

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 29 MARCH 2018

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 29 MARCH 2018 AT 09:30

Present

Councillor CA Green – Chairperson

JPD Blundell	N Clarke	M Jones	B Sedgebeer
RMI Shaw	JC Spanswick	CA Webster	

Apologies for Absence

J Gebbie, T Giffard, RL Penhale-Thomas and T Thomas

Officers:

Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny

Invitees:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Councillor Huw David	Leader
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Andrew Jolley	Corporate Director Operational & Partnership Services
Gill Lewis	Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer
Councillor Dhanisha Patel	Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations
Mark Shephard	Corporate Director - Communities
Councillor Charles Smith	Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration
Councillor Philip White	Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help
Councillor Hywel Williams	Deputy Leader

46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members:-

Councillor T Thomas
Councillor J Gebbie
Councillor T Giffard
Councillor RE Young

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor C Webster declared a personal interest in Agenda item 6, in that her son had previously been in receipt of Social Care support.

48. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meetings of the Corporate O&SC 1 dated 14 December 2017 and 25 January 2018, be approved as a true and accurate record.

49. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (FWP) UPDATE

The Corporate Director Operational and Partnership Services submitted a report, which presented:-

- a) The items due to be considered at the Committee's meeting to be held on 30 April 2018, and seek confirmation of the information required for the subsequent scheduled meeting, the date for which has yet to be confirmed;
- b) A list of responses to comments, recommendations and requests for additional information from the previous meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- c) A list of potential Forward Work Programme items for formal prioritisation and allocation to each of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Feedback from the previous meetings of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee was attached at Appendix A to the report.

Attached to the report at Appendix B was the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme, which included the items scheduled for the next two meetings to be held today and on 30 April 2018.

Further attached at Appendix C to the report, was the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees FWP, which included the topics prioritised and agreed by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the next set of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees in Table 1 attached to the report, as well as a list of proposed future topics at Table 2.

The Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that additional items using the criteria form for future consideration on the Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes, could be identified by Members following the establishment of future dates of Scrutiny meetings following the Annual meeting of Council in May coming.

Members agreed to make some changes to the FWP's for the next two scheduled meetings of each of the four different Scrutiny Committees, and these were reflected in the decision below, together with the original items also being listed for the sake of completeness.

RESOLVED: That the following agenda items be considered for the next two rounds of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees 1,2 and 3:-

Corporate O&SC

- 18 June - Public Service Board update
2017-18 Quarter 4 Financial Performance
Social Services Annual Report
- 26 July - Collaborative working with the Police
Quarterly Performance report Quarter 4

Subject O&SC 1

24 May – Budgetary impacts of Parc Prison

4 July – School Standards

Subject O&SC 2

6 June – Home to School Transport

12 July – Safeguarding

Subject O&SC 3

12 June – Highways Services

10 July – TBC

50. DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLANS 2018-19

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report, the purpose of which, was to present the Council's draft Directorate Business Plans for 2018-2019 for the Committee to comment upon.

The Chairperson advised that the relevant Cabinet Member and Corporate Director would both be invited to the meeting, in turn, to respond to questions on their Business Plans. She added that the Corporate Director – Organisational and Partnership Services, would remain present throughout the meeting as he was deputising for the Chief Executive who was presently on annual leave.

The Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration advised Committee in response to a Members question, that the Council were lobbying Network Rail for electrified rail connections and were looking to design a scheme at Pencoed for the new bridge, together with a traffic management scheme. He added that the likes of the Welsh Government Transport Secretary and the appropriate Member of Parliament needed to discuss the scheme further, and give consent for a date for this being given the go ahead.

The Member responded by stating that the Cardiff Regional City Deal should also be lobbied for a contribution to the scheme, as it was scheduled to be completed by March 2019, and electrified trains may not be in operation within the location by this time.

