

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF COMMUNITY SAFETY AND GOVERNANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON TUESDAY, 17 MARCH 2015 AT 2.00PM

Present:

Councillor N Clarke - Chairperson

E M Hughes	J R McCarthy	M Thomas
R M James	H E Morgan	R L Thomas
M Jones	A D Owen	C Westwood
J E Lewis		

Officers:

G Jewell - Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny  
M A Galvin - Senior Democratic Services Officer – Committees

Invitees:

D Mepham – Chief Executive  
N Young – Corporate Director – Resources  
M Shephard – Corporate Director – Communities  
S Cooper – Corporate Director – Safeguarding and Family Support  
D McMillan – Corporate Director – Safeguarding and Transformation  
L Jones – Head of Regulatory Services  
K Watson – Group Manager Legal and Democratic Services  
D Exton – Group Manager - Finance  
Councillor C E Smith – Cabinet Member – Strategic Change  
Councillor E P Foley – Chairperson, Children and Young People O&SC  
Councillor P Davies – Chairperson, Health and Wellbeing O&SC  
Councillor M Reeves – Chairperson, Corporate Resources and Improvement O&SC  
Councillor J C Spanswick – Chairperson, Community Renewal and Environment O&SC  
Councillor M Gregory – Cabinet Member - Resources

127 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Member:-

Councillor C J James

128 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J C Spanswick declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 5, in that his wife was an employee within BCBC.

129 MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Community Safety and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 18 December 2014 and 20 January 2015 were approved as a true and accurate, subject to Councillor M Thomas being added to the list of apologies for absence for the meeting.

130 DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLANS 2015-16

The Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny presented a report, the purpose of which, was to provide the Committee with an opportunity to comment on the Council's draft Directorate Business Plans for 2015-16 shown attached to the report at Appendices A to E.

Prior to the Invitees being invited into the meeting, Members went through a number of aspects of each of the Business Plans, with the support of the Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny, including proposed questions they indicated they would ask of the Invitees.

The Invitees were then invited into the meeting

A Member referred to paragraph 4.2 of the report, and suggested that a prescribed template be used for future Business Plans, especially now that they are being looked at on a corporate level - for ease of reference between plans for Members and the public.

This was reinforced by another Member who stated that the Council are trying to avoid a silo mentality with reference to ways of working.

The Chairperson pointed out that diagrams in certain areas of the Appendices were also too small, and the wording contained within these needed to be in larger font size, i.e. 12 or 14.

A Member then referred to page 30 of Appendix A, and the third bullet point under the heading Weaknesses- high repair and maintenance backlog to school buildings (circa £37m) with budget insufficient to address the backlog. She asked under what criteria would works to schools be undertaken, especially works that may require to be done as a matter of urgency.

The Corporate Director – Education and Transformation confirmed that the Authority had received Welsh Government match funding to embark on its School Modernisation Programme, and also that a similar programme for old primary schools primarily in the valley communities would ensure funding was received up to 2019. However, from 2019 – 2024 the Council would then be fully reliant on match funding schemes for this purpose.

She added that there was also a £600k maintenance fund available for more minor school works, though there was some contingency available for any works that may be required as a matter of urgency, as a result of a catastrophe taking place at any school, for example from a fire or flooding etc.

A Member noted from page 33 of the report, that there was no breakdown of information that fell under the heading of Safeguarding, for example, in terms of Fostering, Adoptions and CAMHS. He felt that this part of the Plan should include positive information that had arisen from the Council's Permanency Strategy.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that all information in relation to safeguarding of children is currently being compiled to be included in her Wellbeing Directorate Business Plan that would be completed by April, as this area of work had recently crossed into her Directorate from the Children's Directorate.

A Member noted from page 33 of the report that under the Budget allocated for different aspects of learning, there was nothing proposed to be allocated to the Music Service at schools for 2015-16 and the three subsequent years and suggested that the line be deleted.

The Corporate Director – Education and Transformation advised that a budget was allocated to schools for Music Services which the Council funded but which schools bought back. She felt that perhaps an explanatory note would be of some benefit in this area of the Business Plan, so as to explain this.

A Member noted that the number of staff working in the Safeguarding and Family Support Section had reduced. In light of this, he asked the Invitees if they were confident that there was a sufficient enough taskforce to ensure that attempts to reduce the number of Looked After Children (LAC) could actually be achieved through early intervention and preventative measures being put in place.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing advised that though a commitment had been given to reduce the numbers of LAC by using the above approach, it was too early to say whether this would be successfully achievable. The number of LAC had recently reduced from 410 to 391, though there was no guarantee to confirm that this trend would actually continue, as to some degree or another it was out of the Authorities control. It was confirmed that the decrease in staff did not include any social workers.

The Chief Executive noted that there would be quite a considerable number of issues to cover when taking into account each of the 5 Directorate Business Plans, and the number of points that were being raised by Members on the content of these. He felt that the main thrust was not so much to ensure that each of the Plans were perfect in terms of their layout and format, but more about how they fitted into the MTFs and fed into the Corporate Plan including its priorities and commitments. He felt therefore that Members should not be examining so much each individual Plan per se, but to establish whether or not each Directorate were being effective in terms of business planning. The more important elements of the Plans needed to be examined he considered, including aims, objectives, targets and risks etc. He thought that it may be a more pragmatic approach to involve key Members, for example the Chairpersons of each Overview and Scrutiny meeting, to be directly involved in this part of the process, ie putting together the key components of the Plan and having an input into which direction the Authority intend to travel.

He added that this could be achieved through a number of ways, such as inviting key Members to observe the business planning process, or him (and if necessary other Corporate Directors) meeting with Scrutiny Chairpersons collectively to discuss important issues such as the putting together of Business Plans and the monitoring of these throughout the year.

A Member made a general point, namely that more clear and specific targets needed to be expressed in the Business Plans where these had been omitted, and a more corporate approach taken to important areas of the Plans, such as sickness absence management.

The Corporate Director – Resources advised that where there were omissions or gaps in some of the data of the Plans, this was because some targets shown could not be fully completed until end of year, i.e. by April.

### **Conclusions:**

After a brief debate regarding the Directorate Business Plans, it was clear to the Members and Officers that to continue to discuss all Directorate Plans in detail would take a considerable amount of time, therefore Members wished to make the following conclusions:

- The Committee confirmed that the Scrutiny Officer would compile issues from all Members relating to each Directorate Business Plan and forward to each Corporate Director as feedback.
- The Committee agreed to the Scrutiny Chairs meeting with the Chief Executive and appropriate Corporate Directors, to discuss a suitable way forward regarding future scrutiny of Directorate Business Plans.

131 THIRD SECTOR REVIEW

The Corporate Director - Resources submitted a report, in order to the inform Committee of the outcomes of the reviews of Third Sector organisations, as part of the overall Third Sector Review, to identify any issues arising from the reviews, and to consider the achievability of savings for 2015-16 and 2016-17, as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). And whether or not there is scope for further savings.

The Chairperson referred to page 203 of the report and noted that in terms of Action for Children, a decision had been taken not to continue the service in 2014-15. She asked what the reason was for the withdrawal of funding for this.

The Corporate Director - Education and Transformation confirmed that this was the funding for Family Support, including specialist services. Following a review of this, it had been decided to undertake the work for this in-house as it would turn out to be more cost effective.

A Member also noted that there had been a reduction in core funding for the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) which was a very important voluntary organisation that supported the public as a whole. He asked if this reduction in funding had been discussed with CAB, as if anything, this service was increasing in terms of demand.

The Corporate Director – Resources advised that such discussions with the organisation had taken place, with the view of making them savings in other ways to compensate for their reduction in funding, for example through reducing their overheads and looking at other avenues through which they could possibly receive core funding elsewhere.

In response to a point made by the Chairperson, the Corporate Director – Resources advised that there had been some effect on the level of service delivery provided by organisations such as CAB, BAVO and Groundwork Bridgend, as a result of the reduction in funding being allocated to these third sector organisations. She reiterated however, that Officers had worked with them to try and reduce their cost base.

The Cabinet Member – Resources added that even though Groundwork Bridgend were no longer operational, the Authority may still use services provided by Groundwork Wales based in Caerphilly.

A Member referred to page 205 of the report and paragraph 4.11 where it referred to a new Contract having been provided to include Independent Visiting Services which historically have been spot purchased as and when required for an individual or young person on an ad hoc basis. She asked if Invitees could expand upon this.

The Corporate Director – Resources advised that she would obtain details regarding this from the Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing and provide this to the Member outside of the meeting.

The Corporate Director – Education and Transformation added that she would be leading on the Corporate Transformation agenda, and more scoping work would be required as part of this to encourage partnership working with key organisations and stakeholders, including Town and Community Councils. Greater use of commissioning and partnership working was required to overcome future budget restraints and to more fully utilise avenues of funding that may be available for these organisations that was not available to the Council as local authority. The support of the third sector was very important both for the society of Bridgend and its economy she added.

The Chairperson asked who was responsible for monitoring grants that were awarded where value for money and that they were providing their purpose.

The Corporate Director – Resources stated that these would be audited in order to ensure that they were providing value for money.

**Conclusions:**

The Committee noted the report and made the following comments:

- When using the closure of Bettws Life Centre due to the administration of Groundwork as an example, Members emphasised the need to put provisions in place to protect the reputation of the Council;
- When discussing the Transformation agenda and the greater need of support of the third sector, Members were keen to highlight that Officers also look to utilise the use of small local businesses as well as large.

**Additional Information**

Members requested that they receive:

- Further information on the Independent Visiting Services, in line with the Council meeting its statutory duty to deliver Independent Professional Advocacy for all children and young people engaged with social services;
- Members requested to view a breakdown of the Third Sector Review - detailing reasons why funding has ended for each Third Sector organisation.

The meeting closed at 4.10pm