

# **POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **25<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2015**

**Present:** Councillor D.W.H. Richards (Chair)

**Councillors:** D.M. Cundy, G. Davies (Vice-Chair), J.S. Edmunds, J.K. Howell, A. Lenny, A.G. Morgan, D. Price and D.E. Williams.

**Councillor J. James – Substitute for Councillor A.W. Jones**  
**Councillor M.K. Thomas – Substitute for Councillor J. Williams**

**Also in attendance:**

**Councillor L.D Evans – Executive Board Member (Equalities) (Item 9)**

**The following officers were in attendance:**

Mr. C. Moore – Director of Corporate Services  
Mrs. W. Walters – Assistant Chief Executive (ACE) Regeneration & Policy  
Mr. J. Fearn – Head of Corporate Property  
Mr. P. Sexton – Head of Audit, Risk & Procurement  
Mr. J. Roberts - Head of IT & Central Support Services  
Mrs. G. Ayers – Corporate Policy & Partnership Manager  
Mrs. H. Font – Fitness for Work Manager  
Mr. R. Edgecombe – Legal Services Manager  
Ms. G. Morgan – Democratic Services Manager  
Mrs. A. Wood – HR Strategic Manager  
Mrs. B. James - Welsh Language Development Officer (Item 11)  
Ms. L. Lawrence – Principal HR Officer  
Ms. B. Dolan – Senior Consultant

**Observing:**

Ms. A. Thomas – Diversifying Democracy Mentee

**Venue:** Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen (2:00pm – 4:05pm)

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T. Bowen, W.J.W. Evans, A.W. Jones and J. Williams

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor P.A. Palmer, Executive Board Member (Community Champion, Customer Focus & Policy, Anti-Poverty Champion) and Councillor L.M. Stephens, Executive Board Member (Human Resources, Efficiencies & Collaboration and Welsh Language Champion).

## 2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Item	Nature of Interest
Councillor A.G. Morgan	Item 8	He leases an industrial unit in Delta Lakes, Llanelli

## 3. DECLARATION OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

## 4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None were received.

## 5. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee was provided with a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next scheduled meeting on Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> of January 2016.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to note the forthcoming items.**

## 6. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2015/16

The Committee considered the monitoring report that outlined the budgetary position for the 2015/16 financial year as at the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2015. The report included:

- Corporate Revenue Budget (Appendix A);
- The Chief Executive's and Resources Revenue budget (Appendix B);
- Corporate Capital Programme 2015/16 (Appendix C) and
- The Chief Executive's and Resources Capital Programme 2015/16 (Appendix D)

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

It was asked what the latest position was. The Director of Corporate Services stated that there had been no significant movement.

Concern was expressed about the pressures caused by school based EVR and redundancy costs. The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that was outside our control and a significant concern. They were working with schools to make them realise the impact of making staff redundant rather than transferring them between schools. It was also a concern that staff were being made redundant and then re-employed by another school.

Further information was requested in relation to slippage on some savings proposals this year. The Director of Corporate Services advised that there was a

significant piece of work by HR on standby savings which included negotiations with the employee side in terms of changing the rates. It was unlikely that the savings would be delivered this year. There had been a 6 – 8 month delay in delivering savings in Social Care however the changes had started to come through.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to receive the report.**

**7. HALF YEARLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT – 1ST APRIL 2015 TO 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2015**

The Committee considered the report, which provided an overview of how the Authority was performing. The report included information regarding: Improvement Plan Monitoring – Actions & Measures (Report A); Outcome Agreement Grant (OAG) Monitoring (Report B); Sickness Absence (Report C); and Compliments / Complaints (Report D).

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

The reasons for sickness absence were referred to and it was noted that musculo-skeletal, back and neck problems were the highest cause after stress, mental health and fatigue. The Fitness for Work Manager advised that these had improved from last year due to a programme of training and refreshers in manual handling and ensuring risk assessments were in place.

The CIPD surveys on sickness absence were noted. The Fitness for Work Manager stated that these were across all sectors in the UK. The figures showed favourable comparisons for the Council's performance in terms of similar sectors in the private sector. The Principal HR Officer added that the survey results were published in September and October and provided useful comparisons.

