

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 17 JULY 2019 AT 09:30

Present

Councillor CA Green – Chairperson

JPD Blundell
RL Penhale-
Thomas

NA Burnett
T Thomas

N Clarke

T Giffard

Apologies for Absence

J Gebbie, M Jones, RMI Shaw, JC Spanswick and CA Webster

Officers:

Susan Cooper
Councillor Huw
David

Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Leader

Nicola Echanis
Gail Jewell
Councillor Dhanisha
Patel

Head of Education & Family Support
Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations

Mark Shephard
Councillor Charles
Smith

Chief Executive
Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration

Councillor Philip
White

Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help

Councillor Richard
Young

Cabinet Member Communities

127. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr J Gebbie; Cllr M Jones; Cllr R Shaw; Cllr JC Spanswick;

128. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

129. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2018-19

The Chief Executive presented the Financial Performance 2018-19 report to committee, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the Council's financial performance for the year ended 31st March 2019. He explained that there are over 600 services provided by the Council, all of which face different challenges along with variances of overspends and underspends. He finished his presentation by thanking fellow colleagues and Members for bringing in a balanced budget in 2018-19.

The Committee thanked Officers for the detailed report and noted that throughout the document there was frequent use of 'staff vacancies' and queried whether the Council was working to its full potential and if the Council were struggling to recruit to vacancies. The Chief Executive explained that some Directorates were having issues with recruiting to posts and provided the Corporate Landlord service as an example. He further advised Members that although staff vacancies assist with budget savings, it does have an impact on performance with services being provided slower and less efficiently. He concluded by advising that the Council has a stringent process in place for vacancy

management whereby vacancies are not recruited to without a business case to reappoint.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that her Directorate had also encountered a delay with recruiting to direct care roles within the Care at Home for Older People service and had several staff vacancies within the Assessment and Care Management service. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing then notified the Committee that both services are currently undertaking a structure review, which will resolve these issues.

The Committee discussed Welsh Government funding and the potential difficulties imposed on the Council's budget setting process from uncommitted funding, one-off grants and funds that are allocated too late in the year. To mitigate these factors, Members specified that there should be stringent procedures in place that Welsh Government must adhere to.

Members referenced the budget reduction proposals not achieved due to delays and queried whether the reasons for this was due to staff vacancies and staff sickness throughout the Council. The Deputy Head of Finance advised the Committee that each delay had its own reasoning, such as postponements with an approval process with Welsh Government.

The Committee questioned what impact staff sickness and staff vacancies had on work demands and morale of existing staff. In response the Cabinet Member Future Generations and Wellbeing quoted statistics derived from the Staff Wellbeing Survey, where 72% of respondents said they were comfortable with the demands placed on them all or most of the time as well as 71% being able to meet the demands of their job either all or most of the time'.

During discussions regarding the non-achievement of the Learner Transport budget reduction proposal, Members questioned whether the lack of a Learning Resource Centre (LRC) unit in Porthcawl effected the budget of transporting children from Porthcawl to the nearest unit. The Leader responded by explaining that the Council have looked to provide a LRC in Porthcawl in the past and have not ruled out for the future, although the provision would need backing from a school with space to accommodate a unit.

Conclusions

The Committee raised concerns with the lack of commitment for Welsh Government funding to cover the increase in employer's contribution to teachers' pensions. Therefore, Members recommend that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee draft a letter to the Welsh Government Minister with a copy sent to the Secretary of State for Wales outlining the devastating effects the lack of funding would endure on the Council.

During discussions regarding the Home to School Transport overspend, Members noted that Porthcawl has no Learning Resource Centre and highlighted the probable cost implications of transporting children from Porthcawl to the nearest unit. With that in mind, the Committee recommends that future thought is given to adding the provision to the Porthcawl area, which would also ensure children are close to family and other siblings.

Additional information:

- With reference to the data provided from the Staff Wellbeing Survey: '72% of respondents said they were comfortable with the demands placed on them all or most of the time as well as 71% being able to meet the demands of

their job either all or most of the time', Members questioned the response rate for the survey to determine a more accurate representation of the whole Council.

130. COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE AGAINST ITS WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES FOR 2018-19

The Scrutiny Officer presented the information report, the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with an overview of the Council's performance in 2018-19, against its 2018-19 commitments to delivering the wellbeing objectives identified through its Corporate Plan 2018-22. The report covered the following work areas:

- Commitments;
- Corporate Performance Indicators;
- Corporate Plan Indicators;
- Public Accountability Measures;
- Social Services Well-being (SSWB) Performance Measurement; Framework Indicators;
- Sickness absence.

Conclusions

With reference to the Corporate Performance Indicators, Members were concerned by the increase in percentage of indicators 'Worse than last year' and similarly with the percentage of 'Better than last year' Performance Indicators decreasing year on year.

Additional information:

1 The Committee note that long-term sickness remains high and has increased in the last year, therefore, Members requested to receive detail of what options are available for people who are off work to aid an earlier return. For example:

- Working from home;
- Reduced working hours.

2 With reference to the Local Authority losing experienced people, the Committee request to receive details of Exit Interviews to ascertain why staff are choosing to end employment with the Council.

131. URGENT ITEMS

None