

# POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 5 December 2018

**PRESENT:** Councillor A.G. Morgan (Chair)

**Councillors:**

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

**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:**

N. Daniel, Head of I.C.T.  
J. Fearn, Head of Property  
R. Hemingway, Head of Financial Services  
P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance)  
G. Ayers, Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager  
H. Font, Employee Wellbeing Manager  
G. Morgan, Head of Democratic Services  
J. Owen, TIC Programme Manager  
A Clarke, Lead Business Partner (HR)  
R James, Performance Planning & Business Officer  
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer

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

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J. Prosser.

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

There were no declarations of personal interest.

**3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions had been received.

**4. SICKNESS ABSENCE MONITORING REPORT - HALF YEAR Q2 2018/19**

Further to minute 5 of the meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2018 the Committee considered a report which provided absence data for the cumulative period Qtr2 2018/19 financial year and a summary of actions to support a reduction in the level of sickness absence. The Cumulative results showed a continuing downward trend compared to Qtr2 2017/18. The People Management Division continued to support and advise Departmental Management Teams, people managers and employees on the Sickness Absence policy and associated procedures and guidance to ensure absence was managed in a timely, consistent and proactive manner. In particular the Committee's attention was drawn to the imminent launch of the Neyber Financial Assistance Scheme to employees which enabled them to access saving products and loans at competitive rates that they might find difficulty accessing via high street lenders and who might otherwise go to pay day lenders as an alternative. This stemmed from recognition that financial concerns might be

a contributor to stress related absence and the scheme was aimed at supporting staff and offering an alternative solution.

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

- The Lead Business Partner [HR] agreed to provide a list of those primary schools which had not yet joined the Schools' Staff Absence Scheme [SSAS] - an alternative means of providing schools with financial cover for replacement staff costs which operated on the principles of mutuality and not for profit;
- The Assistant Chief Executive [People Management] commented that he had been involved in talks with union representatives regarding initiatives to train and support Managers in dealing with mental health issues amongst staff and that, following discussions with the Wales TUC, WULF funding would be used to support further work on raising awareness corporately on Mental Health;
- Reference was made to the Challenge & Review Attendance Forum', [chaired by the Deputy Leader Cllr. Mair Stephens and attended by Cllr. Giles Morgan, Chair of P&R Committee] which provided challenge and support to Heads of Service to maintain a high profile on attendance management;
- The Assistant Chief Executive [People Management] reiterated his comments made at the June meeting that where there were continued concerns over the levels of sickness absence the Committee might wish to invite the relevant Head of Service to a meeting to explain the situation and outline any remedial action;
- A number of comments were made regarding the possible link between the reduction in staff in some areas and the likely stress on remaining staff;
- It was suggested that where the word 'invited' was used in the report it might be more appropriate to use the word 'required';
- The Assistant Chief Executive [People Management] accepted a suggestion that it might be appropriate to compare Carmarthenshire's performance to similar, largely rural local authorities as opposed to authorities such as Merthyr Tydfil.

## **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED**

**4.1 that the report be received;**

**4.2 that arrangements be made for a further Member Development Session on Sickness Absence Monitoring in the new year with a view to members being apprised of the developments taking place to help reduce sickness absence.**

## **5. TRANSFORM, INNOVATE & CHANGE (TIC) PROGRAMME ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18 & BUSINESS PLAN 2018/19 - 2020/2021**

The Committee considered the Transform, Innovate & Change [TIC] Annual Report for 2017/18 and Business Plan 2018/19 – 2020/21. The Annual Report detailed the work of the TIC Programme over the last year, the outcomes achieved to date [savings totalling £7.7955m since 2012] and looked ahead to the programme's work for the next three years [targeted savings totalling £8.376m].

In response to a concern as to whether savings accrued through TIC reviews might compromise the delivery of services to the public in some areas, as well as increasing pressure on staff, the Committee was assured that one of the key objectives of the TIC approach was to protect and improve front line services whilst also being able to provide for a more efficient way of working. The savings also enabled departments to face existing and future financial challenges including unidentified challenges which could result from BREXIT.

The Head of ICT, in response to a comment, acknowledged the substantial financial savings possible if, for each individual, there existed a holistic record which encapsulated information held by the Council and other bodies such as the Local Health Authority. He added, however, that the different systems used by each body did not currently enable this to happen though a 'My Account' platform had been set up for people to interact with the Council itself. It was noted that procurement was also an area being looked at in terms of possible saving particularly where goods and services could be jointly procured with other bodies. Every effort was made to support local businesses.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the TIC Annual Report for 2017/18 & Business Plan 2018/19 – 2020/2021 be received.**

**6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2019/2022**

The Committee considered the Chief Executive's Departmental Business Plan 2019-22 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.

The Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager noted a request for a physical copy of a plan indicating developments in the Llanelli including cycle paths and also agreed to convey to the appropriate officers a request for more local member representation on the Ammanford Town Taskforce.

**RESOLVED to note the Plan.**

**7. ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2019/2022**

The Committee considered extracts of the Environment Departmental Business Plan 2019-22 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:

- The Head of Property, in response to a query, commented that the division was continuing to explore investment in solar and other forms of renewable energy;
- In response to a comment regarding the future of Ammanford Town Hall the Head of Property confirmed that it remained one of the Council's core office buildings and advised that an update on the Corporate Asset Management Plan and Office Accommodation Programme would be presented at the next meeting;
- The Head of Property agreed that the aim to keep occupancy levels of established properties above 85% wherever possible could be reviewed upwards.

**RESOLVED to note the Plan.**

**8. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2018/19**

The Committee considered the Authority's Corporate Budget Monitoring Report and the Chief Executive's and Corporate Services departmental reports as at 31st August 2018 in respect of the 2018/19 financial year. The report also included, for the first time, an appendix detailing Savings Monitoring 2018-19.

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

- Officers acknowledged concerns over the fact that the figures reflected the position almost 4 months previously and agreed to look into the matter, but reassured the committee that the financial position had already been considered by Budget managers and Executive Board in the interim in respect of corrective actions to be undertaken;
- The Head of Financial Services commented that the increasing costs due to the demand for domiciliary care was a concern and a pressure on the budget but that the pressure would be greater if the people concerned were in care homes;
- In response to a concern that the severance of a post might increase pressure on other staff the Assistant Chief Executive [People Management] commented that the post duties would have to cease under the severance criteria;
- Concern was expressed over the pressure on the Music Services for Schools particularly in view of its cultural contribution to the county.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to receive the report.**

**9. MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR REPORT 1ST APRIL 2018 TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2018**

The Committee considered the Mid-Year Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator report for the period 1st April 2018 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018 to ensure that the activities undertaken were consistent with the requirements of the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy for 2018-2019 adopted by Council on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2018.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the monitoring report be noted.**

**10. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT**

The Committee received the Non-Submission report.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

**11. 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.**

**12. FORTHCOMING ITEMS**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting to be held on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2019 be received.

**13. MINUTES - 11TH OCTOBER 2018**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 11<sup>th</sup> October 2018 be signed as a correct record.

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**CHAIR**

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**DATE**