

POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 11 January 2017

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

Councillors:

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

Also in attendance:

Councillor D. Jenkins, Executive Board Member, Resources;
Councillor T.J. Jones, Executive Board Member, Environmental & Public Protection;
Councillor P.A. Palmer, Executive Board Member, Communities;
Councillor L.M. Stephens, Executive Board Member, Human Resources, Efficiencies, Collaboration and Welsh Language Champion;

The following Officers were in attendance:

O. Bowen, Head of Financial Services;
N. Daniel, Head of ICT;
L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law;
P. Sexton, Head of Audit, Risk and Procurement;
P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance);
W. Walters, Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy);
J. Gravelle, Revenue Services Manager;
H. Morgan, Economic Development Manager;
L. Evans, Policy & Partnership Officer;
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer.

Chamber, 3 Spilman Street, Carmarthen - 10.00 am - 11.15 am

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T. Devichand and W.J.W. Evans.

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 8th February 2017 be noted.

6. REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2017/18 TO 2019/20

The Committee considered the Revenue Budget Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20

which had been endorsed by the Executive Board for consultation purposes at its meeting on 21st November 2016. The report provided Members with the current view of the Revenue Budget for 2017/2018 together with indicative figures for the 2017/2018 and 2019/2020 financial years. The report was based on officers' projections of spending need and took into account the provisional settlement issued by Welsh Government on 19th October 2016. It was reported that the announced provisional settlement was significantly better than expected although the cash neutral settlement would continue to have a negative impact on the Council's resources. The budget proposals would assume full delivery of the £24.6m identified savings. Furthermore, the budget proposals assume a Council tax increase by 2.5% in the Strategy and a 1% movement equated to +/-£790k. Reference was made to the disparities between schools which had surplus reserves and those that were in deficit the latter often being the case where schools found it difficult to fundraise. It was commented that schools often held surplus reserves for specific reasons and officers were engaging with schools to ensure they complied with the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010.

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

7. FIVE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME - 2017/18 - 2021/22

The Committee considered the 5 year capital programme which had been approved by the Executive Board for consultation on the 21st November 21. It was noted that feedback from the consultation process, along with the outcome of the final settlement, would inform the final budget report which would be presented to members for consideration in February, 2017. The proposed capital programme was £208m over the 5 years, and was aimed at delivering a number of key projects that would create jobs and improve the quality of life for the people of Carmarthenshire, with the key investment headings being Schools - £79m; Housing - £10m; Lesiure - £23m, Regeneration - £28m; Environment - £60m.

The report highlighted the provisional settlement received from the Welsh Government on the 19th October 2016, which indicated capital funding of £9.400m for the Authority in 2017-18. The funding was made up of Supported Borrowing of £5.844m and General Capital Grant of £3.556m. It was noted that in the absence of any forward indications by Welsh Government this level of funding had been assumed for each year of the five year programme. In summary, the overall position of the capital programme was funded for the first 4 years from 2017/18 to 2020/21 with a current shortfall of £3.123m in the final year of the programme 2021/22.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Five Year Capital Programme 2017/18 – 2021/22 be endorsed.

8. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S AND CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLANS 2017-20

The Committee considered the Chief Executive's and Corporate Services Departmental Business Plans 2017-20. The Plans outlined the priorities for each department during 2017-20 identifying how they supported the 5 Ways of Working and the 7 Goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The following issues were raised during consideration of the plans:

- In response to a comment the Head of Administration and Legal Services stated that the filling of 2 posts in the legal section should address any delays which had been experienced with regard to Community Asset Transfers;
- The priority to further promote robust sickness management was welcomed;
- Reference was made to Corporate Strategy Focus Point 7 – ‘Ensuring the Council’s governance arrangements and constitution are fit for purpose for future requirements in line with the findings and recommendations of the 2014 WLGA ‘Peer Review’ and it was suggested that progress should, perhaps, be reviewed. The Head of Administration and Legal Services agreed to raise the matter with the Constitutional Review Working Group.

RESOLVED to note the Plans.

9. CARMARTHENSHIRE'S AGEING WELL PLAN - ANNUAL REPORT

Further to minute 8 of the meeting held on the 5th October 2015 the Committee considered Carmarthenshire’s Annual Report for the Ageing Well Plan 2015/2016. The Report (required by the Older Peoples Commission) detailed the Authority’s performance against the following priorities:

- Age Friendly Communities;
- Dementia Supportive Communities;
- Falls Prevention;
- Opportunities for Employment and New Skills;
- Loneliness and Isolation.

The following issues were raised during consideration of the report:

- The importance of Welsh medium provision in providing services for people with dementia was stressed and in response to a query as to whether this was taken into account with staff teams and rotas it was agreed that the Head of Integrated Services be made aware of the issue;
- In terms of loneliness and isolation reference was made to people who lacked the confidence to join social groups or felt isolated in their flats and it was queried as to whether there was any guidance or support available to such individuals. The Asst. Chief Executive [Regeneration & Policy] agreed to raise this with the Community Services Department;
- Reference was made to work being undertaken by the voluntary sector, such as the W.I., to bring older people together for social gatherings;
- Officers agreed to ascertain *how* often highways, footways and lighting infrastructure inspections were undertaken.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to note the Annual Report for the Ageing Well Plan 2015/2016.

10. ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16 ON THE WELSH LANGUAGE

The Committee considered the Annual Report 2015/16 on the Welsh Language necessary in order to comply with the Welsh Language Commissioner’s monitoring arrangements. The report included the statutory and local indicators which measure compliance with the Scheme. It was advised that Standards would replace the current system of Welsh language schemes. The Welsh Language Commissioner gave Carmarthenshire County Council a compliance notice regarding the Welsh Language Standards Regulations on 30th September 2015

which required the Council to comply with most of the standards by 30th March 2016.

Officers were thanked for the work involved in producing the report.

RESOLVED to endorse the Report.

11. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 30TH NOVEMBER 2016

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 30th November 2016 be signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Cllr. G. Davies's name in the list of attendees.

CHAIR

DATE