

Comments from Individual Overview and Scrutiny Committees 2016-17

1 Corporate Resources & Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 1.1 The Committee is concerned that collaborative scrutiny without extra resources could result in a poor level of scrutiny which would be damaging to the authority. The future picture is unclear and the authority should continue to value scrutiny as it played an important part in holding the executive to account and supporting the quality of decision making. The Committee recommend that resources be retained.

2 Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2.1 The Committee note that the Sport, Play and Active Wellbeing team are focusing on the development of the wellbeing and preventative agenda and Member questioned whether future reports of the team would be presented to Adult Social Care or remain with Community Environment and Leisure.
- 2.2 The Committee have requested that when Members receive an update on the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act in February, Officers provide information relating to what the Local Authority has undertaken in relation to the Councils increased legislative responsibility in connection with Deprivation of Liberty Standards (DoLS) and how this work is monitored.
- 2.3 Members have requested that the next meeting of Adult Social Care scheduled for 6 February 2017 be held at Trem Y Mor.

3 Community Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 3.1 Members were concerned at the proposal to eventually close all public conveniences in the Borough by 2018/19 and introduce a comfort scheme as a substitute. Meanwhile Members were concerned that the reductions to the cleaning teams in this area would mean that the service becomes a reactive service and therefore would create a potential public health risk.
- 3.2 Members questioned Officers on the removal of four area cleaner streets teams and asked how the service would operate if the proposal went ahead and what the minimum statutory requirements in the Environmental Protection Act were. Officers stated that the minimum requirements were not defined and it would require a challenge. Officers added that the reduction proposal included the reduction of a vehicle which meant the operational schedule would change and areas would be prioritised as necessary.
- 3.3 Members queried why the car parking review and proposed changes had not yet been completed and implemented despite this being a reduction proposal for 2016-17. Officers stated that the review would happen early in 2017 upon implementation of the residents parking scheme. They added that there had

been some legal issues which had contributed to the delay but now these had been resolved they were hoping to complete the review and achieve the proposed savings as soon as possible

- 3.4 Members questioned the officers on the proposal of the street lighting and whether this was to partially or fully switch off the street lights. Officers stated that risk assessments would be carried out to determine which sites to switch off and that they would be fully turned off in these areas. Members were concerned at the potential risk to community safety, especially of that on learner travel routes.
- 3.5 Members were concerned at the proposal to reduce the frequency to gully cleansing as they feared homes would be at risk due to water and flood risks. Officers shared the Members concerns and stated that this proposal would be reviewed.
- 3.6 Members welcomed a review of the proposal to reduce the frequency of gully cleansing.
- 3.7 Members were concerned at the proposal of reduced focus on rear lanes overgrowth and footpaths in rural areas and that this would require expensive and extensive future repairs.
- 3.8 Members did not agree with the proposed saving of £15k for the reduction of weed spraying as this would end up being more costly in the long run and not an efficient way of operating.

Recommendations

- 3.9 Members recommended the removal of the proposal to switch off the street lighting due to the risk of community safety.

4 Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Education and Family Support

- 4.1 In order to justify any proposed efficiency savings to school budgets, Members recommended that non-statutory services such as early years and nursery provision which the Authority is continuing to provide should be provided in the report to evidence that they are more beneficial long term at preventing a worsening situation for statutory services.
- 4.2 The Committee expressed concerns over the effects of cumulative small budget pressures that schools are experiencing such as pay awards and licenses which were once covered by the Local Authority but are now being delegated to schools.

- 4.3 In light of these pressures the Committee had strong concerns over the potential impact of the 1% efficiency savings proposed for school budgets, particularly for those schools already in deficit and for the primary sector, with evidence being heard that this would equate to losing 40 primary teachers across the 4 years.
- 4.4 As a result of this the Committee recommend against the 1% efficiency saving for school budgets. It is recommended instead that the proposed Community Action Fund for Councillors not be progressed and the money be used to partially offset the 1% saving.
- 4.5 Furthermore the Committee recommend that the budget titled 'Other Corporate Budgets' for 2017-18 with a proposed £6,194,000 set against it, be considered to achieve the remainder of the saving set against schools under the 1% efficiency.
- 4.6 The Committee reiterated previous concerns and recommendations in relation to Learner Transport including those from last year's budget consultation process that proper project management be provided to carry out a review of Learner Transport and that this comes from outside of the two responsible areas in order to provide an objective oversight.

Further comments

- 4.7 The Committee were pleased to receive assurances that the proposed collaboration and savings for the Educational Psychology Service would not be to the detriment of the service but would ensure that it was maintained at its current level.
- 4.8 The Committee wished to congratulate Officers on the success of the School Modernisation Programme and its continued achievements for pupils within the County Borough.
- 4.9 Members also commended schools on the improvement achieved within Bridgend even when we have such a high pupil teacher ratio.

Children's Social Services

- 4.10 The Committee expressed serious concerns regarding the proposal for further savings from the reduction of Looked After Children particularly given the recent Quarter 2 finance report which projected that the savings of 357,000 for LAC allocated for this year will not be made and the service is currently overspent. Members commented that they did not share the apparent confidence that the Directorate displayed over achieving the future savings in this area.
- 4.11 The Committee requested further detail as to how the service had calculated the £260,000 saving for 2017-18 for LAC.

- 4.12 The Committee further stated that in light of the historic overspends in respect of LAC and the current status of the projected savings in this area for 2016-17, the proposals for further savings for 2017-18 and 2018-19 are unrealistic and unachievable. The Committee therefore recommend that the Directorate look elsewhere for more realistic savings that are attainable.
- 4.13 The Committee echoed previous concerns of the Committee in relation to the cost of Out of County Foster Carers compared with those in house and the need for more Foster carers within the County Borough to keep LAC closer to home. The Committee reiterated previous recommendations that there be an increase in payments made to in-house Foster carers to try and grow their numbers and reduce the overall cost of sending children out of Authority, which is not always best for the Looked After Child.