions.

Councillor Richard Jones emphasised the importance of identifying the departmental training needs before determining the training needs of individual employees to avoid a mis-match between department and workforce requirements.

During discussion Officers responded to the comments made by Members around the 'culture and generic practices' in public service organisations. Councillor Robin Guest expressed concern that despite the support, encouragement and training provided, some employees may still lack the required skill levels they needed to do their job.

The Chairman referred to the importance of making employees feel valued. He also commented on the need to ensure that training courses were focussed on the needs of the Council in the first instance.

Councillor Paul Shotton asked for an update on progress with the collaborative work undertaken with Coleg Cambria. The Chief Officer (People and Resources) explained that the Authority had a successful partnership with

Coleg Cambria and referred to ongoing management programmes and development events provided by the college.

Councillor Clive Carver asked if managers were encouraged to develop their own style and abilities of management or if a corporate style was to be adopted. The Chief Officer explained that there were some core activities that managers were expected to undertake and deliver but a range of individual styles and approaches worked well. In response to the further question raised by Councillor Carver concerning attendance management, the Chief Officer commented on the need for managers to comprehensively follow the attendance absence policy and for employees to understand how important attendance was and the need to fulfil their contract of employment.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be received and progress endorsed.

74. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL COMPETENCY BASED MODEL.

The Chief Officer (People and Resources) introduced a report to update the Committee on the implementation of the revised competency based performance appraisal model within Flintshire. She provided background information and referred to the key considerations in the report.

The Chief Officer advised that there was an existing appraisal framework within Flintshire and the inclusion of competencies within that framework was seen as being the most effective way of introducing a progressive approach to appraisals to include talent identification and succession planning.

The Chief Officer reported that the model to be used was competency based and all Chief Officers would be required to aim for 100% completion for their Senior Managers by the end of March. The aim was to complete appraisals for Managers/Team Leaders by June 2015. Chief Officers had been provided with all appraisal documentation including a performance rating '9 box grid'. All management level posts would be appraised in terms of performance against objectives set in 2014/15 together with a review of potential and new objectives consisting of business and corporate related objectives linked to the Council's overall priorities.

Councillor Richard Jones commented that job appraisals should be completed every 12 months and asked whether competencies had been identified for all job titles. In her response the Chief Officer explained that the completion of appraisals was a core business and corporate related objective and good management practice. Referring to the competencies for job titles she advised that there were four levels and Managers had been given guidance as to which level was applicable for each type of role.

Councillor Paul Cunningham referred to the opportunity presented by the appraisal process to identify employee strengths and talents and promote from within the existing workforce. The Chief Executive reported that the appraisal process was used to develop and promote talent within the organisation.

Councillor Richard Jones commented on the need for departments to promote a 'vision' so there was a clear focus for the team to work towards. He also suggested that the appraisal be linked to pay increases and promotion.

Councillor Richard Lloyd commented that employees expected an annual appraisal; however, there was also a need for regular contact and supervision between employees and managers to identify progress against objectives throughout the year.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin suggested that the word 'appraisal' was intimidating and that the title 'Personal Development Plan' could be used instead. Officers responded that the appraisal process was a two way experience and should not be seen as a punitive exercise but as a positive and structured assessment and conversation between managers and employees.

Councillor Arnold Woolley emphasised the importance of the appraisal process being "fair and appropriate". He referred to the '9 box grid' used for performance rating and expressed concerns that it gave the impression the manager was "right" and the employee "wrong". The Chief Officer advised that the appraisal was employee led and agreed to review the wording in the Grid.

In response to the question raised by Councillor Ian Dunbar concerning appraisals and support provided for employees on long term sickness, the Chief Officer commented on the need to maintain communication links with the employee, if they were well enough, to keep them informed and involved of developments within their own service and the organisation.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee welcomed the report and the progress which had been made.

75. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Member Engagement Manager introduced the report to consider the Forward Work Programme for the Committee.

The Member Engagement Manager detailed the items for consideration at the meetings scheduled for 12 March, and 16th April 2015. During discussion it was agreed that following consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, the Member Engagement Manager be authorised to reschedule items on the Forward Work Programme for future meetings.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be agreed; and
- (b) That the Member Engagement Manager be authorised to reschedule items on the Forward Work Programme for future meetings.

76. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.30 am)

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Chair