

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE RESOURCES & IMPROVEMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2015 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor M Reeves (Chair)

Councillors:

G Davies
GW Davies MBE
E Dodd
CA Green
DM Hughes
EM Hughes
CL Jones
RC Jones
DRW Lewis
JR McCarthy
CL Reeves
HM Williams

Officers:

Mark Evans	Group Manager Built Environment
Randal Hemingway	Head of Finance & ICT
Ness Young	Corporate Director - Resources & Section 151 Officer

139. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Member:

Councillor J C Spanswick - Work Commitments

140. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

141. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 15th December 2014 were approved as a true and accurate record.

142. BUILDING REFURBISHMENT AND CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN MANAGEMENT

The Corporate Director – Resources presented a report to provide Members with an update on changes within the Built Environment Service, following a review

undertaken during 2014 to determine whether the service was viable and provided value for money. The model of the service was examined, including the processes in managing the architects and engineering departments, as well as the design and construction process which resulted in a number of areas for improvement being found, confirming concerns that the service could be more competitive compared to external organisations and that better value for money could be achieved. The three key areas for improvement were described in detail under paragraph 4 of the report, and it was the intention over the next few months to establish whether further reductions could be made. The next stage was to develop a methodology year on year and to consider the building maintenance work carried out within schools to introduce full cost recovery. She informed Members that there may be potential in the future to sell the Built Environment services to other local authorities by putting bids forward for architectural and construction work.

One Member asked how productive the service was compared to external providers, and whether the on costs were included in the revised hourly rate.

The Group Manager Built Environment confirmed that prices did compare favourably measured against external providers and would satisfy the Contract Procedure Rules as well as the European criteria. He confirmed that the service was now by far the most cost effective and prices did incorporate related internal costs.

Another Member asked whether the service would be considering apprenticeships.

The Corporate Director – Resources advised that at the moment the focus was on restructuring the service, which currently did not have provision for apprenticeships. She explained that it was difficult in the current economic climate, as maximum productivity was required in order to create the most cost effective service. However, if the service successfully grew, there would be a requirement for additional capacity and skill. She assured Members that her Directorate coordinated apprenticeships across the Authority, and was focus on trying, within the current financial constraints, to create opportunities for apprenticeships. The Cabinet Member – Resources added that developers involved in the School Modernisation Programme are encouraged to take on apprenticeships and also local labour.

The Chairperson enquired about Service Level Agreements with the schools in the Borough.

The Corporate Director – Resources advised that the issue would need to be discussed as it applied to all areas in the Resources Directorate where a service is provided to schools, with some elements looking at a full cost recovery, and consideration would be given to the amount schools were expected to contribute from the Individual School Budget. She explained that schools had their own financial pressures, and whilst they still had protection in 2015/16, they were required to meet pay awards themselves. She added that the process needed to be studied carefully to balance the pressures on schools with the principle of full cost recovery in the future.

Finally, she reported that they were looking at the way some local authorities in England present their support services to schools using as a brochure of available services which are identified on a unit cost basis. The aim was to

develop a similar model so the support service offer to schools becomes more transparent in terms of value for money and full cost recovery.

Conclusions:

The Committee noted the report and update on the changes within the Built Environment Service.

- The Committee commended the work of the service in carrying out a full service review and in effectively implementing improvements and changes identified following the review.
- Members noted the potential for sharing the revised model for service provision with other local authorities in future.
- Members expressed their thanks to Officers for the frank and open nature of the report, the clear and accessible format used in the Appendices and the presentation to the Committee.

The Committee requested that this item remain on the Forward Work Plan

143. BUDGET MONITORING - QUARTER 3 2014-15

The Corporate Director – Resources presented a report to update Members on the Council’s financial position as at the 31st December 2014. In February Council approved a net revenue budget of £255.131m for 2014-15, with a revised capital programme for the year of £31.350m.

She took Members through the report and appendices and explained that the projected underspend of £297k in December 2014, described under Table 1 in the report, was the result of an underspend in the Legal and Regulatory Services Directorate; however this sum masked a number of budget pressures within the Children and Wellbeing Directorates. The outturn assumes full implementation of the current budget reduction requirements, and Directorates are bridging any shortfalls through other measures, such as freezing any vacancies.

The Corporate Director - Resources explained that at the end of the financial year, consideration would then be given to whether any underspends or overspends could be carried forward to the following year. She informed Members that she had already received one request from one Directorate for underspend to be carried forward to next year on a one-off basis. Similarly, it would be ascertained whether overspends in any of the Directorates had been the result of budget mismanagement, or whether it was something which could not have been prevented.

One Member asked how confident they were that the Looked After Children (LAC) strategy would deliver as planned and that overspend was not expected.

The Corporate Director – Resources explained that it was hoped to reduce some of the LAC through adoptions; however she stressed it could not be guaranteed as the budget was demand led and therefore volatile (e.g. a family could move into the Borough next year and the children from that family need to be taken into the care system). Although the budget was planned for around 36 LAC, the situation would be monitored closely.

Another Member referred to the projected overspend in older people residential care as a result of sickness amongst staff within the Authority’s homes.

The Corporate Director – Resources explained that sickness absence was carefully scrutinised through the Corporate Management Board (CMB) and Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) processes, and is discussed at every Directorate Management Team meeting, as well as one to one meetings. She advised that there were areas for concern within Adult Social Care and plans were in action to establish why those problems were recurring. Also the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) had been commissioned to identify at a national level the lessons learned from other local authorities and compare data like for like.

Conclusions:

The Committee noted the report and update on the Council's financial position at December 2014.

Further information requested

- Members requested that further detail be provided regarding actual savings made on staffing costs.
- Members requested further information on underspend for Catering Services and what the basis was for the expectation that sickness levels would be lower than they had turned out to be.
- Members requested further information on whether the mandatory requirement for staff in some service areas to stay away from work for 48 hours is taken into account when calculating staff sickness figures and how this impacts on the reporting of information on staff sickness levels.
- Due to the significant cost to the Authority, Members requested information on the number of convictions for fly tipping; whether £160k spent on waste collection from fly tipping last year had been recouped and on deterrents used to address the issue – the Assistant Chief Executive – Legal and Regulatory Services and Public Protection to be contacted.
- Members requested further information on the new indicator which monitors improvement in damage costs to Council owned vehicles and how performance against the indicator is measured.

144. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report which detailed the topics to be considered at the meeting due to be held on the 23rd April 2015 and to determine the items to be considered and the invitees due to attend in respect of the following meeting, the date of which would be agreed at the Annual Meeting of Council in May.

The Scrutiny Officer informed Members that having sought advice on those invitees who would be asked to attend the meeting in April under the item 'Bridgend Change Programme' will be Councillor C E Smith and the Chief Executive.

Conclusion: The Committee noted the topics due to be considered at the meeting scheduled for the 23rd April and determined the invitees who would be attending.

The meeting closed at 3.35 pm