

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
26 APRIL 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Organisational Change Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Clwyd Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 26th April, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor David Roney (Chairman)

Councillors: Clive Carver, Glenys Diskin, Chris Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Brian Dunn, Ron Hampson, Dave Mackie, Mike Reece, Paul Shotton and Nigel Steele-Mortimer

APOLOGY: Councillor Robin Guest

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: Veronica Gay and Aaron Shotton

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Education; Councillor Kevin Jones, Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection & Leisure; Chief Executive and Chief Officers, Organisational Change

Tamara Harvey, Artistic Director of Theatr Clwyd (for minute number 60)
Pennie Corbett, Principal Librarian (for minute number 61)

IN ATTENDANCE: Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

57. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

As this was the last meeting of the Committee in the 2016/17 municipal year, the Chairman took the opportunity to thank the Members, Cabinet Members and officers for their input. He spoke positively about the approach taken to the meetings and debates which had taken place.

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

During discussion on Agenda Item 4 'Theatr Clwyd Progress Report', Councillor Dave Mackie declared a personal interest as he was a member of the Theatr Clwyd Board.

59. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2016 were submitted.

Accuracy

Councillors Brian Dunn and Mike Reece had both submitted apologies for the meeting and asked that this be shown in the minutes.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the amendments, the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

60. THEATR CLWYD PROGRESS REPORT

The Chief Executive introduced a progress report on the implementation of the business plan for Theatr Clwyd. He spoke about the importance of the theatre which was held in high regard and described the Council's support as a unique arrangement in Wales, reminding Members that this was a non-statutory service. Whilst including some risks and challenges, the business plan provided greater independence to the theatre with less reliance on financial support from the County Council and Arts Council of Wales. The Chief Executive took the opportunity to pay tribute to the level of financial and personal support for the theatre from the Arts Council and also thanked the Board Members and Chief Officers.

The Chief Officer, Organisational Change explained that the key components in achieving the sustainable business model were the creation of the robust business plan, the appointment of Tamara Harvey as Artistic Director, the recruitment of an Executive Director to manage the business side of the theatre, the staffing restructure, the building refurbishment using capital funding and future governance arrangements. He said that the theatre was in a position to sustain itself with reduced financial support for the current year, and would require flexibility to manage future pressures.

The Artistic Director provided an overview of progress on performance where a more diverse range of work was now available to appeal to wider audiences. She spoke about the generation of income from touring productions and developing a culture of new writing through different plays. A measured approach would be taken to the development of an Annual Report to provide guidance on business and artistic elements. A 3% cut in funding from the Arts Council had been better than predicted and was possibly in recognition of the theatre's place in arts across Wales. More creative solutions were being explored to deliver services due to a reduction in the production budget and information was shared on initiatives on working with young people, developing community partnerships and increasing the commerciality of the theatre. Confirmation on eligibility to claim Theatre Tax Relief was particularly welcomed and had been achieved through close working with Council officers. The new staff structure met management ambitions whilst resolving a mix of practicalities, financial and artistic concerns, and a draft Housing Agreement was currently under consideration. The valuable contributions of Trade Union and Council colleagues were noted on this work. A newly appointed Director of Marketing was due to start imminently and two other key posts would be recruited: a Director of Operations to build the commercial side of the theatre and a Director of Development to explore new revenue streams. The re-designation of a post had created an Associate role to focus on capital development projects, such as the £60,000 funding from Welsh Government to be used on short-term building refurbishments. The Artistic Director concluded by referring to her comments included in the theatre's latest brochure on the unique status of the theatre in Wales and her pride in its offer to communities which she felt was an extraordinary achievement by the Council.

Councillor Paul Shotton commended the excellent work done, in particular the decoration of the tunnel from the car park leading to the theatre with help

from local pupils. In response to questions, the Artistic Director advised that members of the Community Engagement team would be involved in the forthcoming Urdd National Eisteddfod, together with other festivals in Wales. When asked about the potential impact from the new theatre in Chester, she assumed that there would be some effect however there would also be opportunities for collaboration in supporting arts across the region and sharing marketing initiatives. In respect of theatre tax relief, it was not possible to claim retrospectively, therefore the first claim would start from the January 2016 season.

The progress made to date was also welcomed by Councillor Ian Dunbar who asked whether the work with young people would provide opportunities for all schools to be involved. The Artistic Director said that the aim was to build community partnerships by working with different schools and their feeder schools to capture a wider range of young people. She thanked Members for their positive comments on the progress of the theatre which had been achievable due to the significant contributions made by Terry Hands in his former role. On further questions, she spoke about advance advertising of productions to help with school planning and the development of a digital marketing strategy alongside the distribution of brochures which were recognised as important to the audience base.

