

POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 20 October 2021

PRESENT: Councillor A.G. Morgan (Chair)

Councillors:

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

Also in attendance Councillors:

E. Dole, Leader of the Council
L.M. Stephens, Deputy Leader of the Council and Leader of the Independent Group
C.A. Davies, Cabinet Member for Communities and Rural Affairs
D.M. Jenkins, Cabinet Member for Resources

The following Officers were in attendance:

P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance)
H. Pugh, Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance
L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law
N. Daniel, Interim Head of Planning
R. Hemingway, Head of Financial Services
G. Ayers, Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager
A. Bebb, Electoral & Civil Registration Service
D. Hockenhull, Marketing and Media Manager
N. Evans, Business Support Manager
L. Jenkins, Executive Board Support Officer
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer
E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer

Virtual Meeting - 10.00 am - 12.45 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J.G. Prosser.

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

Councillor	Minute No (s)	Nature of Interest
T.A.J. Davies	8 - 2021/22 Departmental Quarter 1 Performance Report (1st April to 30th June 2021) Relevant to this Scrutiny. 11 - Ethical Employment in Supply Chains Policy and Modern Slavery, Ethical Employment in Supply Chains Statement.	Sister-in-Law is Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance.

K. Madge	4 - Revenue & Capital Budget Monitoring Report 2021/22.	Daughter works in Social Services.
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There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS.

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2021/22.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the Authority's Corporate Budget Monitoring Report and the Chief Executive's and Corporate Services departmental reports as at 30th June 2021 in respect of the 2021/22 financial year. The report also included an appendix detailing Savings Monitoring 2021/22.

The monitoring report forecasted an end of year underspend of £508k on the Authority's net revenue budget with an underspend at departmental level of £285k. This was largely due to additional COVID19 related costs and lost income being refunded under the Welsh Government hardship scheme.

Amongst the issues and queries raised on the report were the following:

- It was asked if the intention was to fill the vacant posts that had contributed to the savings made by the Authority. It was confirmed the Authority was seeking to recruit under normal processes subject to the current challenging recruitment environment. It was stated that the Authority had approximately 100 vacancies and that campaigns were being undertaken to encourage applications to the harder to fill posts such as home carers.
- In response to a query regarding Carmarthen Market, the Committee was advised that there were inherited issues that needed to be resolved and that the market would open as soon as everything was in place.
- Reference was made to the lack of childcare. It was asked if officers would consider potential childcare funding to allow single mothers to apply for the harder to fill posts. The Chair asked that officers consider this funding during the next round of budget setting.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to receive the report.

5. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR REPORT 2020-2021.

The Committee considered the Annual Report listing the treasury management activities which occurred during 2020-2021 in line with the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2020-2021 that was adopted by Council on the 3rd March 2020.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to endorse the report.

6. QUARTERLY TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR REPORT 1ST APRIL 2021 TO 30TH JUNE 2021.

The Committee considered the Quarterly Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator Report for the period 1st April 2021 - 30th June 2021 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 2020-2021 adopted by Council on the 3rd March 2021.

The Cabinet Member for Resourced advised that the authority's investments during the period returned an average return of 0.05%, exceeding the 7 day LIBID rate. Gross interest earned on investments for the period amounted to £19k and interest paid on loans was £0.92m.

The Authority had not breached any of its Prudential Indicators during the period.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to endorse the report.

7. 2021/22 QUARTER 1 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT (1ST APRIL TO 30TH JUNE 2021) THAT SPANS ACROSS ALL DEPARTMENTS.

The Committee considered the 2021/22 Quarter 1 Corporate Performance Report (1st April to 30th June 2021) that spanned across all Departments.

This report showed progress as at the end of Quarter 1 - 2021/22 of deliverables (Actions and Measures) linked to the Corporate Strategy and the 13 Well-being Objectives.

It was noted that the Authority was under a general duty to make arrangements to monitor performance and to demonstrate to citizens, members and regulators how performance was managed, and appropriate interventions implemented.

