

POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 27 January 2020

PRESENT: Councillor A.G. Morgan (Chair)

Councillors:

K.V. Broom, D.M. Cundy, T.A.J. Davies, H.L. Davies, J.S. Edmunds, W.T. Evans (In place of D.E. Williams), J.K. Howell, G.H. John, C. Jones, G.R. Jones (In place of K. Madge) and J.G. Prosser

Also in attendance:

Councillor D.M. Jenkins, Executive Board Member for Resources

The following Officers were in attendance:

N. Daniel, Head of I.C.T.

J. Fearn, Head of Property

R. Hemingway, Head of Financial Services

I. Jones, Head of Leisure

L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law

P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance)

G. Ayers, Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager

D. Hockenfull, Marketing and Media Manager

G. Jones

A. Parnell, Treasury & Pension Investments Manager

N. Evans

M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen, SA31 1JP - 10.00 am - 12.44 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S.M. Allen, K. Madge and E. Williams.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM

| Councillor | Minute Number | Nature of Interest |
|------------|--|---|
| A. Davies | 9 – Corporate Services Departmental Business Plan 2020/23; | Sister-in-Law is Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance. |

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

4. REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2020/21 to 2022/23

The Committee considered the Revenue Budget Strategy 2020/21 to 2022/23 which had been endorsed by the Executive Board for consultation purposes at its meeting on 6th January 2020. The report, which provided Members with

the current view of the Revenue Budget for 2020/2021 together with indicative figures for the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 financial years, was based on officers' projections of spending requirements and took account of the provisional settlement issued by Welsh Government on 16 December 2019. It also reflected the current departmental submissions for savings proposals. The impact on departmental spending would be dependent upon the final settlement from Welsh Government and the resultant final Budget adopted by County Council.

The budget proposals, as presented in the report, assumed the full delivery of all of the savings proposals submitted, together with the identification and delivery of the shortfall in savings proposals 2021-22 and 2022-23. Further cost reductions would need to be identified and/or larger council tax increases would need to be agreed to deliver a balanced budget for the latter two years.

Given the scale of the pressures and forecasted budget gap, Council Tax increases had been maintained at the previous MTFP levels of 4.89% in each of the three financial years which, it was considered, provided at least some mitigation to the savings proposals which the council needed to consider.

Amongst the issues raised during consideration of the report were the following:

- following the announcement of a new Additional Learning Needs grant of £7.2m across Wales details were awaited of the amount likely to be allocated to CCC;
- in terms of the forecasted increase in school deficit balances (£3m) the Committee was advised that individual deficit plans were being developed and agreed with some schools with a view to achieving financial stability. The budget settlement for schools however was considered to be more favourable than that for Council departments.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to accept the report and endorse the Charging Digest.

5. FIVE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21 - 2024/25

The Committee considered the 5 year capital programme which provided an initial view of the 5 year Capital Programme from 2020/21 to 2024/25. The report formed the basis of the budget consultation process with Scrutiny Committees and other relevant parties and any feedback, along with the final settlement, would inform the final budget report which would be presented to members in March 2020. The proposed capital programme was a capital spend of some £255m over the next 5 years and current funding proposals included external funding of £129m. The report highlighted the provisional settlement received from the Welsh Government which indicated capital funding of £11.834m for the Authority in 2020-21. The funding was made up of Unhypothecated Supported Borrowing of £5.909m and General Capital Grant of £5.925m. In summary, the overall position of the capital programme was funded for the 5 years from 2020/21 to 2024/25.

Amongst the issues raised during consideration of the report were the following:

- Members were advised that in terms of the £500k of new unsupported borrowing allocated to decarbonisation projects there were, as yet, no specific project details;
- In terms of the five-year Fleet Replacement Programme the Head of Financial Services agreed to ascertain whether any eco-related sources of funding were being explored;

- It was clarified that the funding within the Regeneration budget for Llanelli Leisure Centre related to the proposed centre within the Wellness development;
- The Head of Financial Services agreed to circulate details of reserves;
- In response to a question the Head of Property commented that every Head of Service was consulted prior to the disposal of any closed school.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Five Year Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2024/25 be endorsed.

6. TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY 2020-21

The Committee considered the proposed Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2020/21 which would be considered by the Executive Board on the 24th February, 2020, and was reminded that, as part of the requirements of the revised CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, the Council was required to maintain a Treasury Management Policy detailing the policies and objectives of its treasury management activities, and to approve a Treasury Management Strategy annually prior to the commencement of the financial year to which it related. Additionally, under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2003, the Council was required to approve its Treasury Management Prudential Indicators for the coming year. The Head of Financial Services highlighted that the Council would be expected to borrow £29m for the Carmarthenshire led projects within the Swansea Bay City Deal partnership from 2020-21 to 2022-23.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy for 2020/21 and associated appendices be endorsed.

7. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2019/20

The Committee considered the Authority's Corporate Budget Monitoring Report and the Chief Executive's and Corporate Services departmental reports as at 31st October 2019 in respect of the 2019/20 financial year. The report also included an appendix detailing Savings Monitoring 2019-20.

In response to a comment relating to the overspend in the Marketing and Media division it was stated that the service was currently being realigned. There had also been a loss of income streams from external partners such as ERW and alternative potential partnership arrangements were being looked at. In addition it was hoped that the appointment of a Commercial Manager would help generate income

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to receive the report.

8. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2020/2023

The Committee considered the Chief Executive's Departmental Business Plan 2020-23 which outlined the priorities for the department and identified how they supported the 5 Ways of Working and the 7 Goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Amongst the issues raised during consideration of the report were the following:

- It was noted that the Authority continued to work closely with Health colleagues to develop the Integrated Community Hubs and ensure the latest Digital Technology was utilised;
- In response to a query as to when the Community Regeneration Masterplan for the Tyisha ward would be published it was stated that work was still ongoing and the local members were involved;
- The Assistant Chief Executive agreed to circulate details of the development programme being rolled out [with funding from the Wales Union Learning Fund] to enable Managers to better manage mental health issues in the workplace;
- The Committee was advised that there would be no additional costs associated with the introduction of a new corporate brand;
- Members were reassured that a suitable location in Carmarthen town centre was still being sought for a Hwb.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to note the Plan.

9. CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2020/2023

(NOTE: Councillor A. Davies had earlier declared an interest in this item and left the meeting during consideration thereof.)

The Committee considered the Corporate Services Departmental Business Plan 2020-23 which outlined the priorities for the department and identified how they supported the 5 Ways of Working and the 7 Goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

In terms of the trial run to bring forward the accounts closure process it was anticipated that the audited accounts would be reported to the Audit Committee in July.

The Head of Financial Services agreed to ascertain from the Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance whether the Procurement Surgery Sessions were proving to be beneficial.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to note the Plan.

10. ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2020/2023

The Committee considered extracts of the Environment Departmental Business Plan 2020-23 relating to the Property Division which were relevant to the Committee's remit. The Plan extracts outlined the priorities for the department and identified how they supported the 5 Ways of Working and the 7 Goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Amongst the issues raised during consideration of the report were the following:

- In terms of skills gaps, which was hampering recruitment in some areas of the Property Maintenance and Property Design Teams, the Department was being proactive by developing graduate and apprenticeship programmes and, where required, utilising external consultants or agency support. Resources were also being pooled with other local authorities. The

Assistant Chief Executive spoke of the need to convey to schoolchildren the career options available with local authorities and the benefits;

- Arising from the problems referred to in recruiting staff it was considered that the lack of suitable public transport was probably also a contributory factor. It was suggested that this would be a matter for the Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

10.1 to note the Plan;

10.2 that the Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee be requested to consider means of securing improvements to the Joint Transport Plan for South West Wales with a view to maximising opportunities to improve public transport within Carmarthenshire.

11. (DRAFT) STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2020-2024

The Committee considered the [Draft] Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 which detailed how the Council would fulfill its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Specific Duties for Wales. The Authority was required to publish its new plan before 1 April 2020. The draft strategy included four draft objectives that the Council would work towards and report on annually:

- Being a leading employer;
- The needs and rights of people with Protected Characteristics shape the design of services;
- Safe and Cohesive communities that were resilient, fair and equal;
- Improving access to our services and access to our environment.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive Board that the report be approved.

12. DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY REPORT & ACTION PLAN

The Committee considered the Digital Connectivity Report & Action Plan which summarised the current situation across Carmarthenshire in terms of Digital Connectivity and detailed proposed future projects which had the potential to improve digital connectivity and facilitate further digital infrastructure deployment across the County.

In response to a query regarding assistance for communities with poor internet connectivity and mobile signals the Digital Business Transformation Manager advised that funding was available for community groups from various sources details of which were available from the Council's Digital Connectivity Officer;

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Report and Action Plan be endorsed.

13. CARMARTHENSHIRE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD (PSB) MINUTES - SEPTEMBER 2019

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting of the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board [PSB] held on the 12th September 2019. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 required that a designated local government scrutiny committee was appointed to scrutinise the work of the PSB. In Carmarthenshire, the Council's Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee had been designated as the relevant scrutiny committee.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the PSB meeting held on the 12th September 2019 be received.

14. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting to be held on the 18th March 2020 be received.

15. MINUTES - 2ND DECEMBER 2019

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd December 2019 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE