

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
13 OCTOBER 2016

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, 13 October 2016

PRESENT: Councillor Clive Carver (Chairman)

Councillors: Paul Cunningham, Peter Curtis, Andy Dunbobbin, Robin Guest, Ron Hampson, Richard Jones, Vicky Perfect, Paul Shotton, Ian Smith, Nigel Steele-Mortimer and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGIES: Councillors Marion Bateman and Brian Lloyd, and the Chief Executive

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Mike Peers

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Finance; Councillor Billy Mullin, Cabinet Member for Corporate Management; Chief Officer (Governance); and Corporate Finance Manager

Corporate Business & Communications Executive Officer (for minute number 45)

Senior Manager, Human Resources & Organisational Development (for minute number 46)

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment and Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Committee paid a silent tribute to the late Helen Stapleton in recognition of her contributions to the work of the Committee.

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

As a member of the Fire Authority, Councillor Paul Shotton declared a personal interest on Agenda Item 4 'Flintshire Public Services Board'.

47. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 September 2016 had been circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

48. FLINTSHIRE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

The Corporate Business & Communications Executive Officer introduced an overview of the establishment and work of the Flintshire Public Services Board (PSB) following the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales)

Act 2015. The report focussed on areas of governance for the new statutory body which was a continuation of the former Flintshire Local Services Board and its priorities.

Information was circulated on the seven well-being goals which public bodies were expected to work towards, along with the five sustainable development principles to be applied when considering how to add value to the priorities. Members were also shown a map of proposed community areas across the county to be used for a Well-being Needs Assessment. Work was underway on scoping the PSB priorities which focussed on issues such as health, community safety, looked after children and vulnerable adults. Details were shared on new workstreams aimed at inspiring community resilience and supporting families with complex needs through early intervention.

In response to a question from Councillor Robin Guest, explanation was given on the approach to quarterly meetings of the PSB with the full membership required to attend.

Councillor Arnold Woolley raised concerns that Wales could not be protected from the effects of global issues. He commented that the activities, roles and duties of the PSB did not match and asked about the process of reaching agreement within the membership. He felt that managing the principal activities would be difficult as these were subjective rather than measurable targets. He pointed out a typing error in paragraph 1.09 of the report and went on to refer to balancing cost against aspirations, querying funding sources and raising concerns about unforeseen challenges as seen with the Welsh Government (WG) decision on Communities First.

Councillor Aaron Shotton described the work of the PSB as an extension of previous practice on a statutory footing. He said that the Council had always engaged positively with its partners and that the introduction of the PSB had not been an issue in Flintshire. He spoke about the Council's representation on the PSB and the aim to achieve a democratic fit with partnership's public and voluntary organisations by building on those relationships and the priorities. He drew attention to the priorities for 2016/17 and highlighted the opportunity to influence issues on health and social care.

The officer advised that the PSB was currently developing a mediation protocol in the event of any conflict of agreement. She gave assurance that a significant number of targets and milestones, built into the priorities, were subject to monitoring and would be formalised in the Local Well-being Plan to be published following the completion of the assessment. On the matter of cost, collaborative working between partners would add value with only limited additional resources, for example on the early intervention hub.

Following comments on the quality of the papers circulated at the meeting, the officer agreed to provide these electronically to Members.

Councillor Richard Jones linked the priorities of the PSB with those of the Improvement Plan and viewed the PSB as an intelligence-sharing informative body. He pointed out that two of the principal activities - to publish a well-being assessment and plan for Flintshire - were statutory requirements to be completed

by 2017 and 2018 respectively. On the assessment, he proposed that the final draft be reported to both this Committee and the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee around January 2017 following consideration by the PSB. He also queried why North Wales Police was not a statutory member of the PSB, a view shared by Councillor Guest who stated that North Wales Police and the Police & Crime Commissioner should be one organisation. Councillor Guest also felt that the statutory duties of the PSB were unclear.

Councillor Paul Shotton welcomed the collaborative approach to the PSB. On earlier reference to Communities First, he expressed his gratitude for the work which had been done.

Whilst Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer welcomed the goals of the PSB, he remained sceptical about its value.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin felt that the WG decision to abolish Communities First was in recognition of the need for a different approach. On the PSB, he questioned the reliability of data and asked about engagement with the public and other voluntary organisations.

In response, the officer explained that the assessment was being carried out by Conwy County Borough Council which had undertaken significant engagement work. Data sources would be clearly stated within the well-being assessment and the sharing of the draft document with Overview & Scrutiny had been accommodated in the timescale for February/March. Whilst North Wales Police played a senior lead role on the PSB, it was not a statutory member of this WG initiative as it was not devolved. The description of the two Police bodies as separate partners was set out in the legislation. The statutory duties of the PSB had been taken from the guidance to the legislation and embodied in the Terms of Reference. This full information would be shared with the Committee.

On the development of the proposed community areas, it was explained that these incorporated the Council's public engagement areas (used during the 2015 budget consultation), together with the Health Board's locality hub areas and North Wales Police divisional north/south areas. Following a query from the Chairman, the officer agreed to establish the reason for the Health Board determining a straight boundary line from Hendre. When asked about involvement by the Committee, the officer suggested an opportunity to scrutinise the work of the PSB and to invite a partner representative to a future meeting to discuss progress of a particular workstream.

Councillor Peter Curtis expressed his disappointment at the lack of consultation by WG on the withdrawal of Communities First and remarked on its role in contributing towards some of the goals of the PSB.

In response to the comments on Communities First, Councillor Aaron Shotton expressed his disappointment at the way in which the announcement by WG had been made. He referred to the different model which had operated in Flintshire and its benefits to the wider communities. He expected further clarity from WG on its review of the service on which the Council should seek to participate.

Councillor Jones' earlier proposal was seconded and supported by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the role and responsibilities of the Flintshire Public Services Board are supported;
- (b) That the priorities for 2016/17 are supported;
- (c) That Members are assured of the level of progress that the Flintshire PSB has made since its establishment;
- (d) That Members are supportive of the pilot work being undertaken around the CAMMS performance management system; and
- (e) That the final draft of the Well-being Assessment be brought to a future meeting of the Committee to which the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee should be invited.

49. WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT - QUARTER 1 2016/17

The Senior Manager, Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR & OD) presented the quarterly update report on workforce information which had been adapted to focus on performance and trends. She explained that the report had been brought at the first available opportunity.

Amongst the findings of the report, there was a slight improvement in attendance which remained a key priority for the Council. On the management of agency workers, the level of spend within Streetscene & Transportation had been due to a significant number of vacancies, however a positive impact was expected following the completion of the recruitment process.

Councillor Richard Jones questioned the reason for the vacancies in Streetscene when he was aware of two agency workers who had been with the service for up to four years without being given an opportunity to apply for permanent work. The Senior Manager gave assurances that the same opportunities were available to both employees and agency workers, and gave an example where support had been provided to agency workers on their applications. Councillor Jones spoke about the need to identify and provide early support to agency workers who were effective in their roles to encourage their recruitment. The Senior Manager explained that whilst she had no direct involvement in recruitment to that service, she expected all long-term agency workers to be recruited and had previously followed up and sought explanations where this had not been the case.

Councillor Jones proposed that the Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) be asked to explain the reasons for the number of long-term agency workers given the level of vacancies within that service. The Chairman also requested a breakdown of the number of agency workers engaged with the Council for over 12 months, to establish any underlying reasons. The Senior

Manager agreed to provide a breakdown of the total figure which was in the report. The Committee supported these proposals.

The Chairman commented on the need for clear data in the dashboard report to avoid any misinterpretation, for example the annual target in relation to days lost per quarter. The Senior Manager agreed to check if the headings could be changed.

Councillor Peter Curtis said that more improvement was needed on attendance and that the annual 'target' of 9.30 days lost per person should be reduced to 3-4 days as a more realistic target.

On the recruitment of agency workers, Councillor Billy Mullin pointed out that there could be a number of reasons why some individuals may prefer not to apply for permanent jobs. Discussion followed on the advantages and disadvantages of both permanent and temporary employment.

Councillor Arnold Woolley raised concerns about the lack of progress on the use of agency workers. On the dashboard report, he questioned the validity of the data when compared to that of the previous year and whether this was due to the redevelopment of the report format. He went on to refer to comments by the Wales Audit Office on the quality of reports to Overview & Scrutiny committees. He proposed that a set report format be adopted and adhered to, to allow for trend comparison. However, the Senior Manager pointed out that a format had been adopted and was constantly evolving to include additional data. As a way forward, she suggested that future reports could include comparative accurate data for the current and previous year to show direct comparison.

Councillor Aaron Shotton welcomed the feedback on the report format and referred to the reduction in agency worker spend across many of the Council's service areas. He said that explanation had been given on the figures for Streetscene, with actions being taken on vacancy control, and that an improvement was expected.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Workforce Information Report for Quarter 1 of 2016/17 be noted;
- (b) That the Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) be asked to explain the reasons for the number of long-term agency workers within that service; and
- (c) That a breakdown be provided of the number of agency workers engaged with the Council for over 12 months.

50. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2016/17 (MONTH 5)

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced a report on the revenue budget monitoring position for Month 5 of 2016/17 for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 18 October 2016.

On the Council Fund, the projected position was that net spend would be £1.421m higher than the budget. However, this deficit would be reduced to £0.981m with the successful negotiation of an additional Welsh Government transport grant to fund the cost of replacement bus services previously undertaken by GHA Coaches. Progress on the final outcome of these discussions would be included in future budget monitoring reports. Reference was also made to the impact of the use of £0.861m of contingency reserves in Month 4 upon the projected outturn for Month 5. The revised efficiency target for 2016/17 was reported as £10.521m, of which 91% was expected to be met. An update was also given on reserves and balances, together with a breakdown of projected balances as at the end of the current financial year. The projected position for the HRA was also reported, along with a summary of the key risk areas in Section 4 of the report.

As an update for 2017/18, the provisional settlement was expected to be received on 19 October with the main impacts to be reported to Cabinet in November and a briefing note shared with Members. The final Stage 1 proposals would also be reported to Cabinet at that time, with an outline of Stage 2 proposals. These would be subject to consideration by the Committee in late November prior to seeking approval at full Council. The final budget process was due to conclude in February 2017 in line with the usual practice.

In response to queries from Councillor Robin Guest, the Corporate Finance Manager said that the two main reasons for the overspend were the projected underachievement of £0.909m of efficiencies and the additional spend on bus services following the collapse of GHA Coaches. On the table of projected balances on earmarked reserves, it was explained that 'insurance funds' represented the current level of the Council's self-insurance whereas an estimated provision for Municipal Mutual Insurance (MMI) had been set aside elsewhere in service balances to meet that liability.

Councillor Ian Smith commented on the difficulty in reading the small text in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report. The Corporate Finance Manager agreed to provide a written response on the proposed outsourcing of gas extraction from landfill sites and whether this would guarantee income levels.

Councillor Arnold Woolley drew attention to a typing error on the penultimate sentence in paragraph 4.03 on the Intermediate Care Fund.

RESOLVED:

That the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2016/17 Month 5 report be noted.

51. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Forward Work Programme was considered and the following actions agreed:

- The Member Engagement Manager to liaise with the Chairman to agree the deferral of one item from the November meeting, to allow sufficient time for the item with the Police & Crime Commissioner.

- The quarterly update in the Workforce Information Report to be scheduled possibly in November but no later than 8 December 2016.
- Members of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be invited to the meeting in February 2017 to consider the final draft Well-being Assessment report.

The Chairman raised concerns about issues with Members' iPads, including problems with emails, and suggested that a survey be carried out to report on the effectiveness of iPads currently in circulation. He also felt it would be helpful to provide a central IT email address to which issues could be reported. The Chief Officer (Governance) pointed out that IT officers could only resolve issues that were brought to their attention. Some problems reported at the recent drop-in session had been due to user issues; for example, failure to download agenda papers in advance of meetings. The Chief Officer felt that reminding Members of the need to report problems was a more appropriate action. Following discussion, Councillor Robin Guest suggested that the matter be left with the Chief Officer to contact Members and establish any issues.

Councillor Aaron Shotton pointed out that there had been a number of opportunities available to raise iPad issues with IT officers.

RESOLVED:

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

52. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.55 am)

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Chairman