The Corporate Director – Communities advised that there was a whole range of schemes that the Council had submitted to the City Deal initiative to be progressed, however, other participating authorities and organisations had put similar bids in for schemes in their areas also. Therefore, if the scheme at Pencoed railway station was added to these, it would firstly need to be assessed and prioritised against others that had been put forward for consideration.

The Chairperson referred to page 106 of the report, where it stated a Key Achievement, namely that the Council supported 722 local people develop skills so that they could take advantage of opportunities to succeed through our Communities for Work, Bridges into Work and BESP programmes. She felt that these groups should to some degree interlink, so that more information was shared between them, which would then in all probability equate to this number increasing and resulting in better outcomes for people who commit to these programmes.

The Corporate Director – Communities advised that Cabinet had considered a report this week entitled Employability Programmes, and the main thrust of this, was to establish a single team to create and join up programmes such as those detailed above. Funding from Welsh Government and European funding would be committed to these programmes also.

The Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration added that the Authority also needed to keep track on young people still in school as it had an obligation as the local Education Authority to track individuals up to the age of 25 (NEETS, etc), and this would assist in encouraging them to look at developing their skills which would assist them in subsequently obtaining employment opportunities.

A Member referred to page 124 of the report and Ref PAM020/20/22 and the percentage of A roads, B roads and C roads in overall poor condition.

The Corporate Director – Communities confirmed that with regard to the highway network, his Directorate was trying to maintain performance with a reduced budget, and that it was possible that he would need to look to secure extra budget from capital funding, as £2m was required a year for each of the next 10 years just to maintain highways at their present condition, as opposed to them being approved.

A Member referred to page 125 of the report and PAM031, the percentage of municipal waste collected by local authorities sent to landfill, and that the target for 2019/20 was the same as 2018/19 ie 30%. He asked if this was realistic given the uncertainty around MREC disposal/treatment options.

The Corporate Director – Communities advised that this target was being set as a conservative one, as the contract with MREC was both long term, ie for the next 12 years and unfavourable in respect of the terms of the Contract. The only way this performance indicator would probably improve he added, was through a change in the terms of the contract itself.

A Member referred to the narrative on page 98 of the Communities Directorate Business Plan, and felt that this should explicitly confirm the savings (in monetary terms) that the Directorate had made since austerity and the on-set of the recession, and the further estimated savings it yet had to make, to increase public awareness of the decline in certain front line services. The public would then be better placed to be aware of the challenge the local authority faced, particularly in having to make cuts to non-statutory services that the Directorate provided. He added that the Directorate had also supported the Council's School Modernisation Programme, yet there was no mention of this that he could see in its key achievements.

He added that all the Narratives of the other Directorate Business Plans, should be similarly altered.

The Corporate Director – Communities whilst taking these comments on board advised that he did not wish the narrative to be too negative, despite the cutbacks his Directorate had faced and those still yet to come. There were more challenges that lie ahead, but he was confident these could be met by working leaner and more innovatively. His Directorate still had over £20m to spend on public facing services he added.

A Member referred to page 199 of the report and Ref: FIN3.4.1, the number of working days lost per FTE through industrial injury (Finance), as set by the Health and Safety Manager. He asked what the target was for the coming year as this was shown as TBC, to which the Interim Head of Finance replied that she would have a further look at this

and come back to him outside of the meeting, as well as subsequently updating this part of the Plan accordingly.

A Member referred to page 141 of the report and the Budgets for Learning and Strategy and Partnerships and Commissioning, and he noted the progressive reduction in this for years 3, 4 and 5 of the MTFs. This estimated that the Net Total Budget was £108,363 for 2017/18 reducing year by year to £105,439 by 2021/22. He accepted that this was indicative at present, but asked Invitees how this could be mitigated in other ways, as well as it not impacting either too severely on schools budgets. He also noticed that school attendance figures were on the increase in the majority of schools, and asked if this was in any way connected with the School Modernisation Programme.

The Interim Corporate Director – Education and Family Support, advised that the savings for years 3, 4 and 5 as mentioned above, were indicative at present. The Directorate's budget overall was approximately £108m as the Member confirmed, and of this, he explained that approximately £88m is delegated directly to schools for statutory education. The actual figure delegated however, was closer to £94m to schools, with the additional £6m relating to post-16 settings. Therefore, £20m related to the differential (ie the centrally retained element of the budget). It would be a challenge he added to make the recurring £630k saving against budget year on year as part of the current MTFs.

The Interim Corporate Director – Education and Family Support also advised that pupil attendance at schools had improved and was continuing to do so, as was attainment. To the extent that data revealed that in both these areas, BCBC schools, ie both primary and secondary were now in the top quartile in Wales. School attendance figures overall did correlate with good attainment, as pupils were not falling behind in their work etc, when their attendance at school was at an expected level or above. The Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration added, that modern schools were a better and more improved environment to work in, and therefore, this was probably one of the factors why school attendance figures had improved.

A Member noted from this section of the report, that there was an estimated overspend in the sum of £304k for School Transport costs. He felt that ways should be looked at to cut this by providing shared transport arrangements with others, ie Social Services or even immediate neighbouring authorities school run operations.

A Member referred to pages 143/144 of the report, and the key achievements of the Education and Family Support Directorate, which were substantial in terms of their number. She felt that it was information such as this that needed to be made available to the public, in order to reflect the excellent work that this Directorate was providing, in the face of the recession. Referring to page 160 of the report, she was also pleased to see the good progress being made in catering themes, and was interested in knowing more about some of these innovative projects.

A Member referred to page 232 of the report and Ref: DOPS4, the performance indicator description of increasing the number of interactions from citizens on the corporate social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) and noted that the actual for 2016-17 was 11.3%, with a target for the following 2 years of a 5% increase for each of these years. She asked if this would mean that the target would therefore be 11.8% for the subsequent years.

The Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services confirmed that this would be an added 5% to years 2017-18 and 2018-19 in terms of a target, meaning that it would 16.3% for both of these years.

The Cabinet Member – Wellbeing and Future Generations added that the new digital transformation proposals that were going to be rolled out, including new phone applications (and possibly Skype for Business) would assist in realising this increased target.

The Chairperson referred to page 216 of the report, and the Budget in Regulatory Services specifically relating to Trading Standards. In 2017-18 this was £351k but would be increased to £397k for 2018-19, which she calculated was a 12% increase. There were then proposed, indicative reductions for the three year period following 2018-19, though it was anticipated that the budget for each of these years would still be in excess of that allocated in 2017-18.

The Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services, advised that the Shared Regulatory Service collaboration had resulted in savings to all 3 of the participating Authorities, though like other areas of his Directorate, savings would be required in future years to coincide with further cuts that were anticipated (for all Welsh local authorities). He added that the increase in budget for 2018-19 helped off-set other reductions in Regulatory Services, particularly in the Licensing Section where there had been reduced income coming in over the last few years.

He added that the Housing Department, was going to be restructured, and this together with some grant funding added to an under spend, would allow investment to be committed to emergency housing. This was important he explained for a number of reasons, such as accommodating children moving from into/care and finding such a transition difficult to cope with. The Department had to work closely with the Education and Social Services Department's for this reason, as well as to support certain vulnerable individuals who may find themselves evicted and subsequently homeless, and as Corporate Parents, Members (and Officers) had a duty and responsibility to look after these people, particularly the young and old who were in more vulnerable positions than other age groups. The Authority were also bound by legislation to a degree, to look after the homeless.

A Member referred to page 232 of the report and DOPS4, and the P.I. to increase the number of interactions from citizens on the corporate social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter). She noted that this was 11.3% in 2016-17 and that there was a 5% increase for each of the years 2017-18 and 2018-19. She asked how this percentage was derived for 2016-17, and how could targets be set for future years that would be in any way accurate.

The Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services advised that these could be interrogated through systems in place that were being used by the Communications, Marketing and Engagement team, and the methods adopted with regard to their interaction with and through social media. The targets for the next 2 years were based on the above and past performance, but were obviously also estimated he added.