Following a query from Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer on funding from the Council, the Chief Officer, Organisational Change explained that the £150K reduction in 2016/17 was the remainder of the two-year saving of £350K. The total grant for 2016/17 was around £650K, a reduction of £1m from two years ago. The Chief Executive referred to the 30% reduction targets for all Council services including the theatre, other than education and social care, which were broadly being met. He spoke about the significant reforms implemented as part of the robust business plan of the theatre, including complex work on staff restructuring with excellent support from Trade Union colleagues.

Councillor Dave Mackie welcomed the positive changes and progress made by the Artistic Director since her appointment, with the support of the Chief Executive and Chief Officers. The Artistic Director pointed out that whilst significant work had been done to create a more sustainable and efficient model, it was important to acknowledge that this was a challenging period with large-scale cuts to funding and that further achievements were dependent on continued support.

The Chief Executive highlighted the importance of financial support from the Arts Council and spoke about the limitations on capital Council funding over the coming years which would require recognition and support from Welsh Government for supplementary funding. The Chief Officer, Organisational Change said that the impact from the reduction in funding had been lessened through more innovative ways of working.

Following comments by Councillor Andy Dunbobbin on the role of the theatre in tourism, the Artistic Director referred to partnership initiatives such as the Family for All The Family and work with bodies such as Visit Wales to create opportunities to promote tourism in Wales.

When asked by Councillor Chris Dolphin about plans for the cinema, the Artistic Director said that attendance had increased and that the longer-term aim was to extend the range of the cinema offer to give customers a different experience to that of larger, multiplex cinemas.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That having considered the implementation of the Theatr Clwyd Business Plan, the Committee is assured by the progress made; and
- (b) That the Committee is assured that the operational changes and modernisation currently taking place provides a sustainable model for Theatr Clwyd in the foreseeable future.

61. WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS

As portfolio holder, Councillor Chris Bithell introduced a report explaining the changing context of the Welsh Public Library Standards, current performance and anticipated future performance. He gave an overview of the background, explaining that the Standards did not reflect the budgetary challenges faced by councils and emphasised the importance of community-based libraries run by volunteers to complement the formal library network. Overall, performance levels had been sustained despite the reduced funding and the network was developing through the new Deeside library where usage figures had increased and the planned Holywell library which had received Welsh Government (WG) funding. Councillor Bithell took the opportunity to pay tribute to Pennie Corbett, the Principal Librarian, who was shortly due to retire from the Council, and to thank her for her dedication and professionalism. These comments were endorsed by the Chairman and other Members of the Committee.

The Principal Librarian spoke about the robustness of the library network and the exciting developments for the future. She provided information on the Core Entitlements and Quality Indicators which had been met by the Council in 2014/15 and gave explanation on the reasons for partial compliance, some of which were outside the Council's control. The outcome for the percentage of materials budget spent on children's resources had been deemed as partial compliance, despite exceeding the target, due to the criteria set by WG and representations had been made to address this. Information was also shared on planned changes which would reflect positively on future performance, including the provision of Wi-fi at all libraries. Outcomes were expected to improve for 2016/17 as a result of the business plan and changes currently being implemented.

Councillor Clive Carver commented on the provision of Wi-fi where Broadband was already available. The Principal Librarian agreed to look into a reported problem with stopping points of the mobile library.

Concerning the Deeside library, Councillor Dave Mackie remarked on the capacity in comparison with the former library to which the Principal Librarian reported on current stock levels, including those in circulation, and advised that additional storage space was available for top-up. In response to concerns about the use of the self-service machine used by customers, she explained that it

could only be operated with tagged stock and that employees in Deeside Leisure Centre had been offering support in helping customers outside the manned hours. Following a question on the impact survey within the Annual Assessment Report, attention was drawn to Flintshire's standing in the lowest, median and highest figures as the ranking reflected only those councils which had submitted reports for the year.

Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer referred to the moving of the library service topic to the remit of the Committee and asked that a full report on the current and future library network, including plans for Holywell library, be brought to a future meeting. The Chief Officer, Organisational Change agreed to share the medium-term plan with an update on the progress of each library. The Chief Executive spoke about the resilience of the business model for libraries with no further proposals for change intended.

Councillor Paul Shotton welcomed the progress made and highlighted the community support for the transfer of Mancot library. Councillor Glenys Diskin thanked the Council for its support in the successful transfer of Mancot library and paid tribute to the community group involved.

Councillor Clive Carver raised a query about reporting arrangements when a topic under review was transferred to the remit of another Committee. The Chief Executive spoke about the need for Members' input on determining annual Forward Work Programmes, and that the Organisational Change Overview & Scrutiny Committee was different in having a rolling programme. This prompted some Members to share concerns about the movement of topics between different Committees.

In response to queries by Councillor Chris Dolphin on the mobile library service, the Principal Librarian felt that this important service offered value for money. She shared information on the service and explained that the stopping points were reviewed annually and that the level of materials issued were equivalent to that in a smaller branch library. New routes had recently been introduced to take account of changes to the library network.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin stressed the importance of considering the impact of new technology which offered alternative ways of accessing books. It was noted that the library service provided e-books and e-magazines free of charge.

