

POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 13 June 2019

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

Councillors:

S.M. Allen, K.V. Broom, D.M. Cundy, T.A.J. Davies, H.L. Davies, J.K. Howell, G.H. John, C. Jones, K. Madge, J.G. Prosser and D.E. Williams;

Also in attendance:

Councillor E. Dole, Leader of the Council;
Councillor L.M. Stephens, Deputy Leader of the Council;
Councillor D.M. Jenkins, Executive Board Member – Resources;

The following Officers were in attendance:

C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services;
P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance);
G. Ayers, Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager;
A Clarke, Lead Business Partner (HR);
H. Font, Fitness for Work Manager;
J. Williams, IT Security Officer;
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer.

Chamber, 3 Spilman Street, Carmarthen: 10.00 am - 12.30 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

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. CARMARTHENSHIRE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD WELL-BEING PLAN ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr. Barry Liles, Principal of Coleg Sir Gar and Chairman of the Public Services Board, who presented the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board Annual Report 2018-19. This was the first Carmarthenshire Well-being Plan annual report and it covered progress for the period 2018-19 after the Plan had been published in May 2018. Much of the progress to date had focused on establishing and developing project plans for a series of Delivery Groups that had been tasked with making progress against the Well-being Plan's short-term actions. The report provided information on:

- PSB structure
- Regional working
- Five ways of working
- Delivery Group progress reports
- Safer Communities Partnership
- Development areas.

Mr. Liles commented that the disparity of funding between PSBs and the Regional Partnership Board was a concern.

It was a requirement of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that a local authority scrutiny committee was responsible for the overview and scrutiny of the work of the PSB and in Carmarthenshire, the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee had been identified as the lead scrutiny committee.

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

- Mr. Liles concurred with the view that every effort should be made to ensure food consumed in Carmarthenshire was produced and supplied locally. He added that the issue of food packaging was also being considered, particularly where locally produced food was transported out of the county for packaging;
- With regard to a comment that entrepreneurship should be encouraged and promoted the Leader referred to the success of the Beacon Bursary in promoting and encouraging the growth of small / medium enterprises. Reference was also made to initiatives and space available at Yr Egin to develop the creative industry and culture;
- Mr. Liles, in response to a comment, assured the Committee that there was an equal commitment from all partners represented on the PSB;
- With regard to Brexit Mr. Liles commented that there was a concern about the possible outcome but equally it could give rise to new opportunities;
- The work being undertaken by the PSB was welcomed but the partners were urged to address, as a priority, issues related to isolation and the growing dependence on food banks.

Whereupon the Chair thanked Mr. Liles for attending.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board Annual Report 2018-19 be received.

5. CARMARTHENSHIRE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD (PSB) MINUTES

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting of the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board held on the 25th March 2019. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 required that a designated local government scrutiny committee was appointed to scrutinise the work of the PSB. In Carmarthenshire, the Council's Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee had been designated as the relevant scrutiny committee.

The following issues were raised on the minutes:

- With regard to the reference to a transport infrastructure group in Powys the Committee was advised that there was currently no such group in Carmarthenshire but the PSB had discussed issues relating to the development of community transport. It was suggested that town and community councils could, perhaps, be more involved in local transport provision in their areas. The Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager advised that whilst access to services was an issue which had been raised of equal relevance to transport was the provision of locally based facilities. Car sharing schemes were also being developed. Reference was made to the success of the Bwcabus scheme in countering rural isolation;
- the comment of Rob Quin, recorded in the PSB minutes, 'that he had sat on a number of PSBs and none of the others operated as well as this one with the level of commitment and expertise shown by members.' was welcomed;

- It was noted that the CAVS representative on the PSB was leading on the Strong Connections Delivery Group with a view to developing a Volunteering Strategy;
- With regard to housing it was noted that the PSB was engaged in the Local Development Plan process.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the PSB meeting held on the 25th March 2019 be received.

6. SICKNESS ABSENCE MONITORING REPORT - FULL YEAR/Q4 2018/19

Further to minute 7.2 of the meeting held on the 21st March 2018 the Committee considered a report which provided sickness absence data for the cumulative period Q4 2018/19 financial year plus a summary of actions.

The Assistant Chief Executive [People Management] commented that whilst the corporate sickness absence target for 2018/19 had been narrowly missed the results overall were encouraging in that sickness absence rates had reduced. Furthermore, pockets of underreporting of sickness were being addressed and data from the WLGA indicated that the Authority was probably ranked 5th or 6th out of the 22 local authorities in Wales in terms of least number of days lost due to sickness. In terms of the 'better performing' local authorities it was considered that account should be taken of the fact that some of those authorities outsourced services which Carmarthenshire County Council retained.

It was highlighted that the Wales Union Learning Fund [WULF] had confirmed its intention to recommend the Carmarthenshire model for raising mental health awareness to Welsh Government as a model of best practice for other authorities to emulate.

Amongst the issues raised on the report were the following:

- Reference was made to the need to discourage or even prevent the sending of work-related e mails outside normal office hours and particularly late at night or early morning in view of concerns that this could be stressful for both the sender and the recipient. The Assistant Chief Executive [People Management] responded that the issue had already been raised at Corporate Management Team and that he would raise it again in view of the concern expressed;
- It was considered that the profile of the Occupational Health Team and its excellent work needed to be raised amongst staff;
- The Employee Wellbeing Manager agreed to extend invitations to attend Mental Health First Aid Training to elected members;
- It was commented that whilst the reduction in the staff sickness absence level was to be welcomed it was still higher than every non-profit sector comparator. In response the Employee Wellbeing Manager reiterated the role of the Challenge and Review Forum which had interviewed most Heads of Service regarding sickness management and emphasised good practice where appropriate. It was also queried as to why the Health Service was not included as a direct comparator;
- The Employee Wellbeing Manager commented that the Occupational Health Team had provided assistance to staff at special schools and there had been a significant reduction in absence;
- Officers agreed to circulate a divisional profile including sickness absence data alongside other people management data such as overtime costs, agency costs etc where a Head of Service is invited to P&R Scrutiny to discuss sickness absence performance monitoring;

- Officers agreed that the figures for the number of employees from each department seen at the Occupational Health Centre could be provided as percentages of each department's employees;
- Officers noted a suggestion that it might be beneficial to employ a GP within the Occupational Health Team.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked officers for organising the recent visit to the Occupational Health Unit.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

7. 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 in respect of the 2018/19 financial year as at 28th February 2019.

It was noted that in some budget areas, particularly in the Communities Department, realignment of services had helped reduce costs but had increased pressures such as moves to keep people in their own homes longer. Within the Older People Division it was pointed out that the use of agencies enabled the Communities Department to recruit staff quicker but there was no additional cost to the Authority. In response to the unachievable car parking income target the Committee was reminded that Council had agreed not to increase fees.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to receive the report.

8. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee received the Non-Submission report.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be noted.

9. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting to be held on the 18th July 2019 be received.

10. MINUTES - 26TH APRIL 2019

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

CHAIR

DATE