

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
2 NOVEMBER 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a remote attendance meeting on Monday, 2 November 2020

PRESENT: **Councillor Clive Carver (Chairman)**

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Andy Dunbobbin, Mared Eastwood, Patrick Heesom, Kevin Rush, Paul Shotton, Andy Williams and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGY: Councillor Geoff Collett

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Paul Johnson (for Sean Bibby)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Christine Jones, Cabinet Member for Social Services attended as an observer

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Ian Roberts (Leader and Cabinet Member for Education); Councillor Carolyn Thomas (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside); Councillor Glyn Banks (Cabinet Member for Finance), Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Corporate Finance Manager

Strategic Finance Manager (Financial Strategy and Insurance), Strategic Finance Manager (Management Accounting) and Principal Accountants were in attendance for minute number 88 – Budget 2021/22 – Stage 1.

IN ATTENDANCE: Head of Democratic Services, Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None.

19. URGENT ITEM: UPDATE ON THE EMERGENCY SITUATION

The Committee noted the Chairman's decision to admit an urgent item as provided for under section 100B4 (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Following the UK Government announcement that a lockdown was being implemented in England, the Chief Executive had thought it useful to update the Committee on the emergency situation. The Chief Executive advised that a further written briefing would be circulated to all Members following the outcome of the First Minister's statement later in the day. It was expected that the First Minister would announce that Wales would come out of the Firebreak as planned on Monday 9th November with public services which had had to close being able to resume. Ministers continued to work with health officials on specific details around extended households and permissible numbers of people indoor and outdoor with rules being continually reviewed following the ending of the Firebreak.

The statistics expected for Flintshire, which would be available later in the day, were expected to show the highest number of incident rates had been reached but with overnight case numbers for that day and the following day likely to have declined. Across North Wales, plans were in place to double Test, Trace and Protect workforce capacity by December. There would be a full Emergency Management Recovery Team (EMRT) meeting the following day to discuss the resumption of services and communication would be sent out to Members, the public and workforce following this meeting.

In response to a question on the use of Deeside's Rainbow Hospital, the Chief Executive said that in the long term, the hospital might be used to provide vaccinations. The Health Board was reviewing its potential use over the winter months to ease pressure on the district general hospitals. As soon as an outcome was known, local Members, Aura and Aura business partners would be informed.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be received.

20. BUDGET 2021/22 - STAGE 1

The Chief Executive and Corporate Finance Manager introduced the first budget stage report which detailed the forecast and the cost pressures which would make-up the total budget requirement.

A report to Cabinet in October had provided an update on the financial forecast for 2021/22 and the following two financial years. A full review of the forecast had been undertaken to build an accurate and robust baseline of cost pressure which needed to be funded. The review had taken into account the ongoing impacts of the emergency situation including the speed of recovery of income against set targets.

This report set out the limited solutions available to fund the cost pressures with the funding strategy highly dependent on sufficient national funding for local government. The details of the cost pressures for Corporate Services and Corporate Financing were included in the report.

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

- Financial Forecast for 2021/22;
- The Future – What was advised back in February;
- Summary Totals of Cost Pressures;
- Three Part Solutions and Risk-Taking;
- National Position and Funding;
- Potential Funding Scenarios;
- Budget Timetable;
- Support and Challenge Today

Following the presentation, the Chief Executive suggested that a copy of the Ministerial letter and statement which set out the national budget timetable be circulated to the Committee. This was agreed.

Councillor Ian Roberts, Leader of the Council, supported the comments made by the Chief Executive as part of the presentation, highlighting the good working relationship between all local authorities in Wales and Welsh Government (WG). He gave an assurance that clear messages were being sent to WG outlining the need for additional funding to be provided as part of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). He suggested that an additional meeting for Members be convened after 22 December once the provisional local government settlement had been received. The Chief Executive suggested that a special Cabinet meeting be held on 23 December with an all Members briefing arranged for the same day. The Committee supported this suggestion.

In response to a question from Councillor Patrick Heesom on the business support grant, the Chief Executive advised that a business grant support status report would be made available to Members later in the week. Applications were being received from 26 October.

In response to a question from Councillor Paul Shotton on funding pressures for Test, Trace and Protect (TTP), the Chief Executive advised that the TTP scheme was fully funded for 2020/21. He had requested early budget confirmation for 2021/22 from Welsh Government.

In response to a query from the Chairman on the potential funding scenarios, as outlined within the presentation, the Chief Executive explained that the slides showed a sliding scale with the minimum budget gap of £14.423m shown along the top of the table. This table showed the need for a minimum 5% RSG to provide the flexibility to keep the local Council Tax increase under 5%.

It was requested that a 'protocol' be drawn up for Members on the use of the chat bar during formal meetings.

The Chairman thanked officers for their attendance and the presentation provided to the Committee.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report and presentation slides, were moved by Councillor Paul Shotton and seconded by Councillor Andy Dunbobbins.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee support the overall budget strategy;
- (b) That the Committee re-affirm the Council's position on local taxation policy;
- (c) That the Committee support the Council's expectations of Governments, as outlined within the presentation provided;

- (d) That the Corporate Services and Corporate Financing cost pressures, as outlined within the report, be noted; and
- (e) That no further cost efficiency areas be proposed by the Committee to be explored further.

21. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 11.00 am and ended at 12.02 pm)

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Chairman