Amongst the queries raised on the report were the following:

- Reference was made to the impact of Covid on staff and the recruitment issues for the Authority. The Committee was advised that priority was being given to recruitment of roles within the Social Care and Health Department. Campaigns had been undertaken and a Gold Command team had been set up to address the recruitment issues.
- In response to concerns raised regarding staff sickness levels it was clarified that the Authority had seen an increase in absences since schools had re-opened. The Committee was advised that the Authority was doing all that it could in supporting staff to keep healthy. It had been noted that general sickness absences had reduced but that referrals to the wellbeing service had increased.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to receive the report.

8. 2021/22 DEPARTMENTAL QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT (1ST APRIL TO 30TH JUNE 2021) RELEVANT TO THIS SCRUTINY.

The Committee considered the 2021/22 Departmental Quarter 1 Performance Report (1st April to 30th June 2021) relevant to this Scrutiny.

This report showed progress as at the end of Quarter 1 - 2021/22 of deliverables

(Actions and Measures) linked to the Corporate Strategy and the 13 Well-being Objectives.

It was noted that the Authority was under a general duty to make arrangements to monitor performance and to demonstrate to citizens, members and regulators how performance was managed, and appropriate interventions implemented

Amongst the issues raised on the report were the following:

- Reference was made to the fact that sickness levels in some areas was as high as 15% and that in some instances carers had not turned up for 2 days. It was asked how this was being managed so that people received continuity of care. Officers advised that they were not aware of the specifics as it would fall under the remit of Social Care & Health Scrutiny however it was confirmed that there were currently 66 covid related sickness absences and 240 other absences that included stress. Reassurance was provided that there was a satisfactory mechanism in place to manage staff absences.
- It was asked if the Authority could work with the Health Board on recruitment. The Leader advised that the Authority was working with the Health Board however there was a national recruitment crisis. It was stated a longer-term solution was required and that a letter had been sent to Welsh Government outlining the Authority's concern.
- It was clarified that during Covid the TIC team were fully re-deployed however the team was now back up and running. It was suggested that as the TIC Annual Report had not been produced that an update report be provided to the Policy & Resource Committee next month.
- Concern was raised regarding the on-line recycling centre booking system and that some residents did not have the capability to use an on-line system. The Committee was advised that the service was fully accessible as residents were also able to book slots on the telephone via the contact centre
- In response to a query regarding hybrid meetings, officers advised that new equipment had been installed in the Chamber at County Hall and that the system was currently being trialled. It was confirmed that the intention was to roll out the use of hybrid facilities, however the increase in covid numbers had resulted in the roll out being slowed down as personal safety was a key priority.
- An update was requested on the development of the Glanaman Workshops. The Cabinet Member for Resources confirmed that issues with asbestos had been encountered which delayed works, however it was hoped that letting could start early next year.
- In response to a query regarding progress on the 10 Towns Growth Plan, the Leader confirmed that the Authority's ambition had not waned and that the regeneration team had appointed three additional people to the team.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to receive the report.

9. DIGITAL SCHOOLS STRATEGY ANNUAL REPORT 2021.

The Committee considered the Digital Schools Strategy Annual Report 2021 which was presented by the Deputy Leader. The progress report provided an update on

Carmarthenshire County Councils Digital Schools Strategy 2018 - 2021. In May 2018 Carmarthenshire County Council produced its first ever Digital Schools Strategy 2018 - 2021. That Strategy set out the vision, underpinned by overarching principles and key priority areas for the provision of ICT Services to Schools across Carmarthenshire. Within each of the key priority areas a number of key projects and outcomes were approved, and the Annual Report detailed the progress made over the last 12 months.

Amongst the issues raised on the report were the following:

- In response to a query regarding the challenges faced by Governors using the hub and the lack of system notifications, the Committee was advised that this was an issue that Welsh Government were aware of and would be addressing.
- It was asked if the Authority had a list of every child that did not have access to the internet. The Committee was advised that schools were working closely with the Education Department to identify these pupils to ensure that no pupils were disadvantaged due to issues such as connectivity.
- In response to a query regarding future plans the committee was advised that a new strategy was being developed and that Head Teachers and Members would be consulted.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve the content of the Digital Schools Strategy – Annual Report 2021.

10. VACCINATION POLICY.

The Deputy Leader presented the Authority's new vaccination policy for its staff to the Committee.

Carmarthenshire County Council's role in assisting with the roll out of the vaccination programme had been overseen by a Vaccination Tactical Group, and this Group was tasked with developing a vaccination Policy for the Authority that set out clearly the Authority's approach to vaccination and the ancillary workforce issues that surrounded it.

The policy had been developed to reflect the changes in guidance and regulation coming from Welsh Government. The Policy was originally scheduled for discussion earlier in the year but was held back pending national advice / guidance relating to mandatory vaccination. To date there had been no decision on this matter, and so the policy strongly encouraged all staff to take up the offer. The policy would be reviewed as and when new guidance was received.

Amongst the queries raised on the report were the following:

- In response to a query regarding the possibility of a joint campaign with the Health Board concerning the flu jab and vaccination, the Committee was advised that there was joint working with the Health Board via a vaccination tactical group which included the Authority's Head of Integrated Services.
- It was suggested that the wording 'Staff who *refused* to have the Covid 19 vaccination' be changed to 'Staff who do not wish to have the Covid 19

vaccination'. Officers advised they would consider re-wording the sentence.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received and referred to Council for approval.

11. ETHICAL EMPLOYMENT IN SUPPLY CHAINS POLICY AND MODERN SLAVERY, ETHICAL EMPLOYMENT IN SUPPLY CHAINS STATEMENT.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the Ethical Employment in Supply Chains Policy and Modern Slavery, Ethical Employment in Supply Chains Statement to the Committee.

The Welsh Government contacted all Local Authorities across Wales on the 9th February 2018, requesting the Council's adoption of the Code of Practice – Ethical Employment in Supply Chains. In June 2018 Carmarthenshire County Council formally committed to signing up to the Code and an action plan was produced by the Corporate Procurement Unit and colleagues in Policy and HR to take this forward. As part of the commitment the Authority was required to produce a written policy on ethical employment within the Authority and its supply chains.

It was noted that a Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill was out for consultation which ended on the 23rd April 2021. This proposed Bill was looking to ensure the delivery of Fair Work through Procurement and to place duties on contracting authorities to explore options for delivering fair work. The proposal was to look at the inclusion of fair work practice questions and living wage, including due diligence on overseas supply chains, Employee voice and representation – union recognition, access to workers, collective bargaining; Security and flexibility; Opportunities for access growth and progression; Safe, Healthy and inclusive working environment; Legal rights supported and given substantive effect and Equality and diversity. This Bill placed duties on contracting authorities on the procurement cycle as a whole, not just the “advert to award” stages.

The following was raised on the report:

- Reference was made to the wording of Employment practices on page 135 of the agenda pack. It was suggested that the wording “ *zero hour contracts are not used unfairly*” be changed to “ *zero hour contracts are not used unless specifically requested by the employee*”

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to:

11.1 receive the Ethical Employment in Supply Chains Policy subject to the amended wording and;

11.2 receive the Council's annual Modern Slavery, Ethical Employment in Supply Chains Statement.

12. CARMARTHENSHIRE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD (PSB) MINUTES - MAY & JULY 2021.

The Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager presented the minutes of the meeting of the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board [PSB] held on the 4th May 2021 and 15th July, 2021.

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.

In response to a query regarding the issue with recruitment the committee was advised that the issue was being looked at in conjunction with the Regional Skills Partnership/

The Committee was advised that the PSB was considering the co-location of services across Carmarthenshire and that the municipal building in Llandeilo had been identified as a potential pilot location.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the PSB meetings held on the 4th May 2021 and 15th July, 2021 be received.

13. FORTHCOMING ITEMS.

The Committee was informed that the TIC Annual Report 2021 would be replaced with a TIC Update Report.

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on the 10th December, 2021 be noted.

14. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 21ST JULY 2021.

UNANAMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 21st July, 2021 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE