

POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 30 November 2016

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

Councillors:

W.J.W. Evans, A.W. Jones, A. Lenny, D. Price, D.J.R. Bartlett (In place of J.S. Edmunds), D.E. Williams, J.K. Howell, R. Thomas, T. Devichand and S.M. Allen

The following Officers were in attendance:

C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services;
L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law;
W. Walters, Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy);
J. Fearn, Head of Property;
S. Walters, Interim Economic Development Manager;
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer.

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen - 10.00 am - 11.45 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J.S. Edmunds and A.G. Morgan.

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. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting to be held on 11th January 2017 be noted.

6. CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2016-2019

The Committee considered, prior to its submission to the Executive Board, the Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan 2016-2019 which highlighted the property strategy and requirements over the next 3 years.

The following issues were raised during consideration of the Plan:

- The Authority would look to prevent problems occurring and avoid reacting on a piecemeal basis by developing a robust planned maintenance programme. Whilst this may lead to initial additional costs up front it was anticipated that planned maintenance would see these costs level off;
- Concern was expressed over the limited number of units available in Carmarthen and rural areas for start-up businesses. The Head of Property advised that there were plans to refurbish units at Glanamman but no funds allocated in the capital programme for further units in the Council's own

portfolio. The Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy) advised of grant funding available to support private sector investment;

- The Committee was advised that the relocation of the Customer Service Centre to Carmarthen Library would not affect the new Archive Centre;
- It was noted that issues in connection to the car park at Carmarthen Livestock Market were being addressed. The Head of Property agreed to follow up a concern relating to a blocked gutter;
- In terms of Day Centres for People with learning Disabilities the Head of Property agreed to discuss with the Department and circulate information as to the locations of the 'existing community based facilities' referred to;
- The Head of Property agreed to circulate details of the locations of the 14 public conveniences within the Environment portfolio and confirm when the Danfo contract would expire;
- In response to a question about future management of facilities transferred under the Council's Community Asset Transfer Programme, the Head of Property confirmed that future editions of the Plan could include a specific list of assets transferred, where the Authority had retained the freehold, to ensure that such facilities were managed in accordance with wider strategies;
- It was clarified that the high 'Income – percentage performance against target to generate non-strategic capital receipts' in 2014/15 had been due to the sale of land at Cross Hands to Sainsbury's;
- The indicators 'No longer reported' related to the provision of disabled access to council buildings open to the public which had mostly been completed. The Head of Property confirmed that the suite of performance indicators would continue to be kept under review.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Plan be endorsed.

7. SPEND ON EXTERNAL CONSULTANTS 2015/16

The Committee considered an annual update report that it had requested in respect of expenditure on external consultants and legal expertise. The total spend by all departments for 2015/16 had been £1,481,643.00 which was a significant decrease on the 2014/15 total of £2,232,314.00.

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

- Members welcomed the decrease in spending detailed;
- In response to a query as to whether the Council was getting value for money in appointing external consultants it was pointed out that all appointments would be the subject of a tendering exercise;
- Officers agreed to include a column in future reports indicating where the consultants were based;
- In response to a comment that some local authorities in Wales spent less on external consultants than Carmarthenshire according to recent press reports it was suggested that those authorities possibly undertook less schemes and projects. It was also commented that many of the authorities were unlikely to be as aware of their spending on external consultants as Carmarthenshire;
- Whilst consultants were usually engaged due to the lack of in-house expertise measures were being taken to address this in certain areas.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to receive the report.

8. HALF-YEARLY COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT - 1ST APRIL TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2016

The Committee considered those aspects of the above report within its remit [i.e. Chief Executive's and Corporate Services] which provided statistics and analysis on complaints, compliments and enquiries received and dealt with during Quarters 1 and 2 of the 2016/17 financial year.

It was emphasised that the number of compliments received exceeded the number of complaints. The report also now included a departmental analysis of the nature of complaints and the trends. Members were advised that any complainants contacting them should be directed to the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

9. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2016/17

The Committee considered the Authority's Corporate Budget Monitoring Report and the Chief Executive's and Corporate Services departmental reports as at 31st August 2016 in respect of the 2016/17 financial year.

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

- The Director of Corporate Services stated that whilst schemes which had already secured European funding would not be affected by Brexit securing funds for future schemes would be more of a challenge;
- The Director of Corporate Services agreed to circulate details of 'Temporary Accommodation' within 'Council Fund Housing';
- Reference was made to the number of vacant posts and whether this affected service delivery and could lead to complaints. In response it was stated that many of the vacant posts resulted in savings and the filling of these posts was a matter of budget priorities.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to receive the report.

10. MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR REPORT 1ST APRIL 2016 TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2016

The Committee considered the Mid-Year Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator report for the period 1st April 2016 – 30th September 2016 to ensure that the activities undertaken were consistent with the requirements of the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy for 2016-2017 adopted by Council on the 23rd February, 2016.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the monitoring report be noted.

11. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee received the Non- Submission report.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be noted.

12. POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ACTIONS AND REFERRALS UPDATE

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report detailing progress in relation to actions, requests or referrals emerging from previous scrutiny meetings, be noted.

13. MINUTES

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 14th July 2016 and 5th October 2016 be signed as correct records.

CHAIR

DATE