

CORPORATE RESOURCES & IMPROVEMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - TUESDAY, 17 JANUARY 2017

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE RESOURCES & IMPROVEMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON TUESDAY, 17 JANUARY 2017 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor M Reeves – Chairperson

G Davies
JC Spanswick

CA Green
G Thomas

DRW Lewis

JR McCarthy

Apologies for Absence

D Patel, RL Penhale-Thomas and RE Young

Officers:

Mark Galvin
Rachel Keepins
Mark Shephard

Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Corporate Director - Communities

222. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

223. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Resources & Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee dated 7 December 2016, be approved as a true and accurate record.

224. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services submitted a report, that presented the items due to be considered at the Committee's meeting to be held on 4 February 2017, and sought confirmation of the information required for the subsequent scheduled meeting to be held on 15 March 2017. Finally, the report presented a further suggested potential item for prioritisation by the Committee.

The Scrutiny Officer suggested the following which differed slightly to that which was outlined in the report:

Date of Committee

Suggested items for consideration

8 February 2017
8 February 2017
15 March 2017
15 March 2017

Digital Transformation Programme
2016-17 Quarter 3 Financial Performance
Business Plan 2016/17
Community Asset Transfer of Land at Cosy Corner

The Scrutiny Officer further added that the item referred to in the report on 'Rationalising the Council's Estate including Depot Rationalisation', will be presented to a future Committee the date for which had yet to be established.

225. CORPORATE PLAN 2016-2020 - REVIEWED FOR 2017-18

The Chairperson welcomed the Invitees to the meeting, and the Chief Executive introduced the report, following which the Invitees responded to questions from Members.

The Chairperson referred to page 24 of the report, and noted that 1,819 citizens had responded to the Council's priorities and budget reductions as part of its 'Shaping Bridgend's Future' consultation. He added however, that approximately 50% of these respondents had been from those individuals that comprise the Citizen's Panel, and he was aware that a considerable number of these were older people. He felt therefore that future consultations should target the younger element of constituents.

A Member referring to the same page of the report and the penultimate bullet point asked what the statement 'the Council will focus diminishing resources on communities and individuals with the greatest need' meant to members of the public situate in the County Borough.

The Chief Executive stated that the bullet points at the bottom of page 24 and overleaf, were the Council's "Principles" in respect of its Corporate Plan. These had been identified following a series of workshops and had been developed to assist the organisation in meeting new challenges that lie ahead in the face of diminishing budgets. He added that in part this was an expression that if financial restraints become tighter in the future, then people who need specialist services over and above those that required universal provision would be prioritised.

A Member referred to page 25 of the report and a further Principle of the Council working as one (i.e. Council) and discouraging different parts of the organisation from developing multiple processes or unnecessarily different approaches. She felt members of the public did not think that the Council adopted this approach. She also felt that certain Departments whose work overlapped needed to work more cohesively.

The Chief Executive advised that there was some room for improvement in respect of clashes and duplication with regard to frontline systems that various Department's used, and that these could be aligned better in certain areas. There was however a good example of the Authority working as one Council with its back office staff, particularly in relation to efficiencies, economy, providing value for money and working for its communities.

The Leader added that Cabinet Members portfolio's had changed and become more cross-cutting and they were working with more than 1 Director (whose remits had also expanded) compared to previously, and this confirmed the more one Council approach that was being taken. He added that Customer Services also dealt with a number of different queries raised by the public rather than them having to be directed to different Directorates which again reflected a holistic approach.

A Member referred to the top bullet point on page 25 where it stated that the Council will encourage and develop capacity amongst the third sector to identify and respond to local needs. He acknowledged that whilst this had been addressed to a degree last year,

it had not been addressed in the budget proposals for the forthcoming year. This was especially the case in the Communities Directorate where further cuts were proposed which would have a direct affect upon public services.

The Leader confirmed that there had been progress made in services provided by the Communities Directorate, for example the re-development of the Rhiw car park and the provision of a shared cycle route. Some services were not being delivered in the same way as they had been previously, which was the case for all Directorates of the Council who have had to share the burden of savings under the MTFs. He felt that the Council needed to educate the public on the level of savings the local authority had had to make over the past few years and unfortunately those identified for the future under the current MTFs.

A Member noted from page 28 of the report that the percentage of children living in households where no one is working rose from 73.2% in 2014 to 19.4% in 2015, and this was considerably greater than the Wales average of 13.6%. She asked if steps were going to be taken to address this.

The Leader advised that this would be addressed as part of the priorities of the updated Corporate Plan as there was a need to effectively tackle child poverty and mitigate this through initiatives such as Children's free breakfast clubs.

The Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations added that the Bridges into Work Scheme was another good example of decreasing family poverty through encouraging people who were no longer employed for whatever reason, to once more secure employment. The City Deal would hopefully make way for increased opportunities for employment which would in turn ease the situation regarding child poverty.

The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help further added that data regarding the above point would also be examined to establish if child poverty was primarily in deprived areas or whether it affected all areas of the County Borough.

A Member referred to page 29 of the report and the proposal to work with schools to close the gap in educational attainment for pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are not, and improve learner outcomes for other vulnerable groups including looked after children and young carers, and asked Invitees to explain how they were going to achieve this.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support confirmed that there was a Strategic Review in place for schools that primarily covered four work streams. Firstly, there was the School Curriculum where schools in Bridgend were leading on this. Secondly, the leadership of schools was being examined in the face of an ageing profile of Head teachers and there weren't necessarily a ready-made pool of successors. There had been a successful case whereby one Head teacher had been covering two schools at the same time due to the fact that the one he had been seconded to was under performing. Thirdly, there was continued work ongoing under the Council's School Modernisation Programme where a strategic approach was being taken to spending money allocated to this, including match-funding. Lastly, the Corporate Director – Education and Family Support advised that there was the issue of improving Post 16 provision which was proving difficult in the face of reduced Welsh Government funding. There was still a need however, for the Authority to give its learners a choice of options. She further explained that the work streams were being programme managed and that a report in respect of the above was due to be considered by Cabinet around next June or July; to present the findings and any recommendations of the Strategic Review. There was a need to close any 'gap' in all learner outcomes and particularly in areas such as

Key Stage 2. There was some positive news however explained the Corporate Director – Education and Family Support, in that the gap in educational attainment had not increased. This topic would also be the subject of a future report from the School's Central South Consortium to the Children & Young People O&SC.

A Member referred to page 28 of the report and the point that employment rates for people aged between 16 and 64 years have continued to rise. She asked if a reason for this was due to the fact that women born after 1952 needed to continue to be in employment longer.

The Chief Executive made the point that the above was not necessarily the case in all areas of the County Borough as was reflected in this part of the report. He added that this rise did not as far as he was aware, result from the point the Member had made, nor from any reason relating to the demographics of the County Borough.

The Leader added that there were a considerable number of deprived areas and poverty within the County Borough and even in families who were employed. This in a lot of cases applied to only one parent working, and often for the minimum wage.

A Member referred to page 29 of the report and the aim identified to create conditions for growth and enterprise through developing a Low Carbon Transition Plan as part of the Smart System and Heat Programme with a view to identifying and developing heat projects within Bridgend County Borough. She noted that this had been an aim of the Plan for a number of years and therefore asked Invitees what steps had been made in terms of progress on this.

The Corporate Director – Communities advised that progress was being made in with regard to developing improved options with regard to the above, with work ongoing on schemes in Bridgend and Caerau. Further work would also be progressed as part of the City Deal he added.

The Member felt that the public should be made aware of these and any similar projects as she had not been aware of them and therefore it was unlikely that the public would either.

The Leader advised that he would ensure that a media release goes out to the public about these types of projects. He added that the closing of Sunnyside offices and sale of the land this occupied saved the Council further costs as buildings cost money in terms of utility bills and other running costs. The Council were also being energy efficient through improvements to the main Civic Offices through providing new windows and roof which would save the Authority money in the long term.

A Member referred to page 30 of the report and felt that the Council should be far more proactive when it came to introducing apprenticeships and traineeships as the target for 2017-17 was only 4, as was the target also for 2017-18.

The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration concurred with this and advised that he would be attempting to make strides to increase this number in the next financial year if resources permitted the Authority to do this.

The Group Manager – Corporate Performance, Partnerships and Transformation added that whilst this section of the report made reference to 4 apprenticeships/traineeships, this figure had now increased to between 10 and 12, and this topic would be the subject of further consideration by Cabinet/CMB as work in progress after being further considered by the Council's Project Management Board (PMB).

The Cabinet Member – Communities added that it was important that the Council, in order to plan for the future, encouraged and increased its number of apprentices and trainees, particular in areas such as Information Technology and not just for younger employees either.

The Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations advised that the likes of apprentice roles could look to be increased through the Shared Services Agreement, and should include where appropriate looked after children.

The Deputy Leader further added that he had regular meetings with the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development and he confirmed that as of September 2016 the Council had 11 apprentices/trainees in a number of different areas of the Council. This had been a similar picture going back as far as 2010. He pointed out that the number referred to in the report only related to external Contractors and not the Council as a whole.

A Member also referring to page 30 of the report and the percentage of Year 11 leavers from schools in the Authority identified as not being in education, employment or training in the Careers Wales Annual

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support advised that in 2012 following an inspection by Estyn, BCBC's NEET's was one of the highest in Wales. Steps had been taken to address this and a reduction of NEET's by 8% was achieved last year, whilst the figure for this year would be available soon and would certainly be reduced from the total of 60 (3.6%) which was the actual figure in 2014-15. She added that there were now Youth Workers in schools that were assisting to overall reduce figures further in order to ensure that pupils do not leave school with little or no qualifications.

A Member referred to page 31 and where reference was made to the number of visitors to town centres (footfall for Bridgend and Porthcawl). He queried why this information did not also include Maesteg. He also questioned the figure of 100,000 visiting Bridgend during the course of a week, which he felt may be an aspirational figure.

The Corporate Director – Communities advised that the above figure was derived from camera's positioned on the periphery of the two town centres mentioned and as there was no such camera situate in Maesteg, there was no similar data available for this particular town. He anticipated that the above total would increase as soon as the ongoing disruption in Bridgend due to new developments such as the Rhiw development being constructed was concluded. To a lesser degree this would also apply to Porthcawl town he added.

A Member referring to the same page of the report advised that for the targets in respect of both 2016-17 and 2017-18, the percentage of working age population that is in employment showed as an increase, but did not specify a number or percentage?

The Leader confirmed that he would ensure that this is changed as requested by the Member, as well as also giving an explanation for any increase (or decrease), which would largely be based on factors external to the Council.

A Member referred to page 34 of the report, and noted that the target for 2017-18 ie 65%, in respect of the percentage of people who are satisfied with the care and support they receive and asked if this could be set higher.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing advised that this was a newly introduced performance indicator set under the new Social Services and Wellbeing Act, and as there was no baseline for this, it had been set as this figure so as not to be over aspirational.

The Leader added that the Authority needed to obtain a better assessment and feedback in the future in relation to who was receiving care and support services in respect of both the young and the elderly.

A Member referred to page 39 of the report and the top of this page which stated that the percentage of budget reductions achieved would be fully realised in both 2016-17 and 2017-18. He asked if this was actually achievable.

The Head of Finance and S151 Officer confirmed that some of the savings set under the RAG status for 2016-17 would not be fully made in certain areas and therefore, Directorates would have to make these savings in 2017-18 on top of the savings they would be required to make in that particular year also.

A Member referred to page 40 of the report and hoped that sickness absence within the Authority would be adequately targeted in the coming years so as to reduce the current average number of days each employee of the Council was absent due to illness.

The Leader advised that one of the Chief Executive's goals as part of his appraisal was to look at ways to drive down sickness absence in the Authority.

The Deputy Leader added, that sickness levels in 2006 were 14 working days per employee, and the Wales average in 2015-16 was 9.9 days. The Authority were therefore targeting a reduction in this over the next 2 years.

Corporate Plan 2016-2020 – Reviewed for 2017-18

1. Following their consideration of the reviewed Corporate Plan, the Committee made the following suggested amendments:
2. Under Priority One, where it states that the percentage of children living in households where no one is working has risen, there needs to be an additional separate point explaining what we as an Authority are doing to reduce this, e.g. the work under Child Poverty, Bridges into Work etc.
3. Progress needs to be included in the Corporate Plan regarding the Low Carbon Transition Plan and the work that has been undertaken in this area.
4. Clarification needs to be provided within the report in relation to Apprentices; firstly in relation to those that are quoted that relate to external apprentices and also further information added to detail the Authority's own internal Apprentices and Traineeships.
5. Given the fact that we have a number of years of actual figures to compare with, the Committee questioned whether there should be a more challenging target for the 'percentage of working age population that is in employment', in place of the current target which states 'increase'.
6. Where targets have stayed the same for the forthcoming year, there be some form of explanation provided to indicate why performance is expected to remain stagnant.

7. For the Measure relating to the educational attainment gap for 'pupils 15+ entitled to free school meals and those who are not', to include an explanation as to the changing performance and targets.
8. Under Priority Two, the new indicator for 'The percentage of people who are satisfied with the care and support they received' requires more definition in order to establish customer satisfaction due to the fact that this incorporates children and adult care, from which the response could potentially be very different.
9. In relation to the measure for the number of placements for LAC, Members proposed that if possible placements should not include the hospital for new born babies as this can affect the PI significantly and can potentially lead to the PI being misinterpreted.

Further Comments

10. The Committee requested that the Authority improve publicity over the district heating system in the Upper Lynfi valley as promotion of the successes of the Low Carbon Transition Plan.
11. The Committee requested that the Authority raise the profile publicly of both internal and external Apprentices to highlight success stories and try and encourage more Apprenticeship schemes.

Additional Information

The Committee requested that they received information as to where there are increases in households with children where no one is working to determine if there are pockets or areas of greatest need.

Members requested that they receive the latest NEETs figure when it becomes available.

226. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2017-18 TO 2020-21 AND DRAFT BUDGET CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Scrutiny Officer on behalf of the Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services submitted a report, in order to present the Committee with the findings of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) attached at Appendix A to the report. Members were also provided with the responses from all the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in relation to Cabinet's draft budget proposals, attached at Appendix B to the report.

The Chairperson then referred to the recommendations outlined in the report, that had been submitted by BREP, following each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees considering the individual Directorates budgets they aligned to.

Members then went through each of these recommendations together with the Invitees.

In response to a point raised by a Member in relation to a permanent switch off of street lighting in the County Borough (other than at road junctions etc.), the Leader confirmed that this would incorporate consideration of the provision of LED lighting, dimming of lighting, and a part switch in areas where this was considered appropriate. He added that this would comprise of a saving initially of £250k for 2018/19 and a further £250k in

2019/20. He assured Members that he would look into this budget cut in more detail, and ensure that a further report on the provision of street lighting is presented to the Community Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

As this concluded debate on the two main items the Chairperson thanked the Invitees for their attendance, following which they left the meeting.

Recommendations:

The Committee accepted the recommendations and comments from both the BREP and the five Scrutiny Committees and agreed to submit them to Cabinet subject to a series of amendments, as follows:-

Recommendation 12 – That this recommendation be expanded upon so as to explain that the 1% referred to equates to £869k in terms of the MTFS.

Recommendation 16 – That this recommendation be split to separate the topics of a street lighting ‘switch off’ and gully cleansing, and in terms of street lighting that the recommendation be expanded in terms of adding the words “ for the safety of the public/residents and to reduce incidents of accidents and crime and disorder.

227. **URGENT ITEMS**

None

The meeting closed at 5.00 pm