

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30 JANUARY 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold on Friday, 30 January 2015

PRESENT: Councillor Carolyn Thomas (Chair)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Clive, Carver, Paul Cunningham, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Robin Guest, Ron Hampson, Richard Jones, Richard Lloyd, Paul Shotton and Mike Peers

ALSO PRESENT (as all Members had been invited to attend)

Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Glyn Banks, Haydn Bateman, Chris Bithell, Derek Butler, Carol Ellis, Veronica Gay, Christine Jones, Kevin Jones, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Tim Newhouse, Nigel Steele-Mortimer

Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee Co-optees: Mrs Janine Beggan and Mr David Hytch

APOLOGY:

Councillor Arnold Woolley.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Social Services), Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise), Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Chief Officer (Organisational Change), Chief Officer (Planning and Environment), Chief Officer (Organisational Change), Chief Officer (Governance) and Corporate Finance Manager

IN ATTENDANCE:

Member Engagement Manager and Overview & Scrutiny Support Officer

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

No declarations of interest were made.

68. BUDGET CONSULTATION FOR 2015/16

The Chair welcomed Members and the contributors to the meeting.

The Leader outlined the budget consultation process to date, which included briefing meetings with Group Leaders and Chairs of Overview & Scrutiny Committees. Regular updates had been given to Members over recent months and the Leader commented on the unprecedented financial challenges facing all Councils across Wales. The draft budget report, presented to Cabinet on 16th December, 2015 highlighted a £16.4m budget gap for 2015/16. Following intensive work a balanced budget had been achieved. The risk to frontline services was a unique challenge with no magic formula and no additional money available.

The Leader commented on the consequential revenue provision and briefed Members on his lobbying of Ministers and the Welsh Government (WG). He expressed his disappointment following the Autumn Statement that no additional funding for service protection was being allocated to Local Government.

Council Fund

The Chief Executive and Corporate Finance Manager gave a brief presentation which covered the following areas:-

- Summary of process
- Member Involvement
- Background documents shared
- Whole Council budget position
- Reserves and balances
- Revised local position
- Up to date Strategy position
- Remaining Strategy actions
- Final steps in the budget
- Medium Term Financial Plan review

The Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Social Services), Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise), Chief Officer (Education and Youth) and Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) each gave a detailed presentation on the budget proposals within their respective portfolios, which had been challenged through the Overview & Scrutiny process.

Capital Programme

The Chief Executive and Corporate Finance Manager gave a detailed presentation on the following areas:-

- Core Capital Programme 2015/16
- Funding the Capital Programme
- Capital Receipts & Core Programme
- Allocating the Core Programme

The comments and questions which were raised by Members of the Committee on the presentations, together with the responses given, are detailed in Appendix 1 (attached).

During discussion, the Chair thanked Officers for the openness in which the workshops and verbal updates had been delivered to Members. She felt members of the public were better prepared for the year ahead.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be received and that the Member's comments and the responses thereto be incorporated into the budget consultation section of the report to Cabinet on 17th February, 2015.

69. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were one member of the public and three members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 5.08 pm)

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Chair

Overview & Scrutiny Budget Consultation 2015/16

Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Feedback, Challenge and Capital Programme - 30 January 2015.

Section	Issue/Question	Response
SOCIAL CARE		
	Will places be available elsewhere for those who currently attend the Melrose Centre?	Yes, depending on both personal choice and need. Llys Eleanor is the most likely alternative.
	Change in criteria: what are the implications of the move from 'critical and substantial'?	The criteria is not changing, however the Social services and Wellbeing bill will bring changes.
	Action for Children support being reduced by 10% this year and in subsequent years	We are in discussions with Action for Children and further information will be provided in due course.
	How many children will be affected by the changes?	This information will be provided.
	Concern at the use of the term 'sign-posting' for Minor Equipment provision.	'Referral' could be used instead. We will survey other Council's experience to assess the situation.
	It is difficult for Members to appreciate the extent of all of the changes, as they don't know the total effects.	It is acknowledged that this is not an easy process. We are working extensively with the Third Sector and have always protected them until this year. We are not expecting any more or less from the Third Sector than we are from ourselves and do not want to threaten the survival of any of the providers.
	It is difficult to understand the difference between 'not	The eligibility criteria for services is not changing,

	changing' and 're-focussing'	but the degree of provision is> There will be a modest reduction in provision where there are alternatives in place. We believe this to be a credible approach. The amount of support might change, but not the qualification for it.
	What does the reduction mean in monetary terms?	£250 k
	We should not duck the fact that this will be a reduction in service: the quantity, but not the quality of service is being reduced, which will lower the reputation of this Council.	The Voluntary sector can not be immune to the cuts. We have been working with the m through the FLVC. We are looking to retain core services and the Third sector will be treated with parity as no different to Council services.
HOUSING		
	With Telecare there seems to be a lot of increases for the vulnerable which could amount to between £15 and £17 per week.	These points were raised at the Housing O&SC Budget meeting. The emphasis is being placed on only those who actually use a service should pay for it.
	Housing seems to have more efficiencies than any other portfolio.	See response above
	With the Council Tax, everyone pays for services which they don't necessarily use.	
	We need to understand the effects on an individual person, as we could end up with people suffering.	
LIFELONG LEARNING		
	The £50 k efficiency for the PRU	This is not the case: every

