

POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 9 June 2016

PRESENT: Councillor D.W.H. Richards (Chair)

Councillors:

S.M. Allen, D.M. Cundy (In place of R. Thomas), T. Devichand, W.J.W. Evans, W.T. Evans (In place of G. Davies), J.K. Howell, P. Hughes-Griffiths (In place of A. Lenny), A.W. Jones, A.G. Morgan, D. Price, D.E. Williams and J. Williams (In place of J.S. Edmunds)

The following Officers were in attendance:

J. Fearn, Head of Corporate Property
P. Sexton, Head of Audit, Risk and Procurement
N. Daniel, Performance & Information Manager
H. Morgan, Interim Economic Development Manager
J. Wilson, Community Regeneration Manager (Rural)
S. Watkins, Senior TIC Officer
J. Williams, IT Security Officer
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, 3 Spilman Street, Carmarthen - 10.00 am - 12.45 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Davies, J.S. Edmunds, A. Lenny, R. Thomas and L.M. Stephens, Executive Board Member (Human Resources, Efficiencies and Collaboration).

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. DECLARATION OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

5. THIRD SECTOR FUNDING REVIEW

Further to minute 4 of the meeting held on the 30th April 2015 the Committee considered an update report on Third Sector Funding Review findings. The report also detailed the handover arrangement from the TIC Team to a new centralised function to meet the recommendations of the review.

Whilst a target of reducing funding to the 3rd sector by £1million had been set certain areas of spend had been difficult to influence where services were statutory in nature and particularly demand led. However, reductions of £742,075 (or 34%) had been identified due to early dialogue with the organisations and awareness raising of the project. The majority of reductions had been factored within each department's Priority Based Budget and, looking forward, further reductions of £285k within the 3rd sector had already been identified for delivery in 2016/17 and £164k in 17/18.

Members welcomed the report and the savings achieved which, they were assured, had been in areas of duplication of outcomes. The Committee would be kept apprised of further developments.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

- Organisations were being made aware of the need to become more sustainable and less reliant on local authority assistance and this had been relayed at open days with the Third Sector;
- Members welcomed the idea of a map indicating the location of Third Sector organisations in the county;
- Members considered that they should be represented on the proposed 'Challenge Panel' on the basis that it was they who were likely to be held accountable for any decisions to cut or reduce funding to organisations. In response it was stated that the Challenge Panel would continue reviewing Third Sector spend and no decisions to cut funding would be made without the matter being subject to the approval of Members;
- It was queried as to whether the reduction in funding had also led to changes in the quality and range of services provided, to the possible detriment of the service users, particularly where such services had been taken back in-house by the authority. It was suggested that Members be provided with a clearer picture of what had been achieved as a result of the reductions in funding identified.

RESOLVED

5.1 that the progress report and the recommendations contained within be endorsed;

5.2 that the Committee be updated with the Challenge Panel's deliberations.

6. ASSET TRANSFER ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

Further to minute 5 of the meeting held on the 30th April 2015 the Committee considered the annual update on the progress of Community Asset Transfers.

Whilst some good progress was being made with various Community and Town Councils there had been delays in the process mainly due to legal issues, in particular land held on trust, poor condition of assets and a reluctance to take on assets that were perceived to be liabilities until all outstanding issues, whether directly or indirectly related to the premises, were dealt with in advance of any Transfer. The Property Division, working with officers from across the Council, continued to focus efforts on progressing transfers to ensure that services and provision important to local communities for current and future users were retained.

