

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
28 SEPTEMBER 2020

Minutes of the remote meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Monday, 28 September 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Clive Carver (Chairman)

Councillors: Sean Bibby, Haydn Bateman, Geoff Collett, Andy Dunbobbin, Mared Eastwood, Patrick Heesom, Richard Jones, Kevin Rush, Paul Shotton, Andy Williams and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGY: Councillor Billy Mullin

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Ian Roberts (Leader and Cabinet Member for Education), Councillor Carolyn Thomas (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Countryside), Councillor Glyn Banks (Cabinet Member for Finance), Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Corporate Finance Manager, Senior Manager Human Resources & Organisation Design, Finance Manager and Principal Accountant.

IN ATTENDANCE: Head of Democratic Services and Democratic Services Officer

01. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

The Head of Democratic Services reminded the Committee that at the Annual Meeting, Council had resolved that the Conservative group should nominate the Chair of the Committee. The nomination from the group had been for Councillor Clive Carver.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Clive Carver be confirmed as Chairman of the Committee for the municipal year.

(From this point, Councillor Carver chaired the remainder of the meeting)

02. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chairman sought nominations for the appointment of Vice-Chair. Councillor Geoff Collett was nominated by Councillor Paul Shotton and this was seconded by Councillor Andy Dunbobbin. No further nominations were received. On being put to the vote, the nomination was carried.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Geoff Collett be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee for the municipal year.

03. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Paul Shotton declared a personal interest as a board member of the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority.

04. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2020 were submitted. Councillor Andy Dunbobbin moved approval of the minutes and this was duly seconded by Councillor Paul Shotton.

RESOLVED:

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

05. EMERGENCY SITUATION BRIEFING

The Chief Executive provided a verbal update on the latest position in Wales and the risks and implications for Flintshire and service and business continuity.

The Chief Executive explained that the current situation was fluid. He and his Chief Officer colleagues would be ensuring that Members received short up to date verbal briefings at the start of meetings. He also commented that it may yet be necessary to reinstate the situational briefings which had been delivered to members during the first six months of the emergency.

Officers responded to a number of Member concerns and queries.

Councillor Ian Roberts said that, if necessary, Member briefings would be held if the position deteriorated and also gave a commitment to hold a Group Leaders meeting. He sought the support of Members to encourage their local communities to follow latest guidelines to protect against Covid-19.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted and the Chief Executive and Chief Officer Team be thanked for the work which they were undertaking in planning for the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Flintshire.

06. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE

The Head of Democratic Services advised that the new Overview & Scrutiny Committee structure was approved by Council on 27 February 2020. At the Annual Meeting on 9 September, Chairs were appointed to the five committees within the new structure.

The respective terms of reference of each of the Committees and the main contributors to them were identified in Appendix 1 of the report. The Officer drew attention to the terms of reference for the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee and advised that these remain unchanged. The Chief Executive commented that the Committee had retained Emergency Planning

within its functions. This was particularly appropriate given the ongoing pandemic and its impact on Council finances.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Andy Dunbobbin and seconded by Councillor Paul Shotton.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee receives its terms of reference as agreed by Council and as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

07. RECOVERY STRATEGY

The Chief Executive introduced a report to provide an oversight on the recovery planning for the Committee's respective portfolio(s) and to rebuild the forward work programme for the remainder of the 2020/21 Council year with a specific focus on recovery planning.

The Chief Executive led a comprehensive presentation which covered the following key areas on the Recovery Strategy:

- purpose
- recommendations
- objectives of the recovery strategy
- local chronology
- response objectives
- some local achievements in response
- recovery objectives – organisation
- recovery objectives - service
- recovery activities
- Council Plan and performance
- democratic governance of recovery
- recovery objectives

In response to a concern raised by Councillor Richard Jones around the Council Plan and alignment to the budget the Chief Executive gave an assurance that nothing had been abandoned in the Plan due to the Recovery Strategy and Committee were being asked to consider areas which were most relevant in the next 6 to 12 months.

The Chief Executive provided background information and delivered a presentation on the Corporate Risk Register Analysis which covered the following key points :

- open and closed risk trend
- current risk status analysis
- risk trend status analysis

The Chief Executive invited the Corporate Finance Manager, Senior Manager Human Resources & Organisation Design, and the Chief Officer (Governance) to

present the risk register and risk mitigation actions for their respective service portfolios (Finance, Workforce, and Governance).

During his presentation, the Corporate Finance Manager responded to the question raised by Councillor Patrick Heesom. This related to the affordability of having to borrow at an earlier stage to fund the capital programme due to lower level of reserves being held. He felt that this was a risk. The Corporate Finance Manager advised that reserves were positive and the capital programme was spending less than the amount budgeted. In response to the further question raised by Councillor Heesom, the Officer confirmed that there was no additional borrowing requirement for the year.

The Chief Executive advised that the Register, with contextual analysis would be brought to Committee each month for review.

The Corporate Finance Manager also provided a detailed response to the further comments and questions raised by Councillor Richard Jones around the risks to reserves (CF06, CF07) and increase in costs from suppliers for goods and services due to supply/demand and business recovery strategies (CF10).

The Chief Executive advised that specific reports on some of the finance risks would be submitted to the Committee in the near future for consideration in detail.

Referring to the risks identified under the heading Workforce, Councillor Richard Jones asked if the proposal that teaching staff in all schools received flu vaccinations funded by the Council was being progressed. The Senior Manager Human Resources & Organisation Design confirmed that the Council had ordered 4,500 vaccinations and advised that school teachers and key workers were included in the programme and the Occupational Health Team were planning delivery of the scheme. She continued that a number of communications had been provided to strongly encourage the workforce to take up the offer.

The full set of strategic priorities for recovery recommended for extraction from the draft Council Plan for 2020/21 and inclusion in the Recovery Strategy was also attached, together with the full set of revised performance indicator targets for 2020/21.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Paul Shotton and seconded by Councillor Andy Dunbobbin

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the presentation be received, with thanks to the officers; and
- (b) That the Committee tasks Officers to rebuild the Forward Work Programme for the remainder of the 2020/21 Council year with recovery planning at its core.

08. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2020/21 (MONTH 4)

The Corporate Finance Manager delivered a presentation which covered the following key areas:

- Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/21
- Budget monitoring 2020/21 – Assumptions
- Council Tax and Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)
- Claims update – additional costs
- Claims update – income loss

The Corporate Finance Manager presented a copy of the report on Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/21 (Month 4) which had been presented to Cabinet on 22 September 2020 and was appended to the report.

Councillor Richard Jones raised a query on the information provided under significant variances this month and referred to the information in Table 1 of the report under Streetscene and Transportation. In his response the Corporate Finance Manager explained that a full breakdown of the figures provided was detailed in appendix 1 of the report. Councillor Jones suggested that an additional column be added to Table 1 to report on income level over/under (in year over and underspend). In his response the Corporate Finance Manager agreed to give the suggestion further consideration for future reports.

Referring to the comments made by Councillor Jones, the Chief Executive cited an example of how the Council was actively managing risk within the Streetscene and Transportation area. The Chief Executive advised that the Council was in negotiation with the Welsh Government to recover income loss where possible, however not all claims might be eligible.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Richard Jones and duly seconded.

RESOLVED:

That having considered the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/21 (Month 4) report, the Committee confirms that there are no specific matters which it wishes to have reported to the Cabinet.

09. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2020/21 (MONTH 4)

The Corporate Finance Manager presented a copy of the report on Capital Programme Monitoring 2020/21 (Month 4) which had been presented to Cabinet on 22 September 2020 and was appended to the report. He advised that the report summarised changes made to the Capital Programme 2020/21 since it was set in January 2020 to the end of Month 4 (July 2020), along with expenditure to date and projected outturn. He referred to the main considerations as detailed in the report.

In response to a question raised Councillor Carolyn Thomas advised that the Standard Waste Transfer Station was in the capital programme, however, she was hopeful that financial assistance would be provided by the Welsh Government and said two bids had been submitted.

The Finance Officer responded to the further comments and questions raised by Councillor Richard Jones around prudential borrowing and carry forward of capital funding. Councillor Jones stated, as part of the finance policy, that the Council did not carry forward capital until schemes were contractually committed, however recognised that given the current circumstances, this may not be the case for all carry forward requests this financial year.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Richard Jones and seconded by Councillor Geoff Collett.

RESOLVED:

That having considered the Capital Programme Monitoring 2020/21 (Month 4) report, the Committee confirms that there are no specific matters which it wishes to have reported to the Cabinet.

10. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.45 am)

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Chairman