

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE O &S COMMITTEE

30 OCTOBER 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Room, County Hall on Tuesday 30th October 2018

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Dunbar (Chairman)

Councillors: Jean Davies, Ron Davies, Rosetta Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, George Hardcastle, Mike Reece, Paul Shotton and David Wisinger

SUBSTITUTES: Councillor Patrick Heesom (for Ray Hughes) and Mike Lowe (for Ted Palmer)

APOLOGY: Councillors: Adele Davies Cooke and Dave Cox

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Christine Jones

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Bernie Attridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing; Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development; Chief Officer (Housing and Assets); Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy), Finance Manager Community Services, Accountant (Corporate Finance)

IN ATTENDANCE: Community & Education Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Support Officer

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (including whipping declarations)

There were no declarations of interests

32. BUDGET 2019/20 STAGE 2 PROPOSALS

Prior to the introduction of the report, Councillor Patrick Heesom sought clarification on the services now included within the portfolio and asked where questions around funding for Communities for Work and Warmer Homes should be directed. The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) clarified that the service areas within the previous Chief Officers portfolio had been disaggregated following her departure. The Contact Centre and Flintshire Connects service areas now sat within the Chief Officer (Governance) portfolio and would be reported to both this Committee and the Organisational Change Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) explained that the service areas under Economy and Regeneration sat within his portfolio and said that he could provide Councillor Heesom with a breakdown of how funding for Communities to Work and Warmer Homes was distributed across the County, following the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development reported that Communities First did not exist and was now part of Communities for Work which was funded through the Welsh Government (WG). The work programme for this would be reported to a future committee meeting.

The Chief Officer (Housing & Assets) and Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) introduced a report to advise of the financial pressures and efficiencies identified for the Housing portfolio and parts of the Planning, Environment & Economy portfolio for the 2019/20 budget. The Committee was advised that that Member workshops were held on 13 and 23 July and 18 September, 2018 where information on the latest local financial forecast in the context of the overall national position was provided. An additional workshop specifically for the Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee was held on 12 October, 2018 which provided Members with the opportunity to understand the portfolio budgets in more detail and consider the risk and resilience levels of each service area.

The Chief Officer (Housing & Assets) and Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) provided a detailed explanation around the portfolio pressures and investments, together with the portfolio business planning efficiencies as outlined within the report.

The Finance Manager Community Services provided an update on the provisional settlement from Welsh Government (WG) which had increased the budget gap by £1.9m. Officers were currently working through the detail of the National Government budget announcements and what additional funding could be received by WG as a result.

Councillor Heesom asked if the current total budgets of service areas could be shown next to the proposed efficiencies so that Members could make a judgement on whether the proposed efficiencies were acceptable. He raised concerns around the unachievable efficiency within the Contact Centre and the lack of provision for residents to visit these centres to the west of Flintshire. He also raised concerns around the high increase in Council Tax that would be needed to meet the funding shortfall.

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) and Chief Officer (Housing & Assets) provided information on the current total budgets for each of the service areas with proposed efficiencies. Method statements and resilience statements supporting the 2019/20 budget pressures and efficiency proposals had been produced as background documents with copies available on request. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing clarified that the Contact Centre service outlined within the report referred to the call centres currently based in Alltami Depot, Flint Offices and County Hall and the proposal to merge them into one Contact Centre. For further clarification this was not reference to Flintshire Connects as Councillor Heesom had suggested.

A number of comments were made around the small number of efficiencies left available and the hope that additional funding would be forthcoming from WG following the announcement of the National Government budget. Members commended Officers for the work they had undertaken during the financial challenges over recent years.

Councillor Patrick Heesom acknowledged the financial challenges being faced by the Council but said that more information was needed for Members. He welcomed the previous comments from the Cabinet Member for Economic Development around further information on Warmer Homes and Communities First being submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Chief Officer outlined the forthcoming National Budget timetable and Local Budget timetable, as detailed in the report. The final budget would be presented to Cabinet and Council on 19 February, 2019.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the portfolio efficiency options, as shown in the report.

33. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the Press and public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 3.00 pm and ended at 3.36 pm)

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Chair