

POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Friday, 11 January 2019

PRESENT: Councillor A.G. Morgan (Chair)

Councillors:

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

Also in attendance:

Councillor L.M. Stephens, Deputy Leader of the Council

The following Officers were in attendance:

C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services
J. Fearn, Head of Property
R. Hemingway, Head of Financial Services
G. Ayers, Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager
S Morgan, Strategic Asset Manager
C. Powell, Principal Auditor
J. Williams, IT Security Officer
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen 10.00 am - 12.44 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

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

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
A. Davies	6 – Corporate Services Departmental Business Plan 2019/22;	Sister-in-Law is Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance.
K. Lloyd	4 - Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation 2019/20 -2021/22	Niece is Shared Lives Carer;
K. Madge	4 - Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation 2019/20 -2021/22	Daughter works in Social Services.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

4. REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2019/20 to 2021/22

The Committee considered the Revenue Budget Strategy 2019/20 to 2021/22 which had been endorsed by the Executive Board for consultation purposes at its meeting on 19th November 2018. The report provided Members with the current view of the Revenue Budget for 2019/2020 together with indicative figures for the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 financial years. The report was based on officers'

projections of spending need and took into account the provisional settlement issued by Welsh Government on 9th October 2018. It was reported that the announced provisional settlement had been better than anticipated though the reduction on the current year's settlement, which had an enhanced impact when inflationary factors, demographic and demand changes were considered, had a significant negative impact on the Council's resources.

The budget proposals, as presented in the report, assumed the full delivery of all of the savings proposals submitted, together with the identification and delivery of the shortfall in savings proposals 2020-21, and 2021-22. Further cost reductions in the region of £9m needed to be identified and/or larger council tax increases would need to be agreed to deliver a balanced budget in each of the three years. Given the scale of the budget gap forecasted Council Tax increases had been increased from the previous MTFP [Medium Term Financial Plan] to 4.89% in each of the three financial years which provided at least some mitigation to the savings proposals.

Officers were thanked for their work in preparing the report and appendices.

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

- The Head of Corporate Services, in response to a query, commented that he would be willing, via One Voice Wales, to provide assistance with any training required by community councils on budget management;
- The Head of Corporate Services agreed to ascertain whether Land Charges Unit reclaimed VAT on search fees;
- The Head of Corporate Services agreed, in future, to include in his report, relevant questions raised and responses given at the budget consultation sessions involving Councillors prior to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee;
- Concerns were reiterated over the possible economic and budgetary implications of BREXIT;
- Reference was made to the jobs which could be lost as a result of efficiency savings and the knock on effect for the local economy.

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

5. FIVE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2019/20 - 2023/24

The Committee considered the 5 year capital programme which had been approved by the Executive Board for consultation on the 17th December 2018. 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 Council for consideration in February, 2019. The proposed capital programme was a capital spend of some £260m over the next 5 years and current funding proposals included external funding of £128m. The report highlighted the provisional settlement received from the Welsh Government which indicated capital funding of £9.437m for the Authority in 2019-20. The funding was made up of Supported Borrowing of £5.867m and General Capital Grant of £3.570m. In summary, the overall position of the capital programme was funded for the 5 years from 2019/20 to 2023/24.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that the Welsh Government had recently announced its approval for the Band B 21st Century Schools programme running to 2024 with the significant change in the intervention rate from 50% to

65% for schools generally and from 50% to 75% for special schools. This had provided the authority with scope to deliver more schools within the £129.5m Band B programme of which it funded £70m.

It was noted that also included were the City Deal Schemes for the Wellness Village and Yr Egin. The Llanelli Leisure Centre and the Llanelli area review had also been identified as key components of the Wellness Village.

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

- In response to queries and concerns relating to the future of the Wellness Village scheme following recent suspensions at Swansea University the Director of Corporate Services advised that the Collaboration Agreement had, as reported to Council on the 12th December 2018, been terminated, and officers were working with Hywel Dda Local Health Board, University of Wales Trinity St David and Swansea University to bring forward an alternative delivery model that would see the Council itself facilitating the private investment needed. Members were assured that there were no financial risks for the Authority and the only expenditure which had been committed had been utilised for planning purposes and infrastructure. The Director of Corporate Services agreed to apprise the Committee members of any further developments via e mail;
- The Director of Corporate Services clarified that 'Prudential Borrowing' referred to un-supported borrowing funded directly by the Authority.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

5.1 that the Five Year Capital Programme 2019/20 – 2023/24 be endorsed;

5.2 that an update report on the Wellness Village scheme be submitted to the next meeting.

6. CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2019/2022

(NOTE: Councillor A. Davies had earlier declared an interest in this item and left the meeting during consideration thereof.)

The Committee considered the Corporate Services 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 Director of Corporate Services, in response to a question, advised that the difficulties in recruiting experienced and / or qualified procurement personnel were due mainly to the fact that there were too few procurement experts in the jobs market. The Department was working with Cardiff University which operated courses in this field.

RESOLVED to note the Plan.

7. CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN AND OFFICE ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

Further to minute 6 of the meeting held on the 30th November 2016 the Committee considered reports detailing progress made against the actions highlighted in the

Corporate Asset Management Plan [AMP] and the future programme for the Administrative Estate in light of adopting agile working principles. In addition to the Corporate AMP, the Office Accommodation Programme had recently been revised and covered various matters such as the portfolios performance, sustainability issues and key areas of change. One of the key areas would be the outcomes of adopting of agile working principles.

The following issues were raised during consideration of the reports:

- The Head of Property, in response to a question, commented that the Council was committed to ensuring the vitality of the town centres, and would continue to retain or locate offices in these locations where possible;
- In terms of providing additional assistance to community councils which had taken on assets transferred from the County Council there was unlikely to be further funding available and it was reiterated that some community councils had always been responsible for the maintenance of such assets;
- The Head of Property commented that the Agile Working Investment Plan had been delivered within budget to date. It was pointed out however that significant investment in County Hall was necessary and there had been little interest in some of the buildings in Carmarthen which the Authority had vacated and put up for sale. Some buildings which had been sold still remained empty and had not been redeveloped;
- It was noted that Ty'r Nant, Trostre, was on the market as part of a wider redevelopment portfolio;
- The Head of Property advised that renewable energy initiatives such as solar panels and wind turbines continued to be explored.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the reports be received.

8. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

Reference was made to the Pay Policy Statement 2019 included in the Executive Board's Forward Work Programme and the Head of Corporate Services agreed to ascertain if it was appropriate to come before the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting to be held on the 6th February 2019 be received.

9. MINUTES - 5TH DECEMBER 2018

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 5th December 2018 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE