

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE RESOURCES & IMPROVEMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON TUESDAY, 22 MARCH 2016 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor M Reeves – Chairperson

GW Davies MBE	E Dodd	EM Hughes	RC Jones
DRW Lewis	JR McCarthy	CL Reeves	JC Spanswick
G Thomas			

Officers:

Gary Jones	Head of Democratic Services
Andrew Rees	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

Invitees:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Andrew Jolley	Corporate Director Operational & Partnership Services
Deborah McMillan	Corporate Director Education & Family Support
Yuan Shen	
Mark Shephard	Corporate Director - Communities
Ness Young	Corporate Director - Resources & Section 151 Officer
Councillor M Gregory	Cabinet Member Resources
Councillor N Clarke	Chairperson Partnerships & Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Councillor EP Foley	Chairperson Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

193. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members / Officer:

Councillor MEJ Nott – Leader
Councillor HJ David – Deputy Leader
Councillor CE Smith – Cabinet Member Regeneration & Economic Development
Councillor HJ Townsend – Cabinet Member Children’s Social Services and Equalities
Councillor PJ White – Cabinet Member Adult Social Care & Health and Wellbeing
Councillor HM Williams – Cabinet Member Communities
Chief Executive.

The Committee noted its disappointment that the Chief Executive and Cabinet Members had not been able to attend the meeting.

194. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

195. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings of the Corporate Resources & Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 19 January and 9 February 2016 be approved as a true and accurate record.

196. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report which detailed the items to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee to be scheduled following the Annual Meeting of Council and sought confirmation of the information and invitees required.

The Head of Democratic Services also reported on a list of potential items for the 2016-17 Forward Work Programme which would be prioritised and scheduled at the meeting of the Committee following the Annual Meeting of Council.

Conclusions:

The Committee noted the items to be considered at the next meeting to be scheduled at the Annual Meeting of Council and determined the invitees to be invited to attend.

197. DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLANS 2016-17

The Head of Democratic Services introduced a report which presented extracts of the Council's draft Directorate Business Plans for 2016-17.

The Corporate Improvement and Integrated Partnerships Manager informed the Committee that extracts from each Directorate Business Plan had been produced for the Committee and in each extract, Corporate plan indicators had been highlighted in yellow. For each commitment in the Corporate Plan, Directorates have set out the milestones that will be taken to achieve them and the target date for completion and measures they will use to assess performance with targets set for 2016-17.

The Committee expressed concern at the lack of consistency in the way in which performance data is presented in the Directorate Business Plans as some Directorates were making comparisons on different years. The Corporate Director Resources informed the Committee that the comparisons to be made in the Directorate Business Plans should only relate to the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that reports for the education service would vary from other Directorates as school targets are based on academic years while school budgets are based on fiscal years.

The Committee questioned the reason for the budget for the Music Service being zero. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that the core budget of the Directorate was previously used to subsidise the Music Service, however schools now have a Service Level Agreement to pay for the Music Service it uses without the need for subsidy. She stated that the Music Service had been re-structured with peripatetic teachers now being designated as tutors which allows demand to be met for the teaching of more modern musical instruments in schools. There was now a greater amount of choice offered to pupils to enable whole classes to access musical instruments.

The Committee questioned the reason for the budgets for Transition and Post 14 being zero. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee

that these services were still being delivered but in a more integrated way and are reflected in the Strategy, Partnerships & Commissioning budgets. She stated that she would remove these budget headings from the Learning budget. She informed the Committee that the spend for transition was now under the Support for Children & Learners.

The Committee referred to the proposed housing developments at Parc Afon Ewenny and Brackla North East and questioned how the extra capacity from these developments would be dealt with at schools. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that the Welsh Government had provided the authority with the opportunity to bid for Band B funding up to 2024 with the authority giving the Welsh Government an indication of its needs for new schools. A scoping exercise was being undertaken based on demand and anticipated pupil numbers from these proposed housing developments. She informed the Committee that it was envisaged that a new primary school would have to be developed somewhere in Bridgend town centre at a location to be determined. She stated that funding from the school modernisation programme would have to be match funded from capital receipts.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Corporate Improvement and Integrated Partnerships Manager informed the Committee that future extracts of the Directorate Business Plans will contain a glossary of terms used.

The Committee questioned whether the targets are national targets. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that the targets are based on a mixture of Flying Start and foundation phase targets and they conform to national targets. The Committee questioned the lack of targets for performance indicator 1.3.10.3 on consultation on the proposals from the review into the development and rationalisation of the curriculum and school estate for primary, secondary and post 16 education. The Committee also questioned the reasons for the absence of positive targets for the performance indicators on the number of Welsh medium primary schools unable to meet the demand for places at nursery and reception admissions round and the number of English medium primary schools unable to meet in catchment demand for places at nursery and reception admissions round. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that there are four areas of review, namely, school federations; the sharing of leadership; the curriculum and Band B. She stated that it was too early to comment in detail on this programme which is being project managed but more detail would be known on this project in the autumn.

The Committee questioned the reason for target for performance indicator 3.4.1 relating to analysing and reporting on sickness data being static and the number of days lost due to sickness absence not being challenging. The Corporate Director Resources informed the Committee that it was unlikely that any Directorate would meet its sickness absence targets and the target would remain until Directorates hit the target. The Corporate Director Resources confirmed that the sickness absence targets varied by Directorate with the average target being 9.10 days. In response to a question from the Committee on the need for targets the percentage of school days lost due to fixed-term exclusions during the academic year in primary and secondary schools to be more stretching, the Corporate Director Education and Transformation stated that she would look into these targets.

The Committee questioned the reason for the target for pupils in attendance in primary and secondary schools reducing when the targets should increase. The Corporate Director Resources informed the Committee that targets are set realistically so that they could be attained.

The Committee questioned whether the target for the number of young people and adults gaining employment, education or training was challenging enough. The Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Regulatory Services commented that the target of 200 is a fair benchmark and did not believe that more placements could be achieved.

The Committee requested clarification of the term Wise Board. The Corporate Improvement and Integrated Partnerships Manager informed the Committee that the Wise Board had been established under the Single Integrated Partnership Plan as one of five boards. The Wise Board is linked to schools and is chaired by the Principal of Bridgend College.

The Committee questioned the lack of a target in developing opportunities for innovative ICT based technical mobile working practices and whether delaying it to March 2017 would be a missed opportunity. The Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Regulatory Services commented that this related to the Regulatory Services collaboration with Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan and once the targets had been received they would be included in the Business Plan.

In response to a question from the Committee the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Regulatory Services commented that having webcasting facilities could lead to opportunities to provide income generation by letting out the Chamber for use by outside organisations.

The Committee questioned the target for the percentage of food establishments being broadly compliant with food hygiene standards reducing. The Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Regulatory Services commented that the target had reduced as a result of the work to combine the service but he expected the target to increase. He stated that food establishments also had to comply with many other standards.

The Committee requested clarification as to how reviewing opportunities to purchase additional investment properties would contribute to income generation opportunities. The Corporate Director Resources informed the Committee that one of the objectives is to increase income and there is funding available to purchase properties which had the potential to generate income for the authority.

The Committee referred to the reduction in the number of staff on the establishment in the Human Resources Department and questioned why there was no proportionate reduction in the budget. The Corporate Director Resources informed the Committee that the numbers of staff and budgets would be reconciled.

The Committee questioned whether the 3 new initiatives for income generation were in place. The Corporate Director Resources informed the Committee that there would be more than 3 income generation initiatives developed during the MTFS period. She stated that the Council is embarking on an income generation programme.

The Committee questioned why the Trent system had not been adapted to enable line managers to have direct access to the absence management module and employee training records and to enable employees to update personal details. The Corporate Director Resources informed the Committee that changes were needed to be made to develop the appropriate modules on Trent and are on target for December 2016. She stated that the focus of attention was on bringing the finance system in-house as part of the digital transformation programme. In response to a question from the Committee, the Corporate Director Resources stated that she would provide the Committee with information on the composition of the Digital Transformation Panel and on progress made to date.

The Committee questioned whether the target on agile working would be achieved and whether further targets would be added. The Corporate Director Resources informed the Committee that the target for agile working should be achieved by September 2016 and that the Council was almost in a position to sign the lease for Raven's Court with the proposed lessee. Procurement of devices to enable agile working to happen will take place following the signing of the lease.

The Committee questioned the reason for the numbers of days lost for the targets for 2015-16 and 2016-17 for sickness and injuries being the same. The Corporate Director Resources informed the Committee that the outturn had yet to be reached and this was the first time targets had been for these categories.

The Committee questioned the cost of training employees to improve Welsh Language skills. The Corporate Director Resources informed the Committee £318k had been included in the budget to cover the implementation of the Welsh Language Standards which will also include the training of staff. She advised that the main cost of implementing the Welsh language Standards would relate to translation.

The Committee questioned the plans to increase the number of apprenticeships. The Corporate Director Resources informed the Committee that each Directorate will have a target to offer apprenticeships. She stated that with effect from April 2017 a levy on apprenticeships will be introduced, the detail of which was currently being worked through. There was a need to understand how the levy is paid for the training element of apprenticeships.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Corporate Director Communities would provide detail on the reason for the headcount of staff in Street Scene increasing in 2015/16 and then decreasing in 2016/17.

