

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
16 SEPTEMBER 2021

Minutes of the remote attendance meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Thursday, 16 September 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Clive Carver (Chairman)

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Sean Bibby, Geoff Collett, Mared Eastwood, Patrick Heesom, Richard Jones, Richard Lloyd, Kevin Rush and Andy Williams

APOLOGIES: Councillors Paul Shotton and Arnold Woolley

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Ian Roberts - Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Billy Mullin - Deputy Leader (Governance) and Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Assets, Councillor Christine Jones - Deputy Leader (Partnerships) and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Councillor Paul Johnson - Cabinet Member for Finance, Social Value & Procurement, Councillor Dave Hughes - Cabinet Member for Housing, Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Housing and Assets), Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), Corporate Finance Manager, Senior Manager for Human Resources & Organisational Development, Enterprise & Regeneration Manager, Strategic Finance Managers and Finance Manager

For minute number 26

Community and Business Protection Manager (Siân Jones), Community Safety Team Leader (Richard Powell) and Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Co-ordinator (Rhiannon Edwards)

Gwilym Bury and Matt Edwards from Audit Wales

IN ATTENDANCE: Head of Democratic Services, Democratic Services Team Leader and Democratic Services Officer

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

24. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 8 and 29 July 2021 were approved, as moved and seconded by Councillors Haydn Bateman and Geoff Collett.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

25. VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

There was a change in the order of business to enable the contributors to present their reports first.

26. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

The Chief Executive introduced the annual overview of activities and progress of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) over the past 12 months, which was a statutory requirement. As reported previously, governance arrangements for the CSP had been delegated to the Public Service Board and its duties discharged through the 'People are Safe' Board whose work was underpinned by the local delivery plan.

A joint presentation by the Community and Business Protection Manager (Siân Jones), Community Safety Team Leader (Richard Powell) and Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Co-ordinator (Rhiannon Edwards) covered the following:

- Context
- Community Safety Delivery Groups
- Local Priorities for 2021/22:
 - Priority 1 - Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
 - Priority 2 - Protecting Vulnerable Adults
 - Priority 3 - Protecting Vulnerable Young People
 - Priority 4 - Protecting our Communities
- Crime & Disorder in Flintshire - current position (compared with previous year)
- Regional Partnerships

In welcoming the report and presentation, Councillor Heesom moved the recommendation and was seconded by Councillor Haydn Bateman. The presentation slides would be shared with Members following the meeting.

The Chairman thanked the contributors for their attendance.

RESOLVED:

That the Community Safety Partnership Annual Report be noted and supported.

27. NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD - ANNUAL REPORT

The Chief Executive introduced the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) Portfolio Management Office Annual Report for 2020-21. The requirement to report annually on progress formed part of the Final Deal Agreement for the North Wales Growth Deal signed in December 2020.

The Enterprise & Regeneration Manager gave a presentation summarising the work of the Programme Office over the past 12 months covering:

- The Growth Deal Portfolio
- The Programmes
 - Digital
 - Land and Property
 - Low Carbon Energy
 - Innovation in High Value Manufacturing
 - Agri-food and Tourism
- Annual Report

The recommendation was moved and seconded by Councillors Geoff Collett and Patrick Heesom.

RESOLVED:

That the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Portfolio Management Office Annual Report for 2020-21 be noted.

28. MERSEY DEE ALLIANCE (MDA) ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE

The Enterprise & Regeneration Manager presented a report on the background and content of the Mersey Dee Alliance (MDA) Economic Stimulus Package which represented a bid to UK and Welsh Governments for funding to deliver on five investment priorities for the sub-region. The next steps were to refine and prioritise the investment projects within the package prior to engaging with both Governments. Significant work had been carried out to ensure that the package and the Agreement for the North Wales Economic Ambition Board complemented each other without duplication.

Councillor Patrick Heesom asked that future reports include more information on the implications of the 'HyNet' scheme and carbon discharge management for Flintshire. He moved the recommendation and was seconded by Councillor Geoff Collett.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the content of the Fiscal Stimulus Package and supports its refinement and submission to the relevant Governments.

29. BUDGET 2022/23 - STAGE 2 INCLUDING OVERVIEW

The Chief Executive introduced a report on the overall budget process for the 2022/23 financial year on which the Committee had oversight. Following a robust baseline of cost pressures established at Stage 1 of developing the budget in July, Overview & Scrutiny Committees were now invited to rigorously review pressures making up the budget requirement in their respective portfolios. At the start of this Stage 2 process, a separate report on the agenda set out the cost pressures within Corporate Services and Corporate Financing under the remit of the Committee.

The Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Corporate Finance Manager and Senior Manager for Human Resources & Organisational Development gave a detailed presentation covering:

- Purpose and Background
- Summary Totals of Cost Pressures
- Corporate Cost Pressures
 - Governance
 - People and Resources
 - Corporate Finance
- Strategic Solutions
- Update on Efficiencies
- Budget Timelines

Copies of the presentation slides would be shared with Members following the meeting.

Whilst the summary of pressures projected a minimum additional budget requirement of £16.749m of revenue resources in 2022/23, this was subject to change pending the outcome of national resolution pressures currently under negotiation. At this stage, it was projected that £1.250m of efficiencies could be achieved. The strategic funding solutions to reach a legal and balanced budget were mainly dependent on an annual uplift in Revenue Support Grant.

In response to a question from Councillor Haydn Bateman, further information was shared on the benefits of increasing capacity in Occupational Health to meet demand and provide rapid access physiotherapy.

Councillor Ian Roberts said that a collective approach was underway on national funding requirements from Welsh Government.

Councillor Paul Johnson spoke about the changing national position which contributed to the challenges.

The recommendations were moved and seconded by Councillors Patrick Heesom and Haydn Bateman.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- (a) Notes the report and supports the approach for the individual Overview & Scrutiny Committees;
- (b) Accepts the Corporate Services and Corporate Financing cost pressures; and
- (c) Advises that there are no areas of cost efficiencies which it believes should be explored further.

30. FLINTSHIRE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT FINAL REPORT

The Chief Executive introduced the report on the findings of the Council's Financial Sustainability Assessment by Audit Wales following a review of all Councils across Wales. A formal response was not required as the report presented a fair reflection of the Council's financial position with no new issues to report. The item was received for information in line with the protocol for regulatory reports.

In presenting the findings, the Corporate Finance Manager welcomed recognition of the Council's 'clear, well communicated financial strategy', past performance on the achievement of efficiencies and spend compared to budget. He highlighted comments on the Welsh Government Hardship Fund to help recover lost income and the Council's use of reserves.

Matt Edwards said that the report concluded the second phase of financial sustainability assessment work by Audit Wales during 2020-21 following the baseline assessment of the initial impact of the pandemic in 2019-20.

Gwilym Bury advised that all national reports were being published on the Audit Wales website, with a national summary report to be published later in the year.

It was noted that the Council's projected funding gap for 2022-23 reflected the position at the time of the review and had since increased as reported earlier in the meeting.

Councillor Geoff Collett thanked the officers for the positive report as did Councillor Paul Johnson who was pleased to note there were no new recommendations for the Council.

The recommendation was moved and seconded by Councillors Andy Williams and Kevin Rush.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the report and confirms that there are no issues to be brought to the attention of Cabinet.

31. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2021/22 (MONTH 4) AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2021/22 (MONTH 4)

The Strategic Finance Manager and Finance Manager presented their reports on the 2021/22 Month 4 position for Revenue Budget Monitoring and Capital Programme Monitoring prior to consideration by Cabinet.

Revenue Budget Monitoring

The report took into account the latest position on claims made to the Welsh Government (WG) Hardship fund which had proved critical throughout the emergency period.

On the Council Fund, the projected year-end position - without new actions to reduce cost pressures and/or improve the financial return on efficiency planning and cost control - was an operating deficit of £0.739m (excluding the impact of the pay award to be met from reserves). This position would leave a contingency reserve balance of £5.057m at year-end. The reasons for this projected position were set out in the report and included significant variances in Children's Services, Out of County Placements and Streetscene & Transportation.

An update was given on the key financial risks (including an improved position on Council Tax collection rates), achievement of planned in-year efficiencies, and the position on reserves and balances as detailed in the report. On un-earmarked reserves, it was reported that £2.1m of Covid-19 emergency funding currently remained following the allocation of £0.900m for ineligible Covid-19 related grant claims. Information was currently awaited on WG Social Care Recovery Funding which could offset some of the existing cost pressures within that portfolio. An update would be provided in the report for Month 5.

On the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), a projected overspend of £0.495m would leave a closing un-earmarked balance of £3.978m, which was above the recommended guidelines on spend.

In response to questions from Councillor Haydn Bateman, officers provided clarification on Income Loss funding criteria for car park charges.

Councillor Geoff Collett requested a further breakdown of the £1.008m overspend in Children's Services and an understanding on whether those pressures were expected to continue. The Finance Manager agreed to liaise with colleagues in Social Care to provide a response to the Committee.

The recommendation was moved and seconded by Councillors Geoff Collett and Haydn Bateman.

Capital Programme

The revised programme for 2021/22 was £77.136m taking into account all carry forward sums, changes during the period and savings transferred back to the programme. Changes during the last quarter were mainly due to the introduction of grant funding streams across portfolios.

The projected outturn position was £72.837m resulting in an underspend of £4.299m on the Council Fund which was recommended to be carried forward for the completion of schemes in 2022/23. Additional allocations and savings identified in this quarter were also summarised along with the overall projected surplus funding position of £2.795m for the three year programme prior to the

realisation of additional capital receipts or funding sources identified during the year.

The recommendation was moved and seconded by Councillors Haydn Bateman and Andy Williams.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That having considered the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2021/22 (Month 4) report, the Committee confirms that there are no specific issues to be raised with Cabinet; and
- (b) That having considered the Capital Programme Monitoring 2021/22 (Month 4) report, the Committee confirms that there are no specific issues to be raised with Cabinet.

32. EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE QUARTERLY UPDATE

The Senior Manager, Human Resources and Organisational Development presented a report on workforce statistics and their analysis for the first quarter of 2021/22.

In summarising the key areas, the Senior Manager drew attention to the impact of changing employment trends as a result of the pandemic which were being closely monitored. The update also include plans to refresh the appraisal model for 2022 to give more focus to values and well-being and the recruitment campaign underway in Streetscene & Transportation which was expected to reduce agency worker spend in the next quarter. Information was also shared on the successful launch of the apprenticeship programme for 2021/22.

The recommendation was moved and seconded by Councillors Haydn Bateman and Geoff Collett.

RESOLVED:

That the Workforce Information Report for Quarter 1 of 2021/22 to 30 June 2021 be noted.

33. ACTION TRACKING

The Head of Democratic Services presented the update report on progress with actions arising from previous meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the progress which has been made.

34. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Democratic Services presented the current forward work programme for consideration and noted the following changes:

- Feedback from Overview & Scrutiny Committees on the Budget 2022/23 - October meeting
- Capital Programme - November meeting

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved, as varied at the meeting; and
- (b) That the Head of Democratic Services, in consultation with the Committee Chairman, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

35. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10am and ended at 12 noon)

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Chairman