

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
28 JUNE 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Organisational Change Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold, CH7 6NA on Tuesday, 28 June 2016

PRESENT: Councillor Brian Dunn (Chairman)

Councillors: Clive Carver, Chris Dolphin, Andy Dunbobbin, Robin Guest, Brian Lloyd, Dave Mackie, Mike Reece, Paul Shotton and Nigel Steele-Mortimer

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Veronica Gay

APOLOGIES: Councillors Aaron Shotton, Leader of the Council, and Cabinet Member for Finance, Ian Dunbar and Paul Shotton. Chief Officer (Organisational Change 2)

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Bernie Attridge, Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Kevin Jones, Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection & Leisure; Councillor Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Education, Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Organisational Change 1), Corporate Finance Manager, Principal Leisure Services Officer, Finance Manager Community Services, and Principal Librarian,

IN ATTENDANCE: Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

The Member Engagement Manager advised that it had been confirmed at the Annual Meeting of the County Council that the Chair of the Committee should come from the Independent Alliance Group. As Councillor Brian Dunn had been appointed to this role by the Group, the Committee was asked to endorse the decision.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Brian Dunn be confirmed as the Chairman of the Committee.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin nominated Councillor Chris Dolphin as Vice-Chair of the Committee. This was duly seconded and supported by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Chris Dolphin be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2016 were submitted.

Matters arising

Councillor Clive Carver raised a concern regarding the mobile library service in Hawarden. It was agreed that the Principal Librarian would address the matter following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

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

5. **COUNCIL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2017/18**

The Chief Executive introduced the report which provided an update on the financial forecast for 2017/18 financial year together with the budget pressures and the proposed efficiencies for the Organisational Change Portfolio in the third and final year of the current business planning cycle. He reminded Members that the original forecast for 2017/18 had set a likely gap between the total spending requirement and anticipated income of £13.7m. This gap was the total which had to be found in efficiencies, service cost reductions and income growth as part of annual budget planning. The forecast had been revised at regular intervals, responding to budget developments at national and local levels. This meant that the latest forecast presented a working deficit of £8.1 m between the forecast gap and the combined total of working, corporate and service portfolio efficiency proposals of £6.3m which could be found.

The Chief Executive went on to explain that the Cabinet had endorsed the developing portfolio business plans and corporate financial stewardship plans for early consultation with the Overview & Scrutiny Committees. Two meetings, with Corporate Resources on 16 June 2016 and Social & Health Care on 27 June 2016, had already been held.

In continuing the presentation, the Chief Officer (Organisational Change 1) commented on the efficiencies summary for 2017/18 within the portfolio which amounted to Facilities Management £0.126m; Property £0.382m and Leisure and Libraries £0.435m, a total of £0.943m. This was to be achieved by the realisation of a number of efficiency targets, such as the Alternative Delivery Models (ADM) for Facilities Management, Leisure and Libraries. The Chief Executive commented on the resilience statements which had been provided for each service. He emphasised to the Committee

that going beyond the current proposals would mean unacceptable reductions in service.

An extensive discussion followed during which Members raised a number of concerns and queries which were dealt with as appropriate by the Cabinet Members present or by the Officers. The Chairman welcomed the opportunity for the Overview & Scrutiny Committees to be involved in “early stage” proposals and the questions which Members asked.

Councillor Robin Guest, echoing the “underfunded Council” arguments which had been put forward on a number of occasions, commented that Flintshire was a county of small towns and communities, unlike its nearer neighbour where services were concentrated in one large town. Because of the replication of Council facilities and services across a number of localities, there was a danger that attempts to continue a uniform provision would impair the service for all. He was concerned that the current model would not succeed indefinitely, which would have a major impact on the area.

Councillor Guest went on to urge colleagues not to overlook the repercussions of concentrating savings on back office rather than frontline functions because all of those ‘back office’ services were provided to sustain the whole, and reduction in them has repercussions across the organisation. He went on to conclude that the savings were based on the Alternative Delivery Models and Community Asset Transfers (CATs) and sought assurance that these projects would continue to be both robust and timely.

The Chief Executive provided reassurance as far as he was able on service-budget planning. He suggested that progress reports on CATs and ADMs should be brought back to the Committee in due course. Councillor Kevin Jones, as the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Leisure, commented on the successful transfer of Connah’s Quay swimming pool to Cambrian Aquatics and the excellent prospects for a similar transfer of Holywell to a local group. He emphasised that there was a great deal of ‘buy in’ from employees who were very positive about being able to have the freedom to generate income and adjusting to public needs. He was confident that this could be achieved. The aim was to retain as many localised leisure services for Flintshire as possible.

Councillor Bernie Attridge, the Deputy Leader, welcomed the comments made by Councillor Guest and explained that the reason for early consultation with Overview & Scrutiny was to enable meaningful public and stake holder consultation and engagement to be carried out during the Autumn.

Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer asked for clarification about the reference to school meals and sought assurance that this had been properly thought through. He also asked whether there were alternative proposals – effectively a “plan b”. In response, the Chief Executive explained that the exercise had been to separate the planned initiatives from possible future choices which would take services below their resilience threshold. If the Authority were to make further cuts beyond the portfolio business plans, there would be serious consequences, which had been identified within the

presentation slides. He reiterated that it was necessary to appraise Members of the actual position.

RESOLVED

That the Committee supports and endorses the proposals for the Organisational Change Business Plan cost pressures and proposed efficiencies for 2017/18.

6. PLANS FOR PROPERTY, ESTATES AND FACILITIES MANAGEMENT SERVICES

The Chief Executive gave a progress report for Organisational Change 2 which had within its Portfolio Facilities Management; Design and Property Maintenance and Valuation and Estates Services. He explained that progress with development of the Alternative Delivery Model for Facilities Management continued to make good progress, with the Transition Board formed, a Risk Register developed and with initial staff consultation events scheduled for the following month. The ADM for Facilities Management was an independent trading company with a TECKAL exception to trade. The advantage to this was that the Company which would be wholly owned by the Council would not be confined to work for the Authority, but could seek work in the commercial sector.

Councillor Mike Reece made a reference to the Asset Transfer of Bagillt Library for which the Chief Executive thanked him, indicating that this would be pursued outside the meeting. Councillor Clive Carver asked for details of the “intelligent client” approach and went on to seek an update on the Council owned St David’s Park offices which were currently leased to Unilever. The Chief Executive gave an update.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Committee note the progress of Service Development within Property Services and Facilities Management; and
- (b) That further reports back be made in due course.

7. PLANS FOR LEISURE, LIBRARIES , AND CULTURAL SERVICES

The Chief Officer (Organisational Change 1), gave an overview and then suggested that the Principal Librarian and Principal Leisure Services Manager should provide an update for their respective areas. The Principal Librarian commented on the development of a sustainable Libraries infrastructure for the future and work on the designated hub libraries in Mold, Holywell, Connah’s Quay, Deeside Leisure Centre, Buckley and Flint. For rural libraries the feasibility of Community Asset Transfers was being assessed.

The Principal Leisure Services Manager detailed the Alternative Delivery Model proposals for Leisure, which included the transfer of Connah’s

Quay Swimming Pool and Holywell Leisure Centre with the remainder of the facilities initially being part of the proposed ADM.

The Chief Officer (Organisational Change 1) reported that the theatre was in the second year of making efficiencies which totalled £0.350m through cost reductions, reductions in the number of performances and increases in income. A sustainable staffing structure with key appointments to Artistic Director and Executive Director had now been put in place. Within the Museums and Archives Services, it was recognised that these were small scale and were being viewed in terms of regional collaboration. He emphasised that Flintshire's Archive Service was recognised as a leader in North Wales and had achieved a formal accreditation which other authorities had not yet reached.

Members went on to ask a number of questions about the approach to digitisation within the Archives service and whether Town & Community Councils had agreed to support the Connah's Quay pool Cambrian Aquatics initiative. Councillor Robin Guest referred to the statistics which had been included within the efficiency statement which showed that library membership in Flintshire had increased by 5% over 2 years at a time when overall UK library membership had fallen by 4%. In addition 99% of library users had rated Flintshire libraries as either good or very good. Both sets of statistics were extremely pleasing

In responding to Members' questions, the officers thanked Councillor Guest for his comments and explained that whilst there was no further news about Town & Community Council contributions for Connah's Quay Swimming Pool, Sports Wales had made a grant in the region of £20 – 25k and commented on the feasibility of Big Lottery Fund funding which would provide capital investment.

Councillor Chris Dolphin commented that the smaller community councils were currently addressing the issue of the transfer of play areas in their respective areas and that once this had been worked through, they may then be able to consider supporting their local swimming pool and leisure centres financially.

RESOLVED

That the Committee endorses the progress of service development within the Libraries Leisure and Cultural Services.

8. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Member Engagement Manager introduced the Forward Work Programme and drew attention to the item on ADM Social Care which was to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee on 28 July 2016.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved; and

- (b) That the Member Engagement Manager, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair be authorised to vary the work programme between meetings.

9. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 10.00am and ended at 11.30pm)

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Chairman