	<p>may be modest, but it could be detrimental to the school in question: not excluding a disruptive pupil could have an affect on the rest. The teachers will have to concentrate on the disruptive pupils within a class. If there is an impact, will the position be reconsidered?</p>	<p>child needs and will have appropriate provision.</p> <p>Three of our secondary schools are currently over-referring. This is a leadership issue and the respective governing bodies need to manage the implications.</p>
	<p>At the Schools Budget Forum, there was discussion about Sporting Excellence being affected, that there will be no elite swimming or inter school sports tournaments. Can further work be done to avoid opportunities being lost?</p>	
	<p>There is concern at the discontinuation of cognitive ability testing: could this be continued up to year 7?</p>	<p>Very positive discussions with head teachers are ongoing. Whilst CATs provide useful data, they are not essential. If schools want to collectively purchase CATs, this could be possible.</p>
	<p>GWE use the CAT data.</p>	<p>GWE do not use the CAT data, they use other measures.</p>
	<p>Could a 'model school' be used so that we can measure the impact of changes?</p>	<p>The benefit of such an approach was acknowledged. The information had already been shared with schools and the school budget forum</p>
	<p>Could the information which is provided to us high light those proposals which will have effects in future years?</p>	<p>We haven't been provided with an indication of future budgets by WG.</p>
	<p>Given the recent media coverage about obesity in children, the service changes could have serious implications for the future</p>	
	<p>Could we consider different ways</p>	<p>This is currently a free</p>

	of supporting walking in initiatives?	service and should be treated the same as other services facing challenges. Suggestions as to how walking initiatives could continue are identified in the presentation.
ENVIRONMENT		
	Street lighting standards: could we set a maximum time for repairs instead of a minimum?	We will have a series of banded times for repairs.
	Allowing access for trailer users to Sandycroft HRC site	The HRC access policy is to be reviewed.
	Replenishment of food waste bags	There are no proposals to change the current arrangements which we know to work.
	Does the DRT operate outside Flintshire: it has been seen in Cheshire?	CWAC also operate a shuttle bus going onto the Deeside Industrial Park
	Could the winter maintenance standards and criteria be reviewed?	Yes, on a risk based approach
	There is a need for car parking charges to encourage turnover in car parks, allowing greater short stay use.	
	Changes to car park gritting	The car parks will still be gritted on a need basis, but not as frequently as they are currently. They will still be kept safe. Car parks are currently gritted on the same frequency as priority one routes
	Replacement recycling receptacles	These are currently delivered, at a significant cost. Replacements will still be available, but will need to be collected.
	Stopping the missed collection service will cause problems.	Under the new system, with a charge hand on

		each vehicle, ensuring that each street has been signed off before departure, removes the need for this service.
	Loss of the bus subsidy	We can't protect all of the bus services in the County, but we do want to develop community transport initiatives.
	The Scottish Power contract from street lighting	There is a service level agreement with Scottish Power, similar to that which each of the other North Wales local authorities has.
	Does each lamp standard have a meter?	No: each light has a code. Payment is made on the basis of the number of lights with a particular code.
	Cessation of School and Church yard collections	Schools will still have a trade waste collection and church yards will be incorporated into the domestic collection rounds as part of the review. We will be ceasing the trade waste collection for commercial premises as it is not economically viable and not part of our core business.
	Does having a bus service to a village have an effect on its gritting priority status?	Bus routes are currently gritted. If a bus service stops, the priority rating might have to change.
	There is no fact sheet about the fleet review	This is because we are currently in phase 3 of the review which was reported some time ago: it isn't a new issue.

CORPORATE RESOURCES		
	Will the main reception at County Hall still be staffed?	Yes. Customer Services will be relocating to the area where the telephony team are currently situated.
	When will there be a Connects office for Mold?	A partial service will be offered from County Hall and a Connects facility for Mold is within the Capital Programme.
	There is concern at the impact of the changes on those who don't have bank accounts	We are working to support people to have bank accounts and who will then be able to make payments through our preferred direct debit option.
CORE CAPITAL PROGRAMME		
	Where are the details for the Capital Programme	In the December Capital report, copies of which have been provided.
	The change to the security arrangements is not included within the fact sheets	The intention is to close-lock down- the campus rather than continue the 24/7 access arrangements. There is greater CCTV coverage on site to compensate for this.
	Within the capital programme, £1.7m is identified for 'school building works'. Is this for repairs and maintenance and what about annual deterioration in school buildings?	This is being worked on: a report on SLAs and prudential borrowing will be submitted to the March meeting of the Lifelong Learning O&SC.
COUNCIL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2015/16		

	<p>The £163 for ICT and Legal collaboration is a red risk. Should something be done about it?</p>	<p>The Chief Officer Governance is currently working on a contingency plan. A fuller statement of progress will be available by the Cabinet meeting on 17th February.</p>
	<p>The way that the budget has been approached this year has provided a lot of information, which has been very useful. However, there is still a gap of £777K. Are you working to close this gap?</p>	<p>Yes, working is ongoing to address this.</p>