**RESOLVED that the monitoring report be received.**

**8. HALF YEARLY DEPARTMENTAL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT – 1ST APRIL 2015 TO 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2015**

*Councillor A.G. Morgan declared an interest in that he leases an industrial unit in Delta Lakes, Llanelli.*

The Committee considered the performance management report which provided an overview of how the Chief Executive's and Resources Departments had performed last year. The report included information relating to:

- Heads of Service Overview of Performance (Report A)
- Improvement Plan Monitoring – Combined Actions and Measures Report (Report B)

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

An update was requested in relation to the Hub in Llanelli, the Skype pilot and the future use of Ty Elwyn. The ACE Regeneration & Policy stated that visitors to the

Hub had been surveyed and the majority preferred it as a location for the Customer Services Centre. It was hoped to replicate the model in Ammanford and Carmarthen. There had been some problems with the Skype pilot in terms of connectivity in some rural areas and also some complaints about lack of privacy. It was hoped to secure funding to expand the scheme across rural Carmarthenshire. The Head of Corporate Property advised that the refurbishment of the ground floor at Ty Elwyn was due to be completed in the next few weeks with a small reception area and office accommodation. Ty Elwyn would also be a single location for the Children's Services Teams. There would also be an opportunity to base a police presence in the building. Cashiers were currently still located in Coleshill but would re-locate to the Hub when it was made ready.

Reference was made to the Rural Poverty Study looking at issues that affect rural communities. In response to a question, the ACE Regeneration & Policy confirmed and that the study would be used to ensure that funding went to the right areas. She agreed to circulate the study to the Committee.

It was asked whether or not the Audit section had enough resources. The Head of Audit, Risk & Procurement advised that the team currently comprised 9.4 FTE and that he would not want fewer resources than that. The Director of Corporate Resources added that they were actually looking at increasing the resource in light of issues that had arisen over the last year.

The Procurement Fitness Check was referred to and it was asked what issues remained unresolved as well as the overall direction of travel. The Head of Audit, Risk & Procurement stated that a focus group of Committee members would be meeting shortly to look in detail at the current position in Procurement. One of the main issues that remained unresolved related to category management which was the model used by the National Procurement Service (NPS) and not feasible with a team of 6 FTE in the Corporate Procurement Unit. Welsh Government also had 1 officer for every £10m spend. The Chief Executive was looking at opportunities to collaborate with Pembrokeshire in terms of category management. In response to an additional question, the Head of Audit, Risk & Procurement agreed to include a detailed analysis of Fitness Check in the Procurement Annual Report being presented to the Committee early in the New Year.

Reference was made to the Corporate ICT Strategy finalised earlier in the year which included implementing a "Bring your own device" policy. It was asked if this still the intention. The Head of IT & Central Support Services advised that he did not subscribe to the latter, preferring instead that officers were supplied with Council equipment. He was looking at commonalities with Pembrokeshire. Carmarthenshire would need to revisit the Corporate ICT Strategy. The ACE Regeneration & Policy added that there were significant information governance and security issues with a "Bring your own device" policy and the Corporate Management Team would be reviewing the issue as part of the new ICT Strategy being developed by the Head of IT & Central Support Services.

It was noted that the Payroll section had co-located with Human Resources. The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that the new arrangements were working well.

The high level of occupation of the Council's 400 industrial units was welcomed. It was asked however if the number of units was sufficient, particularly in rural areas where it was extremely difficult to get planning permission to develop outbuildings and new builds. The Head of Corporate Property advised that bids were being made for European funding for small industrial unit developments in the future and in rural areas. In response to an additional question about the potential to develop former schools into industrial units rather than residential use, he stated that some former schools, such as White Mill, had been sold for business use.

The poor condition of the units in Glanamman was referred to and it was asked if anything was proposed to improve them. The Head of Corporate Property confirmed that these units were amongst the 4% unoccupied and that they in poor condition. A bid to the proposed draft capital programme included proposals to refurbish and extend the estate as well as funding for development of further start up units for small businesses.

In response to a question about asset transfers in the Rural and Town areas of Llanelli, the Head of Corporate Property noted that Llanelli Rural Council, having accepted the asset transfers of parks in Swiss Valley and a few other places, had recently indicated that it was not interested in any further transfers. Llanelli Town Council had also confirmed that, whilst it was willing to support the funding of certain maintenance activities, it was not willing to accept transfer of those assets. It was intended to keep discussions open to try to encourage more transfers. He added that any parks or playgrounds that had not received an expression of interest by the end of March 2016 would be reported to the Executive Board and then the current policy was then to consult on ceasing to maintain those facilities not transferred. He also noted that some facilities were being transferred to clubs and sporting associations, not just to Community and Town Councils.