The Member advised that it may be better splitting Facebook and Twitter for this P.I. in future, in order to get more accurate targets for both for next year and the year after, as they operated in different ways, ie Facebook ran on a 28 day cycle then lapsed, whilst Twitter didn't.

The Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services advised he would discuss this point further with the Communications, Marketing and Engagement Manager, to see if these could/should be split in future into two separate P.I.'s based on the Member's advice.

A Member made the point that the Directorate Business Plans should link in more closely with the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services advised that Directorate Business Plans were more of an internal document, whereby the Corporate Plan 2018-2022 was both an internal and external document, that was actually made available to the public, as well as being published on-line.

The Member felt that it was important that the public recognised that the Authority had now adopted a 'One Council' approach in terms of conducting its business and providing services.

The Cabinet Member – Wellbeing and Future Generations, confirmed that the financial savings required as part of the MTFs were outlined in the Directorate Business Plans, and asked if the Member wanted these broken down further than they were in these documents.

The Member replied by stating that he just felt that the Council needed to explain more explicitly to the public of the challenges that lie ahead and the further savings it was required to make, on top of those it already had made.

A Member referred to page 117 of the report and DCO16.8 P.I., regarding number of Council owned assets (CAT) transferred to the community for running. He noted that that none of these had been taken over in 2016-17, and that the target was fairly modest for the next 2 years. He felt that aspirations for this P.I. should be higher.

The Corporate Director – Communities advised that the targets for CAT were not aspirational but they were realistic. It was difficult to convince community groups and more particularly Clubs and Associations to take over the likes of Sports Pavilions and Club changing rooms, particularly as a substantial number of these were in a poor condition, and required some considerable work to then make them more fit for purpose, some of which was costly, ie structural as opposed to just maintenance work. This was compounded by the fact that Clubs, ie football, rugby and cricket teams had an 80% subsidy off the Council under current arrangements, with the local authority being responsible for the upkeep of the buildings as well as any maintenance works that were required from time to time. If Club's and Associations etc, operated any such asset completely through CAT, then they would lose this subsidy, and be totally responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the building in question.

The Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration added that there was political support for CAT's, and in 2018/19 a total takeover from the Council of Bryntirion Playing fields would be secured by way of a CAT.

51. SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING FUTURE SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing submitted a report, that shared with Committee the Social Services and Wellbeing Future Service Delivery Plan.

She explained that over the last 4 years, the Council has reduced the budget by over £12m in social care and wellbeing. This had been achieved by doing things differently, ie remodelling, reconfiguring, restructuring and developing new ways of working together with new service delivery models. The strategy for the next few years was to manage demand and introduce new ways of working, in order to lessen dependency and enable

people to maximise their independence. This required to be achieved within existing budget and after taking account of the current overspend of £2.2m.

Attached at Appendix 1 to the report, was the Future Service Delivery Plan (“the Plan”), however, it was noted that the Plan was an evolving document, and the planned actions and targets within it may potentially be subject to change.

The Plan was made up of two sections, namely Section A – highlighting work completed and MTFS savings achieved to date and MTFS shortfalls, while Section B – Delivery Plan, set out the planned actions to be undertaken in order to make the required MTFS savings and maximise income opportunities by March 2019.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing added that under the Plan, MTFS savings of over £400k had been achieved in 2017/18 through reviewing and implementing new models of delivery for partnership contracts. There remained a shortfall of £237k for which additional planned actions were being developed, as identified in the Plan.

She added that a Corporate Governance Board had been established to monitor and review the Directorate’s Plan. The Board was to be chaired by the Chief Executive and was made up of Officers as shown in paragraph 4.6 of the report.

Attached at Appendix 2 to the report, was a table that detailed governance arrangements in the Directorate.

The report went on to advise that the projected overspend in the quarter 3 Cabinet Budget Monitoring report, was £200k against older people’s services. However, at period 10, the projected overspend had reduced to £70k. This together with Welsh Government also having recently allocated winter pressure grant funding to local authorities, would mean older persons services will at least break even by year end.

