

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
11 DECEMBER 2014

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, 11 December 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Carolyn Thomas (Chair)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Paul Cunningham, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Ron Hampson, Joe Johnson, Richard Jones, Richard Lloyd, David Roney, Paul Shotton and Arnold Woolley

SUBSTITUTE: Councillor Adele Davies-Cooke for Clive Carver

APOLOGIES: Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure. Councillor Peter Curtis.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Haydn Bateman

CONTRIBUTORS: Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Chief Executive, Chief Officer (People & Resources), Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Organisational Change), Corporate Finance Manager, Customer Services Manager, and Managed Agency Contracts Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

44. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 November 2014 had been circulated with the agenda.

Matters Arising

Councillor Richard Jones referred to his request on page 6 of the minutes that the value of assumptions and risks be indicated on future reports where possible to help understanding. He cited paragraph 5.01 on page 188 of the agenda and said this had not been done. The Chief Officer (People and Resources) agreed to look into this.

Councillor Jones also drew attention to his comments on page 7 concerning changes to budget headings for Social Services and the commentary around major variances which were difficult to follow from one month to another within the revenue budget monitoring reports. The Chief

Officer (People and Resources) said she would review this to ensure that the tracking of budget headings was easy to follow.

Referring to the revenue budget monitoring report (month 6), Councillor Jones also commented on the explanation given for variances within the residential and domiciliary services and the Mental Health and Substance Misuse services where the explanation for the variances were the same as the previous month even though the monetary amounts were different. He asked that these be updated each month.

Councillor Jones referred to the revenue budget monitoring report (month 5) and commented on the explanation given for variances where the amount had changed by £79k but the explanation given was the same as the explanation at month 4 and said that this needed to be updated.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas suggested that in future, when an Overview & Scrutiny Committee were receiving a report as a result of a recommendation from the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee, this should be reflected in the report. She said this had been suggested recently by the Welsh Audit Office to provide an audit trail of the recommendations made from the Corporate Resources Committee to another Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

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

45. BUDGET CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Leader of the Council advised that the Welsh Government (WG) final local settlement had just been published. He advised on the implications for Flintshire.

The Leader referred to the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and the additional £113m funding to be made available for Wales. He commented that the bulk of the funding would be made available to the Health Service but £43m was unallocated and further clarification on how that was to be allocated would be provided in the New Year. He explained that preparatory work would be carried out between now and the New Year to outline the Authority's case for funding for social care. He commented on the value of local government in terms of the local community services provided around preventative care and health and well-being through leisure services for example.

The Leader of the Council referred to consideration of the draft revenue budget proposals for the Council Fund 2015/16 at Cabinet on 16 December 2014, and the formal Overview & Scrutiny budget consultation meetings to be held in January 2015. He asked the Committee for their views on whether the provisional budget workshop date of 19 December 2014 should be utilised for an all Member budget drop-in session to address any questions/queries prior

to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee budget meetings. The Committee supported the suggestion and it was agreed that confirmation would be sent to all Members. It was also agreed that the provisional slot of 16 January 2015 would be utilised for a similar budget drop-in session. Confirmation of this would also be sent to all Members in due course.

The Chief Executive also referred to the significant amount of funding from the WG which was unallocated and welcomed the availability of any continued short-term funding for social care. He commented on the formal consultation process to be undertaken in January 2015 on the draft Council Fund Revenue Budget 2015/16. In response to the queries raised by Members he advised that all Chief Officer portfolios would be covered across Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

During discussion, Councillor Richard Jones expressed concerns that the Health Service was being supported by the WG at the expense of local government provision. He proposed that a letter be sent to the WG outlining Members concerns around hypothecated funding and the impact this would have on front line services when considering future budget proposals. He also asked that the letter seeks a move from the WG towards un-hypothecated budgets for local authorities in the future. The Leader of the Council agreed to send a letter to the WG.

The Chairman commented on the discussions which arose during the budget briefing meeting for Group Leaders around considering a base budget next year and asked that the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee be involved in reviewing the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the update be noted;
- (b) That an invitation to attend a budget drop-in session on the 19 December, 2014 at 2.00 pm be sent to all Members; and
- (c) That a letter outlining Members concerns on hypothecated funding be sent to the Welsh Government (WG)

46. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2013/14 AUDIT-CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE.

The Chief Executive introduced a report on the positive Certificate of Compliance from the Auditor General for Wales in respect of the audit of the 2013-14 Annual Performance Report. He provided background information and advised that this was the second certificate that the Council had received during 2014/15 to certify the Auditor General's views on the Council's compliance with discharging its duty to publish an assessment of performance. The conclusion of the audit was "that the Council had discharged its duties under section 15(2), (3), (8) and (9) of the Measure and

had acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance sufficiently to discharge its duties". The Auditor General had made no new statutory recommendation or proposals for improvement.

RESOLVED:

That the positive Certificate of Compliance from the Auditor General for Wales in respect of the audit of the 2013-14 Annual Performance Report be noted.

47. MID YEAR CHIEF OFFICER PERFORMANCE REPORTS

The Committee received a report on the 2014/15 Mid Year Service Performance Reports produced at Chief Officer level for their respective portfolios. The reports covered the period April to September 2014.

The Chief Officer (People and Resources) presented the Mid Year Chief Officer Performance Report for People and Resources.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas commented on the duplication of items on the agenda as some of the items were also being covered as part of the performance reports and asked that consideration be given to how reports were presented in the future.

Councillor Richard Jones suggested that the font size of the headings in the COT performance reports be made larger for "easy reading" and it was agreed that this would be passed to the performance team.

Councillor Arnold Woolley asked for a list of fee generating services. The Chief Officer (People and Resources) explained that this was part of the Income Strategy and agreed to make enquiries to establish if this information could be provided to the Committee.

Councillor Arnold Woolley referred to page 25 of the agenda. He commented on the need for a clear audit trail when undertaking virements and said he had contacted the Corporate Finance Manager about this matter and was waiting for information about virements. The Chief Officer (People and Resources) explained the difficulties around the level of detail required but said she would look into this. She gave an assurance that the Authority was fully compliant with the regulations regarding virements.

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented the Mid Year Chief Officer Performance Report for Governance.

Councillor Arnold Woolley referred to the introduction of individual electoral registration and the positive comments he had received from older people on how this change had been dealt with. He asked the Chief Officer (Governance) to forward his congratulations to the election team.

Councillor Ian Dunbar referred to the Public Sector Broadband Aggregation (PSBA) project and raised concerns around connectivity to

schools. The Chief Officer responded to the matters raised and advised that the estimated completion date for the project was March 2015. He agreed to discuss any specific issues with Councillor Dunbar following the meeting. In response to the further concerns raised by Councillor Dunbar around procurement, the Chief Officer advised that schools had been allocated a procurement officer for contact. He also commented on the work being undertaken to connect schools to the P2P corporate system.

Councillor Richard Jones commented on the Service Level Agreements between the Authority and schools for IT support and expressed concerns that there could be a long delay before technical support became available. He also explained that there was a local resources issue with IT in schools and that there was a problem if members wished to use their own IT equipment in schools. The Chief Officer referred to the appointment of a consultant to liaise with schools to determine their needs and said this information would be shared with the Leader of the Council in the New Year to consider the options for future service provision.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas suggested that Committee Services staff be trained on how to use ipads, so that they could assist Members during Committee meetings.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin suggested that a short information video on how to use the ipads be posted onto the Council's infonet for Members to access should they experience any problems. The Chief Officer agreed to ask the IT Support Officer to do this.

Councillor Marion Bateman asked that her compliments be passed to Andrew Peers, IT Support Officer, for the assistance and training he had provided to all Members on the use of ipads.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the reports be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee continues to highlight and monitor poor performance and feedback details of any challenge to the Policy, Performance & Partnerships Team for reporting to Cabinet where appropriate.

48. QUARTER 2 IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORT

The Chief Officer (Organisational Change) introduced a report on the 2014/15 Improvement Plan Monitoring Report relevant to the Committee. The report covered the period July – September 2014.

In response to a query raised by Councillor Richard Jones concerning empty industrial units at Buckley, the Chief Officer (Organisational Change) referred to the Authority's rationalisation programme and gave an assurance that an area review would be undertaken during the next 12 months.