It was noted that the Executive Board report, at its meeting scheduled for 20th June 2016, would be considering a report setting out the position in relation to recreational facilities following the Expressions of Interest [EOI] deadline of 31st March 2016. The report would highlight the properties that had not been the subject of an EOI and seek a decision on the future process and timing for dealing with these assets, together with the future availability of Maintenance Grants.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

- Concerns were raised about the delays, on both sides, associated with legal processes and it was hoped that the Authority's recent appointments of 2 new solicitors would help address the matter;
- In response to a query it was stated that there was no policy to dispose of

- any parks or playgrounds for non sporting or exclusive use but the Executive Board would have to consider future use where there were no expressions of interest though this would be a matter for consultation;
- Concern was expressed that the Authority would still have to maintain areas of land not transferred even if they were no longer used;
- The impact and relevance of the Wellbeing of Future Generations [Wales] Act 2015 on the Asset Transfer Policy was, in response to a comment, being taken into account and the Committee was informed that report templates were also being amended to reflect its implications;
- The Head of Property assured members that they would be consulted on any proposals regarding the disposal of surplus assets for community purposes in their wards.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received and progress noted.

7. AMENDMENTS TO THE EMAIL USAGE & MONITORING POLICY

The Committee considered a report detailing proposed amendments to the Email Usage & Monitoring Policy, which defined Carmarthenshire County Council's policy for the effective and appropriate use of email, in order that it met statutory obligations.

The following issues were raised during consideration of the report:

- Concern was expressed on behalf of members of the Planning and Licensing Committees who often received unsolicited e mails from external sources in connection with planning and licensing applications;
- The IT section was looking into the control of SPAM emails. The Authority already undertook the automated monitoring of text in order that attachments could be checked for viruses which could be damaging to the Council's systems;
- It was suggested that the filtering of email text should not only be able to pick up on obscene language but also threats or security issues particularly in light of the recent bomb threats received at local schools.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

7.1 that the amendments to the Email usage and Monitoring Policy be endorsed;

7.2 that a report be submitted on an annual basis indicating the number of occasions e mails have been tracked.

8. PORTABLE DEVICE USAGE POLICY

The Committee considered a report on the proposed introduction of a Portable Device Usage Policy which would provide strong and clear governance around the use of portable devices by Carmarthenshire County Council staff and Elected Members.

In its drive to mobilise the workforce Carmarthenshire County Council had seen a significant increase in the number of portable devices in use which facilitated greater flexibility for elected members and staff to access various Council systems. With the ongoing drive towards greater mobile working, there was expected to be a continuous increase in the number of portable devices being used.

Some Members expressed concern and frustration that they were unable to connect to the Council's network on their personal devices and were therefore

having to carry around a number of tablets and phones in order to undertake their duties efficiently. Officers referred to the amount of sensitive information held on the Council's network which could be compromised and vulnerable to external threats if it was made available on a device which the Authority did not have control of. Furthermore if a Council-provided ipad was lost the Council could still remotely wipe out the information it held so that it could not be accessed by others. It was suggested that the issue of providing iphones instead of ipads to Members who would prefer a smaller device could be looked into.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Portable Device Usage Policy be endorsed.

9. CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16 AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2016/17

The Committee received the draft combined Annual Report & Improvement Plan (ARIP), which provided a summary of the Council's performance during 2015/16 and an outline of the improvement priorities for 2017/17. The Committee noted that production of the ARIP was a statutory requirement and provided the Council with an opportunity to review, monitor and reflect upon its performance. The Committee also noted that the Council was required to publish its Improvement Plan as soon as it was *reasonably* practicable after the start of the financial year (i.e. April 1st) and also publish an Annual Report on past performance by the end of October each year.

In response to a query as to how many of those who had responded to the survey on rural poverty were actually from rural areas officers agreed to seek clarification. A concern was expressed that rural areas of Carmarthenshire could be losing out on the basis that under European and Welsh Government criteria some town wards were also considered to be 'rural'.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

9.1 that the report be received;

9.2 that the draft Annual Report 2015/16 and Improvement Plan 2016/17 be endorsed and referred to the Executive Board.

10. POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2016/17

The Committee received a report that had been prepared to inform the development of the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee forward work programme for 2016/17, following an informal meeting on the 3rd May 2016. The Committee noted that each scrutiny committee was required to develop and publish an annual forward work programme, identifying issues and reports to be considered during the course of a municipal year.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme for 2016/17 be confirmed.

CHAIR

DATE