

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
9 FEBRUARY 2017

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, 9 February 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Arnold Woolley (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Paul Cunningham, Peter Curtis, Andy Dunbobbin, Robin Guest, Ron Hampson, Ray Hughes, Richard Jones, Brian Lloyd, Vicky Perfect, Paul Shotton, Ian Smith and Nigel Steele-Mortimer

APOLOGY: Councillor Clive Carver

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Finance; Councillor Billy Mullin, Cabinet Member for Corporate Management; and Chief Executive

Business Information & Compliance Advisor (for minute number 82)
Finance Manager - Strategy Accounting & Systems and Finance Manager - Technical Accountancy (for minute number 84)

IN ATTENDANCE: Democratic Services Manager and Committee Officer

82. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the Welsh Government White Paper on Local Government reform which was currently out for consultation. The Chief Executive said that it was intended to schedule the item for the County Council meeting on 1 March 2017 to enable debate within the consultation period.

83. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

84. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 8 December 2016 and 12 January 2017 were received.

Matters Arising - 8 December 2016

Minute number 68 - Revenue Budget Monitoring Month 7 - the requested information on costs relating to historic child abuse settlements was being sought and would be shared with the Committee.

Matters Arising - 12 January 2017

Minute number 74 - Workforce Information Quarter 2 - the Democratic Services Manager agreed to pursue a response to Councillor Richard Jones'

query on whether there was any reason for the difference between teacher age profiles in schools.

Minute number 76 - Forward Work Programme - the update on the BT broadband programme would be scheduled following the elections, as the Regional Director was unavailable for the March 2017 meeting.

RESOLVED:

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

85. CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING

The Chief Executive presented the report on work being undertaken to ensure that the Council met its safeguarding responsibilities and sought comments on the draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

The Corporate Safeguarding Panel had carried out an assessment against the recommendations of the Wales Audit Office 2015 report 'Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils' to strengthen the Council's robust safeguarding arrangements already in place. Key actions from the work programme developed by the Panel were shared together with a number of specific performance indicators to measure implementation of the policy. The Chief Executive highlighted the importance of the workforce and elected Members accepting shared safeguarding responsibilities.

On the changes in behaviour which could indicate potential abuse, Councillor Marion Bateman stressed the importance of considering all behavioural factors rather than taking each in isolation. The Chief Executive agreed and said that those listed in Appendix 2 of the policy were intended as a guide to alert actions on potential issues.

In welcoming the refresh of the Council's safeguarding arrangements, Councillor Paul Shotton asked whether a reminder should be issued to reinforce individual responsibilities set out in the Code of Conduct. The Chief Executive said that corporate safeguarding was part of the Member induction programme and that training was targeted at those employee groups who were most likely to come into contact with individuals at risk.

Councillor Robin Guest sought assurance that the draft policy did not replicate any other policy/guidance already in place. The Chief Executive said that this was a general policy for all employees, in addition to the various specialised practices for individuals working directly with children or vulnerable people, but would check that there was no conflict with any other Council policy. On the suggested performance indicators, he explained that referral rates would be used for baseline figures and would be monitored as part of annual reporting. On a further point, he agreed that Appendices 3 and 4 would be extended to reflect safeguarding against access to child pornography through reading material as well as electronically.

The Chairman drew attention to the examples of good practice listed in Appendix 4 of the policy.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee is assured that work is being undertaken to improve corporate arrangements for safeguarding children and adults;
- (b) That the draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy be noted; and
- (c) That annual reports be received on work carried out to improve corporate safeguarding arrangements and the effectiveness of relevant policies.

86. WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT – QUARTER 3 2016/17

The Chief Executive presented the quarterly update report on workforce information which focussed on organisational performance and trends.

A slight improvement in attendance during Quarter 3 was reported in comparison to the same period for 2015/16 with outcomes for the year projected to show an overall improvement. As reported at the previous meeting, there was a reduction in agency worker spend in Quarter 3, mainly due to the recruitment of a number of agency workers to permanent posts in Streetscene. On equality and diversity workforce monitoring, it was explained that the classification of 'other' was aligned with the official Census definition.

Councillor Billy Mullin thanked the Senior Manager of Human Resources & Organisational Development and her team for the improvements made to the reports. This was echoed by the Chairman.

Councillor Paul Shotton welcomed the positive position on agency worker spend, which had been explained previously. The Chief Executive spoke about shared concerns with other councils regionally on the reliance on agencies for engaging temporary social care workers.

RESOLVED:

That the Workforce Information report for Quarter 3 be approved.

87. WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS

The Chief Executive presented the report on the outcome of negotiations with the Welsh Language Commissioner for a new set of Welsh Language Standards for the Council.

