

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
18 DECEMBER 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Friday, 18 December 2015

PRESENT: Councillor Clive Carver (Chair)

Councillors: Andy Dunbobbin, Richard Jones, David Roney, Nigel Steele-Mortimer and Arnold Woolley

ALSO PRESENT (as all Members had been invited to attend)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Chris Bithell, Derek Butler, Ian Dunbar, Alison Halford, David Healey, Christine Jones, Kevin Jones, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Mike Peers, Gareth Roberts and Paul Shotton

Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee Co-optee: Mr David Hytch

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillors Haydn Bateman (for Marion Bateman) and Nancy Matthews (for Robin Guest)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Carol Ellis, Richard Lloyd and Brian Mullin. Rebecca Stark.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Planning and Environment), Chief Officer (Organisational Change 1), Chief Officer (Organisational Change 2), Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Chief Officer (Governance), Corporate Finance Manager, Technical Finance Manager, and Policy, Performance & Partnerships Manager

IN ATTENDANCE:

Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

67. COUNCIL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2016/17

The Chair welcomed Members and the contributors to the meeting.

The Chief Executive referred to the budget consultation process to date and the opportunity to review feedback in relation to the specific budget proposals by Portfolio for the Council Fund 2016/17 from the individual scrutiny meetings held between 7 and 18 December 2015, and to review general observations on the budget process and the information available.

Local Government Provisional Settlement 2016/17

The Chief Executive and Corporate Finance Manager gave a brief presentation on the Settlement which covered the following areas:-

- Settlement context
- Settlement headlines
- Flintshire's position in the Settlement
- known impacts for Flintshire
- ongoing local budget work
- ongoing national budget work
- timescale for phasing the budget

Overview of First Phase of the Budget process

The Chief Executive and Corporate Finance Manager then gave a presentation on the first phase of the budget process. The Chief Executive advised that the purpose of the meeting was to receive feedback on the first phase proposals for the 2016/17 Council Fund Revenue Budget for services presented throughout December, to provide commentary to the Cabinet, and to note the implications of the Settlement and advise on the budget setting process.

The Chief Officer (Planning and Environment) and Chief Officer (Organisational Change 1) each gave a detailed presentation on the budget proposals within their respective portfolios, which had been challenged through the Overview & Scrutiny process.

The main points of the presentation were as follows:

- general points on process
- calculating the RSG change
- reassessing the Council case
- use of consultants
- specific portfolio feedback (Environment, Organisational Change, Social Care & Health, Education & Youth, Community & Enterprise)
- budget closure strategy
- National budget timetable
- timescale for phasing the budget

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive and Officers for their presentations and the verbal updates which had been given to Members.

The comments and questions which were raised by Members of the Committee on the presentations, together with the responses given, are detailed in Appendix 1 (attached).

RESOLVED:

That the presentations be received and that Members' comments and the responses be noted and collated as part of the background material for the budget proposals.

68. DRAFT CAPITAL STRATEGY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2015-2020

The Chief Officer (Organisational Change 2) introduced a report on the Draft Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan 2015-2020 and explained this was a new Strategy for the Authority combining medium term plans for managing the Council's assets and its Capital Programme. He advised that the report outlined the need for the Strategy, the purpose, key aims, principles and content. He explained that member's views and approval, in principle, was sought prior to the final version being put forward to Council for approval in February 2016.

The Chief Officer provided background information and referred to the key aims and principles of the Strategy as detailed in the report and drew attention to the summary of what was included in the Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan and the Capital Programme. He pointed out the reference to the theatre and assured the Committee that full details would be provide at the final stage of the Asset Management Plan.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions.

Councillor Richard Jones raised a number of questions concerning the draft Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan. He referred to the retention of the Authority's offices at Ewloe by the leaseholder and asked why they was not contributing to the maintenance costs. He raised further questions around the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to increase the supply of affordable homes in the County. He commented on the need to understand the benefit of industrial units and referred to small business premises and the Council's Alternative Delivery Model programme (ADM). Councillor Jones referred to page 28 of the draft Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan and commented on the annual allocation and the cost of borrowing.

During discussion Officers responded to the questions and concerns raised by Councillor Jones. The Chief Officer explained that the Ewloe offices were leased until July 2016, following this the options for the Authority were either to dispose of the freehold or place on the market. Councillor Dave Mackie raised concerns around the condition of the office building at Ewloe and referred to the issue of vandalism. The Chief Officer advised that the leaseholder had a commitment to honour its landlord obligations and explained that a deprivation claim would be made as part of the lease termination process.

Councillor Arnold Woolley referred to the backlog of maintenance work across the Authority's property portfolio and commented that if left for too long this would impact on any future plans for disposal. He also commented on the Authority's aims to deliver an integrated programme of regeneration for Deeside and referred to the need to improve quality of housing. He referred to the issue of empty homes and expressed the view that there was room for further consideration to be given to the issue of social housing. The Chief Officer acknowledged the points raised and agreed to contact the Housing team to seek a response.

During discussion Officers responded to the further questions and concerns raised around assessment and disposal of assets, town and rural regeneration, citing Buckley in particular, and the location of Buckley Medical Centre.

Councillor Paul Shotton referred to the potential for realising the Authority's assets and commented on the agile working policy and the impact of this on the Authority's offices in Flint. He also commented on the demolition of offices in Connah's Quay and asked what savings had been achieved as a result. The Chief Officer commented on the challenge of maintaining the Authority's 'ageing' asset base and advised that the demolition of the offices in Connah's Quay had generated an ongoing efficiency of £75k per annum.

Councillor Arnold Woolley referred to the recommendation in the report that the Draft Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan 2015-2020 be supported, and proposed that members considered supporting the draft Strategy and Plan in principle. The proposal was duly seconded and when put to the vote was carried.

RESOLVED:

That the Draft Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan 2015-2020 be supported in principle before the final version is produced.

69. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2016/17 – 2019/20: OVERVIEW

The Technical Finance Manager introduced a report which put forward an overview of the 2016/17 – 2019/20 Capital Programme for member comments. She referred to the key considerations and the data provided in tables 1 to 4 of the report concerning estimated available funding 2016/17 – 2019/20, proposed allocations, proposed investment schemes, and summary capital programme.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions.

Councillor Clive Carver referred to the installation of solar panels on the Buckley landfill site and asked if this would be completed before a drop in tariff came into effect. The Chief Officer (Organisational Change 2) said the intention was that this would be done.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the existing proposal of allocating capital receipts to fund capital schemes generally only when the receipts have been actually received be supported;
- (b) That the allocations in Table 2 for the Statutory/Regulatory and Retained Assets sections of the Capital Programme 2016/17 – 2019/20 be supported;
- (c) That the schemes included in Table 3 for the Investment section of the Capital Programme 2016/17 – 2019/20 be supported; and
- (d) That the remainder of the report be endorsed.

70. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.35 pm)

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Chair