**RESOLVED to receive the report.**

## **9. DRAFT STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2016 – 2020**

The Committee considered the draft Carmarthenshire County Council Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020 which had been prepared to outline how the Council will meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Specific Duties for Wales.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

The Committee welcomed the Plan which was concisely and clearly written. It was asked how success would be measured. The ACE Regeneration & Policy advised that an action plan would be developed in February 2016 which would include assessing progress against the Plan's priorities and objectives. Annual reports would be presented to the Committee.

It was asked whether or not the Plan should include reference to the Living Wage. The ACE Regeneration & Policy stated that this issue had not been included as it would not necessarily be considered as an equalities matter and was within the remit of the Council's Pay Policy. The Director of Corporate Services added that there were also links with the budget and reminded the Committee that there were

now 2 Living Wages following the Chancellor's announcement about the National Living Wage. There would be stark choices on delivering it in the future.

**RESOLVED to endorse the report.**

#### **10. SPEND ON EXTERNAL CONSULTANTS 2014/15**

The Committee considered an annual update report that it had requested in respect of expenditure on external consultants and legal expertise.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

It was asked what governance and management analysis arrangements were in place regarding the expenditure. The Head of Audit, Risk & Procurement stated that the main spend was in the Environment Department and there was significant challenge in relation to the £1.7m spent in 2014/15. The Property Design & Projects Manager was preparing a report for the Corporate Management Team regarding the resources required to increase in-house capacity and reviewing the current Gateway and design framework arrangements. The ACE Regeneration & Policy added that business plans, evaluations and feasibility studies were required by many of the EU funded programmes and in some cases required independent evaluation hence external consultants had to be used. She signed off all applications for external expertise.

It was noted that the reasons for expenditure on external legal expertise were often lack of in-house capacity. It was asked if anything was being done to address this. The Legal Services Manager advised that 2 additional property solicitors were being recruited.

**RESOLVED to receive the report.**

#### **11. WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME ANNUAL REPORT 2015/15**

The Committee considered the Annual Report on the Welsh Language Scheme 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 30 September 2015 which requires the Council to comply with most of the standards by 30 March 2016.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

It was noted that the last staff linguistic survey had been carried out during 2011 and that the response rate, particularly in Education and Children's Services, had been disappointing. It was asked whether or not a further survey was planned. The Corporate Policy & Partnership Manager stated that this was a requirement of the new Standards. It was easier to survey staff with access to computers and

discussions were ongoing on how to survey those that did not. The survey had to be carried out before the end of March 2016.

Comments were made about the need for people to feel free to speak in their language of choice. The ACE Regeneration & Policy advised that personal confidence in speaking Welsh at any level was an issue that needed to be encouraged and that everyone had a role to play in this.

**RESOLVED to endorse the report.**

## **12. WELSH LANGUAGE SKILLS STRATEGY**

The Committee was advised that the Council developed its first Language Skills Strategy in 2008, in order to ensure that sufficient skills were available in the workplace (through learning and development and recruitment) to meet the requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme. Further to the research and recommendations made by the Census Working Group, the Strategy had been reviewed in order to manage and plan staff language skills. The aim of the Strategy was also to ensure that the Council implements the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards, specifically the Operational Standard.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

It was asked who decided the linguistic skills level for new positions. The Corporate Policy & Partnership Manager advised that new levels under the ALTE framework were being introduced in the new Strategy which included a process for conducting assessments of the requirements for each new post. This was carried out by senior management and in some cases following advice by the Corporate Policy team.

**RESOLVED to endorse the Strategy.**

## **13. MID-YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR REPORT (1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL TO 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2015)**

The Committee considered the Annual Report listing the treasury management activities which occurred during the first half of the year in line with the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2015-2016 that was adopted by Council on the 24th February 2015.

**RESOLVED to endorse the report.**

## **14. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT**

The Committee received an explanation for the non-submission of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, ICT Strategy and Combined Spend on Private Sector and Third Sector Services reports.

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

**15. POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ACTIONS AND REFERRALS UPDATE**

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

**16. TO SIGN AS CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 5<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2015**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5<sup>TH</sup> October 2015, be signed as a correct record.

**SIGNED:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair)

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_