

POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 11 October 2017

PRESENT: Councillor A.G. Morgan (Chair)

Councillors:

F. Akhtar, S.M. Allen, T.A.J. Davies, H.L. Davies, J.K. Howell, G.H. John, C. Jones, J.G. Prosser, B. Thomas, D.E. Williams and J.S. Phillips (In place of D. Nicholas)

Also in attendance:

Councillor D.M. Jenkins, Executive Board Member for Resources
L.M. Stephens, Deputy Leader of the Council

The following Officers were in attendance:

C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services
P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance)
N. Daniel, Head of I.C.T.
H. Pugh, Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance
H. Morgan, Economic Development Manager
R James
G. Ayres, Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen - 10.00 am - 12.15 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D.C. Evans and D. Nicholas.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
Councillor A. Davies	Minute No. 6 - Draft Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual Report 2016/17; Minute No. 8 – 2017/18 Well-Being Objectives and Governance Resources Departmental Performance Monitoring Report;	Sister-in-Law is Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance.

3. DECLARATION OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

5. POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

The Committee considered the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for the 2016/17 municipal year which provided an overview of the work of the Committee including:-

- Overview of the Scrutiny Work Programmes
- Key issues considered
- Issues referred to or from Executive Board/Other Scrutiny Committees
- Member attendance at meetings

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to endorse the report.

6. DRAFT - CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2016/17

The Committee considered the Council's draft Annual Report for 2016/17 which included the second year progress report on the Corporate Strategy 2015-20, the Summary Annual Report 2016/17 and the full Annual Report.

When the Corporate Strategy had been published in 2015/20 it had been agreed that an annual progress report would be produced setting out 24 outcome measures to judge the Authority's progress against. The Corporate Strategy would be reviewed for 2018/19 as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 required the Well-being Objectives to be incorporated within the Corporate Strategy.

Whilst in previous years the Annual Report and Improvement Plan had been combined into a single document this year they had been separated because the new Well-being of Future Generations Act required the publication of the Authority's Well-being Objectives by the 31st March and it therefore made sense to incorporate the Improvement Plan for the year ahead within that. It would not have been possible to produce the Annual Report before the year's end.

It was noted that it was a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure the Authority must publish an Annual Report on past performance by the end of October each year.

The following issues were raised on the report:-

- It was acknowledged, in response to a comment, that 'staff sickness absence levels' could be included within the 'Outcome' 'Making Better Use of Resources' as opposed to 'Building a Better Council';
- It was noted that significant developments were taking place across the Authority to address public satisfaction levels which had a tendency to fluctuate from year to year;
- With regard to concerns over the rise in staff sickness levels the Committee was informed that the matter had also been raised at the Community Scrutiny Committee recently which had agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to look at the issue. The Director of Corporate Services stated that Heads of Service were being called to account for sickness absence levels in their respective sections;

- Reference was made to the improved digital access referred to in the report but concern was expressed that mobile phone coverage in some parts of the County, which was equally as important as internet access to businesses, schools and residents, was very poor. In response it was commented that the Executive Board Member –Deputy Leader had raised the matter in a letter to the Head of BT and a response was awaited. Members were assured that this was a high priority for the Authority.

RESOLVED that the draft Annual Report, including the Second Year Progress Report on the Corporate Strategy, be received.

7. 2017/18 WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES AND GOVERNANCE & RESOURCES CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered a report which provided an overview of progress against the 2017/18 actions and measures in each of the 14 Well-being Objectives together with the Governance & Resources delivery plans, as at 30th June 2017 and broken down by Scrutiny.

RESOLVED to note the report.

8. 2017/18 WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES AND GOVERNANCE & RESOURCES DEPARTMENTAL PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered a report detailing progress against the actions and measures in the 2017/18 Well-being Objectives delivery plan relevant to the Committee's remit, as at 30th June, 2017.

The following issues/observations were raised on the report:-

- The Committee was apprised of the action being taken to address sickness absence, as detailed in the report, following concerns raised by Members. This included the establishment of a new Sickness Challenge Forum with Heads of Service being more accountable, as part of their responsibilities, for sickness absence within their divisions. It was emphasised that the current policy relating to sickness absence had been member-led following the Committee's 2009/10 Task and Finish Group's review of sickness absence which had come up with 40 recommendations. In response to a comment it was stated that the role and cost of the occupational health unit was deemed to be good value for money in terms of supporting staff and an invitation was extended to the Committee to visit the unit. However, as stress could be due to domestic circumstances rather than work-related Managers needed support and training to identify the underlying cause. It was suggested that it might be appropriate for the Committee to receive quarterly reports on sickness absence.
- With regard to internet access in Carmarthenshire the Committee was informed that continued pressure was being put on BT by the Authority to secure improved coverage across the county both in terms of broadband and mobile phone coverage;

RESOLVED

8.1 that the report be received;

8.2 that a report on sickness absence be submitted to the next meeting;

8.3 that arrangements be made for the Committee members to visit the occupational health unit followed by an informal session on HR.

9. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR REPORT 2016-2017

The Committee considered the Annual Report listing the treasury management activities which occurred during 2016-2017 in line with the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2016-2017 that was adopted by Council on the 23rd February 2016.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to endorse the report.

10. QUARTERLY TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR REPORT 1ST APRIL 2017 TO 30TH JUNE 2017

The Committee considered the Quarterly Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator Report for the period 1st April 2017- 30th June 2017 which listed the treasury management activities which had occurred during the first quarter of the year in line with the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2017-2018 adopted by Council on the 22nd February 2017.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to endorse the report.

11. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2017/18

The Committee considered the monitoring report that outlined the budgetary position for the 2017/18 financial year as at the 30th June 2017. The report included:

- Authority Corporate Budget Monitoring Report (Appendix A);
- The Chief Executive's and Corporate Services Revenue budget (Appendix B);
- Corporate Capital Programme Monitoring 2017/18 (Appendix C);
- Corporate Capital Programme Monitoring 2016/17 – main Variances (Appendix D);
- The Chief Executive's and Corporate Services Schemes 2016/17 – main variances (Appendix E).

The following issues were raised during consideration of the report:

- In response to a comment the Director of Corporate Services advised that 'efficiency proposals' were constantly monitored as it was accepted that not all would be achievable;
- The Committee was informed that officers were due to meet union representatives to discuss the standby rate which was currently one of the highest in Wales.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to note the report.

12. POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2017/18

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme for 2017/18, which had been prepared in accordance with the Council's Constitution which required Scrutiny Committees to develop and publish annual forward work programmes identifying issues and reports to be considered at meetings during the course of the municipal year.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme for the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for 2017/18 be confirmed subject to the amendments detailed in the Non Submissions report [minute 13 below refers] and the inclusion of a report on sickness absence [minute 8 above refers].

13. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee received the Non-Submission report.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be noted.

14. MINUTES

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 28th April 2017 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE