

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 MAY 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Thursday, 16 May 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Tim Newhouse (Chairman)

Councillors: Clive Carver, Peter Curtis, Ian Dunbar, Ron Hampson, Patrick Heesom, Richard Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Paul Shotton, Ian Smith and Arnold Woolley

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Joe Johnson (for Trefor Howorth)

APOLOGY: Councillor Richard Jones

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: Bernie Attridge and Kevin Jones

CONTRIBUTORS: Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Cabinet Member for Corporate Management, Chief Executive and Head of ICT & Customer Services

Corporate Finance Manager and Finance Manager for minute number 4
Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development for minute number 5

IN ATTENDANCE:

Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

During discussion under Agenda Item 4: Revenue Budget Monitoring 2012/13 Month 11, Councillor R.G. Hampson declared a personal interest.

2. URGENT ITEM - APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chairman sought nominations for a Vice-Chair for the Committee. A nomination for Councillor P.J. Curtis was duly seconded and on being put to the vote, this was carried. No further nominations were received.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor P.J. Curtis be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 April 2013 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Councillor P.G. Heesom thanked officers for the note detailing actions arising, which had previously been circulated.

Accuracy

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2012/13 Month 10 - Councillor P.J. Curtis pointed out that his comments about a slide related to the swimming baths in Holywell and not a play area. He explained his concerns that the removal of the slide may have led to a loss of revenue and that an increased ratio of inspections may have helped to avoid the removal of such features.

Matters Arising

Minute 91: Customer Services as a Flintshire Futures Workstream - Councillor Heesom made reference to the minutes of the meeting in January 2013 and requested that information be shared with Members on capacity proposals.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance took the opportunity to welcome the new Chairman and Vice-Chairman and thanked the former Chairman and Vice-Chairman for their contributions. He acknowledged the request from Councillor Heesom and gave a commitment that an update would be provided on the allocation of ringfenced funding.

The Chief Executive said that the Council would be revisiting priorities in June as part of work on the Medium Term Financial Plan in terms of the fiscal gap and changing services. He spoke of positive work on Organisational Change and the need to increase this further to address the gap which would necessitate major debate with Members.

Minute 93: Revenue Budget Monitoring 2012/13 Month 10 - Councillor Heesom queried whether proposed changes to the catering service in secondary schools would also apply to primary schools, as indicated in recent press reports.

The Leader said that following a similar question raised at the previous meeting, the breakdown of projected overspend in Facilities Services, which had been provided to the Committee, indicated a primary school deficit of £100K. He added that a report would be brought back to the Committee, as shown on the Forward Work Programme.

Minute 94: Workforce Information Quarter 3 Oct-Dec 2012 - Councillor A. Woolley advised that following discussion with officers, it had been agreed that there would be a change in the way in which future statistics were presented.

RESOLVED:

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

4. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2012/13 MONTH 11

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced a report to provide Members with Revenue Budget Monitoring 2012/13 (Month 11) information for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) due for submission to Cabinet on 21 May 2013.

It was reported that the projected year end position, as estimated at Month 11, was a net underspend of £2.334m on the Council Fund and a projected net underspend of £0.574m on the HRA. For Council Fund, the table in 3.01 showed a reduced overspend of £0.590m in Lifelong Learning, which was offset by underspends in other directorates, most notably of £2.564m in Community Services. Reasons for all the movements from month 10 were detailed in Appendix 1. The report also included various requests for carrying forward funding as detailed in 3.16 - 3.21 and an update on non-standard inflation which remained unchanged from the previous month.

The Corporate Finance Manager confirmed that the report now included estimates for the additional costs arising from the impact of the severe weather period earlier in the year totalling £1.2m. The estimate included actual costs arising when the incident occurred (falling in 2012/13) of £0.629m and other estimated costs in relation to the recovery period (majority falling in 2013/14) of £0.621m.

It was reported that the in-year costs had been dealt with in 2 ways. Firstly, an amount of £0.245m had been drawn down from the Winter Maintenance reserve and secondly it was recommended that the remainder be met from contingency reserves. Consideration would need to be given on whether to reinstate the Winter Maintenance reserves in full or in part when the final outturn was known. Costs relating to the recovery period would be approved for the next financial year and officers were exploring the possibility of Welsh Government (WG) support via the Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme (EFAS), however a threshold of £487K would apply to Flintshire for 2012/13.

