

POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 5 October 2016

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

Councillors:

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

Also in attendance:

Councillor D. Jenkins, Executive Board Member (EBM), Resources;
Councillor L.M. Stephens, Executive Board Member (EBM), Human Resources, Efficiencies, Collaboration and Welsh Language Champion;

The following Officers were in attendance:

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

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen - 10.00 am - 11.20 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A.W. Jones.

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 (NONE RECEIVED)

No public questions were received.

5. 2016/17 IMPROVEMENT PLAN CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered a report which provided an overview of how each Scrutiny function was performing against the actions and measures in the Authority's 2016/17 Improvement Plan, as at 30th June 2016.

The Economic Development Manager, in response to a query, agreed to seek clarification as to why the breakdown figures for Education & Children's Services Scrutiny figures did not add up.

RESOLVED to note the report.

6. 2016/17 IMPROVEMENT PLAN DEPARTMENTAL PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered the 2016/17 Improvement Plan Departmental Performance Monitoring report which provided an overview of how the Chief Executive's and Corporate Services' Departments had performed in quarter 1 [1st April-30th June] of 2016/17.

The following issues were raised during consideration of the report:

- In response to a query regarding the significant delay in responding to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests the Economic Development Manager explained to the Committee that many of the requests were complex, often requiring data from multiple facets of the Authority and from a number of previous years. She added that in light of the number of requests being received the target would be reviewed;
- The Head of Financial Services, in response to a query, agreed to furnish members with details of the current proposals by Welsh Government following the withdrawal of the Wales Retail (Rate) Relief Scheme;
- An assurance was sought that the combined approach by the Street Scene and Building Services sections for acquiring sewerage and gulley emptiers would not impact on the service such a vehicle provided. The Head of Audit, Risk and Procurement stated that this was just one aspect of where the aforementioned sections were working together to improve current provisions and achieve efficiency savings but he would seek the reassurance sought from the service in question;
- Officers agreed to ascertain from the Electoral Services Division as to how prevalent in Carmarthenshire was the problem of people not registering to vote;
- In response to a query arising from 'Action 12007' the Head of Administration and Law advised that the Constitutional Review Working Group [CRWG] was due to meet shortly to review the changes it had recommended since its establishment and to consider whether any refinements were necessary. She also agreed to take back to CRWG a comment that the reference to improving 'the openness and transparency of the Council' should incorporate 'inclusion' also;
- the Interim Head of ICT Services stated that his service had engaged with Directors, Heads of Service and staff to establish how best ICT could meet their Service needs. In addition, Members were informed that a new Digital Transformation Strategy would be developed over the next 6 months with further extensive engagement with all service areas, elected members and partners and the Strategy would be aligned to the Corporate Strategy to ensure a more agile mobile workforce;
- The Assistant Chief Executive (People Management and Performance) informed Committee advised that the proposed joint working arrangement with Pembrokeshire County Council on ICT matters had stalled with the latter having appointed its own Head of ICT. Carmarthenshire County Council remained a willing partner however on collaborative working.

RESOLVED to note the report.

7. STRATEGY TO PROMOTE THE WELSH LANGUAGE

The Committee considered the draft Strategy to Promote the Welsh Language which the Council was required to publish as part of the Welsh Language Standards. The Strategy, which had been developed in partnership with the County's Strategic Welsh Language Forum, provided an opportunity for the Authority to work and share best practice with other organisations across the county through the Strategic Welsh Language Forum.

The following issues were raised during consideration of the draft Strategy:

- Members were advised that the Authority already collaborated with neighbouring local authorities on aspects of the strategy;
- It was suggested that, aside from the aforementioned Strategy which related to the Welsh language, consideration should be given to the possibility of introducing a separate strategy which would encourage people who had left Wales to return. The Policy and Partnership Officer agreed that such a strategy would be welcome but further research was needed as to why people had initially moved away and this would be a priority within the first 18 months of the Strategy's adoption;
- Concern was expressed that the Strategy was directed primarily at the public sector rather than the private sector. The Policy and Partnership Officer responded that there were many businesses in Carmarthenshire which operated bilingually and there was great emphasis on partnership working.

RESOLVED that the draft Strategy be endorsed.

8. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered the monitoring report that outlined the budgetary position for the 2016/17 financial year as at the 30th June 2016. The report included:

- Authority Corporate Budget Monitoring Report (Appendix A);
- The Chief Executive's and Corporate Services Revenue budget (Appendix B);
- Corporate Capital Programme Monitoring 2016/17 (Appendix C);
- Corporate Capital Programme Monitoring 2016/17 – main Variances and
- The Chief Executive's and Resources Capital Programme 2015/16 (Appendix D).

The following issues were raised during consideration of the report:

- In response to a query the Committee was informed that the standby savings had been identified following a review by the TIC [Transform, Innovate and Change] team which had identified that some employees had been receiving standby payments in line with their duties for a number of years but had never been called out;

- Reference was made to the costs associated with enhanced voluntary redundancy at schools which the Council had had to cover and it was noted that options relating to the management of the costs and the potential sharing of some of the cost with schools was being explored;
- Concern was expressed that some of the £632k underspend on extra care homes had been utilised to purchase the Guildhall, Carmarthen, rather than on social care. The Head of Financial Services confirmed that £225k of this money had been vired for that purpose following the Executive Board's decision to acquire the building.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to endorse the report.

9. QUARTERLY TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR REPORT

The Committee considered the Quarterly Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator Report for the period 1st April 2016-30th June 2016 which listed the treasury management activities which had occurred during the first quarter of the year in line with the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2016-2017 adopted by Council on the 23rd February 2016.

RESOLVED to endorse the report.

10. POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

The Committee considered the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for the 2015/16 municipal year which provided an overview of the work of the Committee including:-

- Overview of the Scrutiny Work Programmes
- Key issues considered
- Issues referred to or from Executive Board/Other Scrutiny Committees
- Member attendance at meetings

The Head of Administration and Law, in response to a comment, agreed to provide the Committee with details of the Executive Board's Forward Work Programme on a quarterly basis.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to endorse the report.

11. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting to be held on 11th November, 2016 be noted.

12. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th June 2016 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE