

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 FEBRUARY 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Monday, 3 February 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Tim Newhouse (Chairman)

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Marion Bateman, Clive Carver, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Ron Hampson, Ray Hughes, Richard Jones, Richard Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Paul Shotton and Arnold Woolley

ALSO PRESENT (as all Members were invited to attend):

Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Amanda Bragg, Veronica Gay, Robin Guest, Kevin Jones, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Billy Mullin, Mike Peers and Nigel Steele-Mortimer

Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Co-optees: David Hytch, Rebecca Stark and Stephanie Williams

APOLOGY:

Councillor: Peter Curtis

CONTRIBUTORS:

Leader of the Council, Chief Executive, Director of Environment, Director of Community Services, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Finance, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, Corporate Finance Manager and Finance Officers

IN ATTENDANCE:

Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

71. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

No declarations of interest were made.

72. BUDGET CONSULTATION FOR 2014/15

The Chief Executive and the Head of Finance provided a presentation on the Council Fund Revenue Budget 2014/15, the main features of which were:-

- Purpose of this session
- Overview & Scrutiny meetings held
- Member Feedback
- Issues raised across Committees
 - Housing and Social Care
 - Environment
 - Lifelong Learning
 - Corporate Resources
- Budget Update
- Issues still under consideration to achieve a balanced budget
- Investment Strategy
- Next steps

The Director of Environment and the Head of Finance then provided a presentation on the Assets and the Capital Programme Budget 2014/15, the main features of which were:

- Purpose of the meeting
- Capital Programme Contest
- Funding the Capital Programme
- Capital Programme – Funding
- Core Capital Programme
- Capital Receipts & Core Programme
- Allocating the Core Programme
- Core Capital Programme – Allocation
- Next Steps

The comments and questions which were raised by Members, and the responses given, are attached at Appendix 1.

RESOLVED:

That the presentations be noted.

73. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press and no members of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 a.m. and ended at 12.01 p.m.)

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Chairman

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No.	Comments and Questions:	Responses:
1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Comments and Questions 	
1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the Scrutiny meetings last week, Members were advised that we could only balance the budget gap which is currently £915k from recurring items only. Why therefore is there a suggested strategy of utilising £205k from the Month 8 monitoring position to do this? Can we have details of the breakdown of this amount? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The £205k is made up of recurring items. Details are as made up of a reduction in previous years efficiencies from Matrix and the Flintshire Futures Asset Programme (£175k) not being achievable together with recurring efficiencies in the budget for Discretionary Housing Payments as a result of lower demand than anticipated and a reprofiling of Housing Benefit income.
1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern raised that we are referring to a projected position in relation to the Contingency sum available. Events could happen in Month 9 – Month 12 which could affect the actual year end position. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £3.7m is the update at Month 8. This is a reasonable assumption to work on that this level will be achieved and is consistent with the approach taken in previous years budget strategies.
1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridging Finance, why do we have to do this? It is not the usual way of balancing the budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This relates to efficiencies that we will not achieve in full in the first financial year (2014/15) even though they will be recurring in later years. The bridging or transitional funding from reserves relates to the timing of these. Without the use of bridging finance funded from through the Investment Strategy, the gap still to find from recurring efficiencies would be £2m.

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No.	Comments and Questions:	Responses:
1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is reference to a review of the proposed Council Tax level as part of the strategy to close the gap, has any further work been done on this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The projection currently includes an assumption of a 3% increase in Council tax. A further 1% increase would bring in a gross amount of £0.5m but we need to calculate the effect of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme in order for us to have the net position.
1.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there anything in place to replenish reserves for the future? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently there is £1.580m built in to the assumptions for 2015/16 and 2016/17 for investment costs. In 2014/15 this is not required as the resources available from the review of reserves and balances has provided resource for the investment strategy and there is not a not need to make a contribution from base budget.
1.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do Members know that we have not over assumed the amount of bridging finance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The risk management approach to the budget provides assurance that the VFM work can be delivered within agreed timescales and the bridging reflects this.
1.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference to previous restructures in 2005 and that this did not work out then so what assurance it can be delivered this time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organisation does need to change and this does need to be controlled. Establishment control is essential to this. Much tighter control will be possible following the introduction of the Single Status agreement and the realignment of budgets..

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No.	Comments and Questions:	Responses:
1.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference to information which shows that FCC have underspent on staff costs for a number of years. Meeting requested with CEO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting to be arranged.
1.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With Single Status and future reorganisation, if we are not careful we will be open to further challenges on Equal Pay claims and people who are left in a reduced workforce may need revised job evaluations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobs may need to be re-evaluated if their role changes but this will not lead to additional equal pay claims as this has been resolved through the Single Status agreement and the new pay structure..

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No.	Comments and Questions:	Responses:
<p>2.00</p> <p>2.1</p>	<p>Pressures/Investments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With regard to the pressure of £0.962m for Leisure, this is partly related to a capital payment. How much is that and can we have further detail on this pressure? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An allocation of £0.505m from the contingency reserve was made in 2013/14 to address the in-year budget implications of the revised Leisure Centres business plan. This amount is included on a recurring basis within the £0.962m for Leisure Centres identified in the budget proposals for 2014/15.'

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No.	Comments and Questions:	Responses:
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3.0	<u>Corporate Resources Comments / Issues</u>	
3.0	<u>Efficiencies</u>	
3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With reference to additional efficiencies that may be available from Procurement/Back to Basics, has that not already been included? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The outcome of the work so far has been included but this work is ongoing and we are striving to find as much as possible from this source.
3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can we have more detail of the Workforce Cost of Employment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This relates to Professional Subscriptions/travel etc. It is not related to Part 3 terms and conditions. Discussions have been held with the Unions .
3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The slide referring to meeting the budget gap makes reference to further efficiencies under the VFM programme. What other types of efficiencies are being included? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The identification of efficiencies is an ongoing process which will continue until the budget is balanced . A risk based approach is being taken to identify what is achievable. There are no further VFMs in Service areas identified for inclusion..