Whilst costs had been reported for the operational phase of dealing with the impact of severe weather, the Chief Executive spoke of plans for the recovery phase which principally involved repairs to roads. An application had been made for discretionary support under EFAS and in view of the severity of the weather conditions and arising impact, it was hoped that there would be a positive outcome with costs reinstated into the budget.

On the request for carry forward in Corporate Services to fund improved electronic communications with Members, Councillor C.S. Carver asked if an outcome had already been agreed as a specific figure of £80K was mentioned. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance said that the amount quoted related to the business case which would provide savings to the Council and that this had been shared with Group Leaders. Responses to questions raised would be brought back to the next meeting with Group Leaders on 6 June 2013 where full support would be required on the business case in order to move forward. The Head of ICT & Customer Services said that the £80K represented advance investment required for the procurement of hardware, software and support which, as discussed at the Group Leaders' meeting, would involve iPads. He added that there would be payback in the first year. The Chief Executive said that the request for carry forward was not intended to assume a particular outcome. The Cabinet Member for Corporate Management spoke of the need to demonstrate best use of information technology and modernisation combined with savings.

Councillor P.G. Heesom welcomed the increased level of underspend in Community Services but questioned the reason for this. He raised concerns about healthcare pressures and asked about the Council's approach in dealing with this. The Chief Executive said that a number of increases in underspend were due to changes in practices and management. He went on to speak of major pressures in social care on UK level which were not financially sustainable and would require greater flexibility by all. On health care, regional reviews were ongoing which would impact on services. There was an awareness of changes in the NHS and the medium term future was an issue.

The Leader agreed that a valid point had been made by Councillor Heesom and said that critical work on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) would take into account any impact from new legislation such as the Social Care Bill.

Councillor Heesom requested early debate on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to ascertain whether this was the best toolkit to address the pressures faced. On Social Care, the Chief Executive spoke of positive changes such as success with commissioning on a regional level and the intention for the MTFP to be smarter to improve services. The Cabinet Member for Corporate Management made reference to the Betsi Cadwaladr public meeting at which a number of Members had raised concerns at changes. He spoke of the importance of sustaining a level of underspend to offset any increase in costs, for example, from out of county placements.

Councillor A. Woolley remarked on the efforts of the Occupational Therapy team to cope with an increased demand for services and called for additional resources in that area. The Chief Executive gave reassurance that professional colleagues in Social Care had determined resources needed, which included Occupational Therapists at the core of the team.

Whilst reflecting on the current underspend position in Community Services, Councillor R.G. Hampson referred to proposals to withdraw free transport for people with learning disabilities and pensioners attending day centres. The Leader said that a cautious approach had been taken in preparing the Council for the challenges ahead, particularly in light of the Chancellor's recent announcement on cuts to the WG budget which would have implications for Councils. There was an aspiration to reinstate some of these services, however discussion on the MTFS would need to take into account all projections and pressures. The Chief Executive understood the sensitive nature of the issue but pointed out that the budget would currently be in deficit if difficult choices had not been made in the previous budget.

Councillor W.P. Shotton praised the work carried out by Streetscene during the severe weather and was hopeful of a positive outcome from WG in the application for costs for the recovery phase, mindful that bids had also been submitted by Wrexham and Denbighshire.

On the variances for Waste Disposal and Waste Collection shown in Appendix 2, Councillor Heesom felt that the explanation provided was not satisfactory. He also raised concerns about the Youth Service and asked if this could be analysed in more detail. The Leader referred to previous debate and

Members' concerns about the Leisure service and said that a scoping report was awaited. He went on to say that questions would need to be asked as to the cost of Leisure to the Authority and that this was a non-discretionary service which was important to communities and Members. In response to the query on Waste, the Chief Executive said that further information could be sought from officers outside the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

5. MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development introduced a report which provided an overview of the Council's current Management Development framework delivered in partnership with Deeside College. She explained that Heather Johnson, who had been involved in the development of the project, was unable to attend the meeting.

The Chief Executive detailed the background and said that although Flintshire had previously invested well in training, there had been no coherent programme. This development programme in partnership with Deeside College was thought to be a unique arrangement in Wales and provided generic training to support employees in career progression. Discussions were taking place with Wrexham County Borough Council on how the programme could be further enhanced and the Chief Executive gave examples of a number of Flintshire employees who had successfully completed the Management Development programme.

The Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development said that the framework had been developed around expectations of managers and supervisors fused with requirements from the National Management qualification framework. She advised that Welsh Government (WG) funding could be accessed via Deeside College enabling the programme to be cost neutral and also commented that Flintshire was one of three finalists competing for the Vocational Qualification Employer of the Year Award. Benefits of the programme were that training was tailored to meet the Council's requirements and included input on the modules by leadership teams. An 'Aspiring Leaders' programme was also being developed with Deeside College for employees who had completed Level 5 of the Management Development programme. Although this did not attract WG funding, the partnership would enable Deeside College to assist in delivering and resourcing the training, with the remaining costs relating to the residential element being met by the Council.

Councillor P.G. Heesom spoke of the importance of understanding the roles and responsibilities of elected Members and relationships with officers. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance said that the modules in the programme should recognise the unique role of Members in the organisation. He spoke of practice in previous years where Modern Trainees had spent time with Executive Members during inductions to gain an understanding of their roles.

The Chief Executive said that although there was not a specific module which dealt with this, expectations of working with Members were built in to a number of modules and this could be reflected on at a later stage. The Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development added that some modules included a level of awareness of the Council along with the roles of senior management and relationships with Members.

In welcoming the report, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Management commented on the Council's positive relationship with Deeside College and said that the programme was tailored to Flintshire's needs and could assist with the appraisal process.

Following a query by Councillor I. Smith, the Chief Executive said that the Management Development training would take place over half-day modules spread over a year and managed around work commitments. The Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development said that delegates were expected to undertake a large amount of work in their own time to complete the course and achieve the qualification.

Councillor A. Woolley was supportive of the programme but raised concerns about any possible threats to future funding.

Councillor W.P. Shotton agreed that strong management development was essential to the organisation and asked about potential numbers on the Aspiring Leaders programme and whether alternative funding should be sought for this. The Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development explained that the Aspiring Leaders programme was currently under development and that potential delegates would need to undergo a competitive process based on their personal ambition and need, together with sponsorship and support from their Heads of Service. She anticipated a maximum of one programme per year and said that alternative options of funding were being explored.

Councillor P.J. Curtis spoke in support of the benefits to the Council but expressed concerns about the potential for trained employees to move on to other Local Authorities. He asked if Team Leaders who had undergone training and had authority of supervision had impacted on managerial structures in the organisation. The Chief Executive said that following service reviews and Single Status work, a maximum of seven tiers would apply in any part of the organisation.

In response to a query from Councillor T.R. Lloyd, it was confirmed that the Aspiring Leaders Level 7 qualification was recognised as equivalent to a Masters degree. Councillor Lloyd proposed a vote of thanks to Councillors R.B. Jones and C.S. Carver for their hard work as the former Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee. This was duly seconded and agreed by the Committee. The Member Engagement Manager said that he would write to Councillor Jones on behalf of the Committee.

Councillor M. Lowe asked whether delegates of the Aspiring Leaders programme would be expected to contribute to training costs as they would benefit from the qualification. The Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development said that this would be a consideration. The Chief Executive

pointed out that this training would only be commissioned for a small number of employees.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Corporate Training complete a review of all programmes to ensure content is relevant and current in line with the new Behavioural Competency Framework and the new qualification standards;
- (b) That Corporate Training explore other qualifications at Level 5 that would attract funding and would therefore remove the reliance on Deeside College to provide this programme at their own cost;
- (c) That the Management Development programmes are promoted across the organisation to ensure all employees have the opportunity to take up the learning and development available to ensure that they have the skills and expertise to undertake their roles competently;
- (d) That Corporate Training explore further the option of offering the 'Aspiring Leaders' programme at Level 7 for those managers wishing to progress from Level 5 at a cost of £658 per delegate; and
- (e) That the Member Engagement Manager write to Councillor R.B. Jones to express the Committee's appreciation for his work as the former Chairman.

6. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Member Engagement Manager introduced a report to enable the Committee to consider the Forward Work Programme. He drew attention to the large number of items scheduled for the meeting on 13 June 2013 and suggested that some of these items could be dealt with at a special meeting which could be arranged for the end of June or start of July, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

Following earlier discussion, the Chief Executive suggested that the Medium Term Financial Plan could be brought in July 2013. On the Wales Audit Office (WAO) Annual Improvement Report, he advised that the WAO report had been omitted from the Cabinet agenda as it was finalised at a later stage and would be made available the following day. The full document would be submitted to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Member Engagement Manager liaise with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to arrange a special meeting of the Committee and schedule the items accordingly.

7. **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 11.25 am)

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Chairman