The Chief Executive said that the challenge in applying a uniform approach to all Welsh councils was recognised, particularly for cross-border counties such as Flintshire. He wished to put on record his appreciation to the Welsh Language Commissioner and her team in engaging positively with the Council to achieve a set of Standards acceptable to both parties. A pragmatic approach had been taken to resolving concerns on specific Standards with examples cited on committee agenda papers and signage. Positive dialogue with the Commissioner had led to recognition on the major risks involved on costs and

capacity if no amendments had been made to the original Standards. The cost of implementing the Standards was being managed by a budget pressure.

Councillor Billy Mullin welcomed the outcomes and the Commissioner's positive approach to implementation in Flintshire.

The Chairman said that the report demonstrated the benefits of constructive negotiations.

Councillor Robin Guest thanked the Chief Executive and Policy Advisor (Equality & Cohesion) for their work and made the point that 'implementation date' would have been better wording on the Compliance Notice.

In response to remarks by Councillor Paul Shotton, the Chief Executive said that the cost of implementing the negotiated Standards was £35K. If the Commissioner had insisted on all committee reports being translated, the cost could have been in the region of £350K. He explained the approach to translation services required at partnership meetings based on scale of need. In addition to the Standards, work was underway on the development of a Welsh Language Promotion Strategy to be brought to the Committee around September 2017.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the successful outcome for Flintshire County Council on negotiated Standards within the final Compliance Notice be endorsed;
- (b) That the Welsh Language Standards be fully supported; and
- (c) To receive a further report on the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy, which is a requirement of the Standards and will raise the profile and strengthen the Welsh language in Flintshire.

88. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING (MONTH 9) AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING (MONTH 9)

The Finance Manager - Strategy Accounting & Systems and Finance Manager - Technical Accountancy presented a report on the revenue budget monitoring position for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Capital Programme as at Month 9, prior to consideration by Cabinet.

Revenue Budget Monitoring

On the Council Fund, there had been a £1.011m reduction in the operating deficit to £0.799m, mainly due to the recovery of costs for joint care packages in Social Services. The change in Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) accounting policy had eliminated the in-year operating deficit and meant that net spend was projected to be £2.087m less than budgeted, leaving projected contingency reserves of £5.279m. The projected position of each portfolio was tabled in the report, with explanation given on significant budget movements in Streetscene & Transportation and Social Services, and the realignment of budgets. It was

projected that 89% of programmed efficiencies would be achieved. The areas of risk summarised in the report included a number which had reduced in-year.

On the HRA, in-year expenditure was projected to be £0.037m above budget leaving a closing balance of £1.061m.

The Chief Executive spoke about the positive outcome of negotiations on the Continuing Health Care fund but reminded Members that contingency reserves were one of the available sources used to balance the budget. On the risk areas, he advised that a confidential report would be considered by Cabinet on the proposed disposal of the orphaned industrial site at Sandycroft.

Councillor Robin Guest asked about the grant funding received to upgrade recycling centres in Mold and Buckley, and was informed that this would be reflected in a later report due to the timing of that announcement. In response to comments on the implications if the MRP accounting policy had not been changed, the Chief Executive said that the review - led by the Finance Manager (Technical Accountancy) - had recommended changes in agreement with the Treasury Management advisors. Whilst this provided a degree of flexibility, there would still be an operating deficit.

Councillor Aaron Shotton referred to forthcoming consideration of the 2017/18 budget and said that the position would have been even more challenging without the change in MRP policy.

Councillor Paul Shotton acknowledged the work of the officer team on the MRP policy and the positive negotiations on Continuing Health Care funding which he hoped would continue. In response to comments, the Chief Executive explained that the agreement reached with the Health Board provided a better balance of funding. He said that whilst the domiciliary and residential care market in Flintshire was currently stable, this remained an area of risk.

Capital Programme

A breakdown of changes to the programme indicated an increase of £0.573m during the quarter, mainly due to additional grant funding from Welsh Government. A summary of capital expenditure against the budget showed a projected outturn of £30.463m on the Council Fund, reflecting an underspend of £1.046m. The position on the HRA was for a projected outturn of £29.671m with the £0.150m overspend to be funded by increased revenue contributions to the capital budget. Attention was drawn to a summary of rollover amounts into 2017/18 and details of funding of approved schemes in 2016/17 which indicated the availability of £3.873m.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee approves the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2016/17 (Month 9) and confirms that there are no specific issues to be brought to the attention of the Cabinet; and

- (b) That the Committee approves the Capital Programme monitoring 2016/17 (Month 9) and confirms that there are no specific issues to be brought to the attention of the Cabinet.

89. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The following actions were agreed:

- The meeting scheduled for 6 April 2017 to be cancelled.
- Members were reminded of the item on cyber crime at the next meeting on 9 March 2017 and were asked to submit any questions in advance.
- The Forward Work Programme to be removed from the March 2017 meeting as this was the final meeting before the election.
- The Customer Services Strategy to remain on the agenda for March 2017.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved with amendments; 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.

90. 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 11.00 am)

.....
Chairman