Councillor Paul Shotton commented on the proposed demolition of the Civic Offices in Connah's Quay. The Chief Officer (Organisational Change) advised that the demolition had been planned as part of the overall strategy of rationalisation. The Leader of the Council explained that it had been previously agreed that the Civic Offices would remain open until the Connects Centre in Connah's Quay was operational and the cash office facility available for public use. Councillor Carolyn Thomas asked if some of the services available at the Connects Centres could be replicated at County Hall, Mold. The Chief Executive explained that the Authority was looking to consolidate its Reception services at County Hall from next year to reflect the changing way that customers dealt with the Authority and to meet customer needs.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee continues to highlight and monitor poor performance and feedback details of any challenge to the Policy, Performance & Partnerships Team for reporting to Cabinet where appropriate.

49 VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair said that there would be a slight change in the order of business to bring forward agenda item 9 on Workforce Information Quarters 1 and 2. The remainder of the agenda would then follow in the usual order.

50. WORKFORCE INFORMATION QUARTERS 1 AND 2 2014/15

The Chief Officer (People and Resources) introduced a report to provide an update for the first and second quarters for 2014/15. She explained that the information was being presented in dashboard format and that the performance information for the whole organisation was split to show Schools and Non-Schools data separately.

The Chief Officer provided background information and reported on the main considerations as detailed in the report around headcount and full time equivalent, organisational age profile, employee turnover and stability, attendance, performance appraisals and development, resource management, equality and diversity.

Councillor Arnold Woolley commented on the use of agency workers and asked if information on the time that an agency worker was employed by the Council could be provided in future reports. The Chief Officer (People and Resources) agreed to include the duration that agency workers were employed for in future reports.

RESOLVED:

That the Workforce Information Reports for Quarters 1 and 2 be noted.

51. CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

The Customer Services Manager introduced a report on the revised Customer Service Policy to seek support for formal customer consultation. She advised that the policy had been updated to reflect the change in the way that customers deal with the Council. Customer service standards had been revised and demonstrated a stronger commitment rather than an aim.

Councillor Richard Jones suggested that the headings for each section of the Customer Services Policy be included on the preface page to make the document more “user” friendly. The Customer Services Manager agreed to amend the draft document.

Councillor Marion Bateman raised concerns in relation to the work mobile phone numbers of Officers not being made available to Members. The Chief Executive said that the work mobile numbers of Officers should be made available to Members and agreed to liaise with the Customer Service Manager to establish how they were disclosed.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the revised Customer Services Policy and support it being issued for formal customer consultation.

52. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2014/15 (MONTH 6) AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2014/15 (MONTH 6)

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced a report on the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2014/15 (Month 6) report and the Capital Programme 2014/15 (Month 6) report. He explained that both the Revenue Monitoring report and the Capital Programme report would be presented to Cabinet on 16 December 2014. He reported on the main considerations within both reports which were appended for information.

Revenue Budget Monitoring Report

Councillor Richard Jones thanked the Corporate Finance Manager and the Finance Manager for providing information within the report on budget movements.

Councillor Jones raised a number of queries on the report and it was agreed that he would send his questions to the Corporate Finance Manager to enable him to provide more detailed responses. The Chair asked that the questions and answers also be circulated to the Committee for information.

The Chair requested that reference to the Committee’s comments being fed back to Cabinet be included in the recommendation of future reports.

Capital Programme

Councillor Richard Jones referred to page 221 of the agenda and commented on the Rollover into 2015/16 shown at paragraph 3.05. He said only spending that had been committed could be rolled over into the next year. The Corporate Finance Manager agreed to check this information and provide a response to Councillor Jones.

Councillor Jones also said that following the changes to Chief Officer portfolios, it was difficult to compare the capital programme update reports with the capital programme report approved by County Council on the 18 February 2014. The Corporate Finance Manager agreed to look at how this could be changed to make it easier to follow.

RESOLVED:

That the reports be noted.

53. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the report to enable the Committee to consider the Forward Work Programme. She reminded Members that a People Strategy Workshop was being held on 12 December 2014 and referred to the budget consultation meetings which had been scheduled for 15th, 22nd and 30th January 2015.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be approved.

54. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 10.00am and ended at 12.40pm)

.....
Chair