Councillor Ian Dunbar praised the support given by the Council on the transfer of Mancot library. He welcomed the increased attendance at the new Deeside library and asked if there were any issues. The Principal Librarian referred to the good support from workers at Deeside Leisure Centre and that there had been no issues on the open access aspect of the library.

In terms of other Community Asset Transfers, the Chief Officer, Organisational Change reported on the completion of the transfer of the library in Mynydd Isa with the transfer of Hope Community library nearing completion.

Following comments from Councillor Mike Reece on funding cuts, the Chief Executive said that any further meaningful cuts, beyond those already made, would result in changes to the model and inevitably, reduce services.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee is satisfied with the Council's progress on delivery within the changing context for the Welsh Public Library Standards.

62. ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY MODELS - THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Chief Officer, Organisational Change introduced a report to update Members on the national position on Alternative Delivery Models (ADMs) as set out in the Welsh Government (WG) commissioned document 'Is the Feeling Mutual?'. This was in line with the approach being taken by the Council on ADMs. The WG document highlighted the necessity for ADMs in public service delivery in Wales and provided a framework for the development of ADMs. Following consultation earlier in the year, WG was currently developing a national action plan with support package to assist councils in delivering ADMs. It was anticipated that the national framework would set a common approach for councils on issues such as managing contracts, legalities and human resources, and that the action plan would be implemented promptly to help sustain services and protect jobs through ADMs.

Following comments from Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer on the risks in Section 4 of the report, the Chief Officer, Organisational Change explained that since writing the report, the national action plan had been published and thereby demonstrated a level of commitment from WG.

Councillor Dave Mackie spoke about the Council's achievements on ADMs and the expectation for WG funding as there was no capacity in Town and Community Councils. He added that there were still issues around asset transfers including the need for more flexibility for the organisations involved. The Chief Officer, Organisational Change referred to the Community Asset Transfer process on finding solutions at a local level and the need for discussions on funding at an early stage. The Chief Executive spoke about the differences between funding for County Councils and that for Town/Community Councils where a range of grants could be accessed. He welcomed the recognition from WG on ADMs on which Flintshire's progress had been acknowledged nationally.

Councillor Paul Shotton commented on examples of asset transfers involving innovative solutions. In relation to the transfer of Connah's Quay swimming baths, it was reported that the legal process had been finalised and the new organisation would take over on 31 May.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee is satisfied with the Council's progress on Alternative Delivery Models within the national policy context and emerging proposals for the Welsh Government.

63. IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2016/17

The Chief Executive introduced the report on sections of the Improvement Plan 2016/17 which were relevant to the Committee. The Improvement Plan had been updated to reflect the key priorities of the Council for next year and retained the eight priorities and the sub-priorities. Five of the eight priorities continued with a refresh of longer term projects or ambitions, whereas the remaining three had been reviewed to reflect local circumstances and priorities. A new section within each sub-priority referenced national issues which could potentially impact the delivery of the priorities.

The Chief Officer, Organisational Change summarised the aims of the 'Developing Communities' sub-priority, as set out in the report, and reminded Members about the Council's duties on reporting statutory measures.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin asked that the wording in the report be amended to correctly reflect the objective to ensure that the Armed Forces community and their families 'are not disadvantaged' when accessing Council Services'.

In terms of awarding contracts, Councillor Clive Carver queried the approach in the event of under-performance. The Chief Officer, Organisational Change said that there were key performance indicators for larger contracts which were subject to monitoring at regular contract meetings. He agreed to provide a separate response to the query on the number of contracts valued above £1m which were awarded by the Council each year.

In response to a query from Councillor Ian Dunbar on the Community Benefits Board, explanation was given on the setup and involvement by the Chief Officer, Community & Enterprise.

The Chief Executive said that Members were able to submit any further questions to officers prior to consideration of the Improvement Plan at the special County Council meeting in June.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee accepts the content of the Improvement Plan and 'How we Measure Achievement' document for the priority 'Developing Communities'; and
- (b) That the Committee accepts the proposed targets for the national performance indicators.

64. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Member Engagement Manager introduced the current Forward Work Programme. The Committee agreed to his suggestion that the new Chairman liaise with officers on scheduled items for the remaining meetings of the municipal year. It was also agreed that the update report on the library network be scheduled for the June meeting.

In response to earlier discussion, the Member Engagement Manager gave a reminder about the process involving Members for agreeing Terms of Reference for Committees. The Chief Executive suggested that Members may wish to consider at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting the best approach in dealing with incomplete topics passed to other Committees.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved with the additions; and
- (b) That the Member Engagement Manager, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings.

65. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.20 pm)

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Chairman