The Committee questioned the targets for the number of vacant properties in Bridgend, Portcawl and Maesteg town centres being static. The Corporate Director Communities informed the Committee that the target had remained static as it was a reflection of the economic downturn but hoped this would reduce over time as a result of regeneration projects such as the redevelopment of the Rhiw car park which could act as a catalyst for businesses to open up.

The Committee expressed its disappointment at the low target numbers for apprenticeships and traineeships to be offered. The Corporate Director Communities informed the Committee that there is an ambition corporately to increase the number of apprenticeships and traineeships offered but it was difficult to do so when the number of staff on the establishment was reducing. He stated that a "grow our own" approach would be looked at and would be incorporated in the next Business Plan.

The Committee requested clarification of the review of facilities provided by the parks and playing fields service including potential asset transfer. The Corporate Director Communities informed the Committee that there was a need to making savings of £1m in in 2017/18 in line with the requirements of the MTFs which would result in the Council managing less parks and playing field facilities. He stated that if the authority could not afford to continue running these facilities consideration would need to be given as to potential closure or to mitigate that by a community asset transfer process. Concern was expressed by the Committee that some deprived communities may lose much needed facilities and questioned whether an equality impact assessment would be carried out on the loss of such facilities. The Corporate Director Communities informed the Committee that the sum of £1m had been allocated in the capital programme as an

incentive for organisations to pursue a community asset transfer of facilities. Organisations in pursuing asset transfer would be required to develop a business case for the transfer of the asset and the Council would invest in putting the most urgent repairs / works right prior to the transfer taking place. No community asset transfers had yet taken place although there were applications being progressed. The Corporate Director Communities informed the Committee that significant savings would have to be made to the Communities Directorate budget and services in parks and playing fields would have to be cut. The Corporate Director Resources informed the Committee that the community asset transfer process is an opportunity to protect and invest in facilities working in partnership with third parties. The Committee questioned whether clubs would be given incentives to progress a community asset transfer. The Corporate Director Resources stated that each business case would be looked at on its merits and there may be a need for some transition funding to assist the asset transfer process and in order to come up with a sustainable solution. She also stated that in the event of an asset being transferred by way of a lease, there was an opportunity for the asset to be taken back by the Council. She stated that the third sector programme was about developing capacity in communities in order that they become more self-reliant.

The Committee questioned what would happen to an asset transfer in the event that more than sports club used the facilities. The Corporate Director Communities informed the Committee that in such cases there might be a lead club and clubs sharing facilities would be encouraged to form a sports association. He stated that guidelines for community asset transfer are being drawn up. The Cabinet Member Resources provided the Committee with an example of town and community councils taking a lead whereby Pencoed Town Council was taking a lead in an asset transfer and a sports association had been formed. The Corporate Director Communities informed the Committee that the authority would no longer be in a position to manage facilities. He stated that the authority has appointed a CAT Officer to progress and assist clubs with the asset transfer process, however many clubs lacked the capacity to progress applications and a lengthy lead-in process was often needed for clubs to work up their proposals. He informed the Committee that the authority is keen to have town and community councils on board to assist clubs in their community leadership role.

The Committee questioned the variance in the staff headcount with that of the budget. The Corporate Director Resources informed the Committee she would check the accuracy of the employment numbers and the budget figures per Directorate.

The Committee questioned the target for the number of visits to sport and leisure facilities where the visitor will be participating in physical activity not being stretching. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that the figures had been affected due to work to facilities being undertaken at the Bridgend Recreation Centre and which had not yet finished, but she would follow the target up.

The Committee questioned the reason for the rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 or over being set low. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that the service had always performed well against this target. She stated that the Social Services and Wellbeing Act had brought about 51 new targets.

The Committee questioned the target for the number of service users who provide feedback as part of contract monitoring arrangements not being stretching enough. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that the new target is based on similar indicators which the service has had in the past and she stated that the target should be more stretching.

Conclusions

The Committee recommended that a review of target setting be undertaken. The committee identified that target setting across the business plans raised concerns as many targets had been reduced and were not considered as suitably challenging.

The Committee recommended that the development of the TRENT system in respect of the online management systems for absence training, personnel information and the use of BACS instead of cheque books for schools was progressed as quickly as possible to provide immediate budget and efficiency savings.

The Committee recommended that following clarification of the levy for apprenticeships that all Directorates maximise any opportunities to increase the number of apprentices.

The Committee recommended that a clear plan be developed regarding the ongoing use of Community Facilities, Parks and Playing fields. The funding available for Community Asset Transfer (CAT) required a robust utilisation plan to ensure that the opportunities for CAT were optimised and that any residual funding was used to meet the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing and Future Generations Acts.