In respect of Looked After Children, the projected overspend in the quarter 3 Cabinet budget monitoring report was £1.049m. This was mainly due to children being placed in Out of County placements, with such placements costing up to £460k per annum per placement.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing reminded Members however, that the Directorate were presently in a more improved financial position this year than the previous year, which reflected the Service’s Strategy to place more children into more cost effective placements.

Similarly, high cost independent fostering placements had also actually reduced from an average of 90 in 2016/17 to an average of 75 in 2017/18. As a consequence, the average number of these in-house placements had increased from an average of 208 in 2016/17 to 217 this year (2017/18) at a much reduced average annual cost per placement of £18k. This change also evidenced the services Strategy, to place children in more cost effective places.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that under the Service Delivery Plan there sat a Financial Monitoring Plan, established to assist in securing the outstanding shortfall, which would be not only be reviewed quarterly but monthly also.

The Chairperson asked what quartile BCBC were in when it came to an average spend per head for Adult Services and Childrens Services.

The Interim Head of Finance advised that we were in the same position as most other Welsh authorities when it came to spend per head, though the cost to support adults was obviously lower than for children, due to the high expense associated with LAC costs.

A Member referred to paragraph 4.11 of the report, and the ongoing and high costs associated with LAC. He asked if there was any scope to collaborate with neighbouring authorities to provide support facilities within localised regions, as opposed to expensive Out of County arrangements as part of an Invest to Save type initiative. This could possibly be co-ordinated through Welsh Government.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing advised that some regional work had been completed in respect of the above, through a Regional Adoption Service. Some work had also taken place with certain providers with a view to reducing some elements of costs for LAC and expensive placements. She added that there was a piece of work being looked at which may possibly see the conversion of the Glan-yr-Afon site for the purpose of considering a commercial approach, of not only a care provision suitable for young people in Bridgend, but also as a facility where places could be sold elsewhere outside the area, which would then also potentially bring in a source of much needed income.

The Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help advised that numbers of LAC were difficult to adequately control, and were costly for the Authority, and therefore certain initiatives were being looked at by CMB, such as that above, which would be shared with Cabinet in due course accordingly.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing added that there was some assistance for the support of children entering various care environments through avenues of grant funding from Welsh Government, such as 'Reflex' for care arrangements in respect of post pregnancy and a similar initiative known as 'Baby Mind'.

A Member referred to Appendix 1, Section B, of the Delivery Plan and the RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status of the various saving targets shown therein and with the commencement of the new financial year just days away, he asked when all the savings earmarked would be fully realised.

The Interim Head of Finance advised that this was currently work in progress, and that payback of the Directorate shortfall in terms of savings, would be closely monitored for progress as the Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing had advised earlier in debate, ie monthly, quarterly and finally on an annual basis, with a view to fully achieving all the over spend.

Finally, in response to a further question from the Chairperson regarding the Council charging other local authorities for the use of certain services provided to the Authority as referenced on page 260 of the report, the Interim Head of Finance confirmed that this would be investigated further as was confirmed in this section of the report, and possibly discussed at a future meeting of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP), as part of future delivery of savings.

Conclusions:

- The Committee asked that in future meetings the RAG status be completed in the financial plan.
- The Committee proposed charging for things as Discovery days as a method of income generation.

- The Committee agreed to receive an information report on the Social Services Financial Plan at each Corporate Overview and Scrutiny meeting so that they can continue to monitor the plan and pick up on any concerns as necessary.

Additional Information:

The Committee requested that they receive detail of the average spend per head for adults and children separately and where we sit as an Authority in comparison to other LA's.

52. URGENT ITEMS

None.

53. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as it contains exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 16 Part 4 and Paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees confirmed that this item was not subject to the public interest test for reasons of legal professional privilege and should therefore be considered in private. The public interest therefore did not apply in respect of this item.

54. ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The meeting closed at 13:30