The Committee recommended and the Corporate Director Resources agreed that HR and Finance would work together to review both HR and Finance data to reconcile the information accordingly.

The Committee requested the following information:

There was little or no detail regarding post 16 education and the indicators relating to Welsh/English primary schools being unable to meet the demand for nursery and reception places. Further information was requested to clarify this indicator.

198. BUDGET MONITORING - QUARTER 3 2015-16

The Corporate Director Resources reported on an update on the Council's financial position as at 31 December 2015. She stated that the overall projected position as at 31 December 2015 was a net under spend of £1.165m. She highlighted the status of the budget monitoring proposals which showed 76% of the proposals being green, nine proposals totalling £1.230m are currently red with nine proposals totalling £1.481m being amber.

The Corporate Director Resources also reported on the monitoring of the capital programme which for 2015-16 totals £40.088m of which £24.794m is the Council's resources with the remaining £15.294m coming from external grants. She also informed the Committee on the review of earmarked reserves where Directorates had up until 15 December 2015 drawn down £288k of funding from their Directorate specific earmarked reserves and £940k from Corporate Reserves including the Major Claims Reserve and the Change Fund.

The Committee expressed concern at the under spend of £218k in Schools Based SEN. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that the under spend had occurred as a result of the need to hold vacancies to meet the savings required in the MTFs. She stated that difficulties had been encountered in recruiting one-to-one support for pupils. She also stated that the Welsh Language Standards had introduced a requirement to employ Welsh speaking support staff and discussions had taken place with the Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and RCT Councils in

relation to having an arrangement for Welsh speaking support staff in an attempt to avoid a large turnover in staff.

The Committee questioned whether the over spend of £142k in School Improvement related to one school. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee additional funding had to be allocated to Coleg Cymunedol y Dderwen due to it being placed in special measures. Funding had also been allocated to other schools in terms of capacity and leadership and an additional head teacher allocated to Cornelly primary to cover sickness. Funding for School Improvement had been received from Schools Challenge and the Central South Consortium.

The Committee expressed concern at the over spend of £170k on Home to School / College Transport and that the service should be placed in one Directorate and separate to the two existing Directorates to which the functions sat. The Committee referred to recent communications received by parents in relation to their child's eligibility to qualify for Home to School / College Transport only for it to be later withdrawn. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that the service had suffered a legacy of inconsistencies in management with some inconsistencies in the application of Home to School / College Transport which had affected approximately 150 pupils. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation stated that the software package in use by the Transport Team had thrown up some anomalies. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation commented on the difficulties that had been encountered in managing the service when the budget for the service is held in another Directorate. She stated that she would be holding discussions shortly with the Corporate Director Communities and the two Heads of Service to resolve issues.

The Committee questioned the reason for the over spend of £200k on fleet and whether it was attributed to the outsourcing of ground maintenance. The Corporate Director communities informed the Committee that the savings on the fleet joint venture with the police had yet to be fully realised. However there was a net saving of £132k on ground maintenance.

In response to a question from the Committee the Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing stated that she would confirm the position on liability in the event of Halo litigating.

Conclusions

The Committee considered that a sufficient period of time had been provided to address the historic issues relating to Home to School Transport. It was recommended that a service review be undertaken independently or by the Chief Executive to address these ongoing issues and deliver the necessary savings and efficiencies.

The Committee requested additional information regarding the possibility of procuring of Special Educational Needs services for one-to-one educational requirements from other Local Authorities.

Concerns were raised that the income generation target of £1.5m for 3 new initiatives in 2016/17 was similar to that of the budget reductions identified in the financial indicators. It was hoped that there would be more than 3 income generation initiatives this year to mitigate the saving being made in the MTFs. The Committee requested additional information regarding the initiatives that were being planned and the likelihood that they would achieve the necessary budget savings.

Concerns were raised regarding the savings identified for Fleet Services and queried if there was any merit in outsourcing this service.

The Committee requested additional information regarding the benefits of outsourcing any of Fleet Services and the potential impact on the quality of services should this occur.

199. NOMINATION FOR STANDING BUDGET RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PANEL

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report seeking nominations from the Committee to sit on the Standing Budget Research and Evaluation Panel. The Standing BREP would undertake a review of the process following the setting of this year's budget. The Committee was requested to nominate the Chair of this Committee and one Member of the Committee and additionally a reserve Member to sit on the Standing BREP.

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson of the Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Councillor C Reeves be nominated to represent the Committee on the Standing Budget Research and Evaluation Panel with Councillor E Dodd being nominated as the reserve member in the event that Councillor C Reeves could not attend.

200. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 5.05 pm