

Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee

Friday, 30 April 2021

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

Councillors:

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

Also in attendance:

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

The following Officers were in attendance:

C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services;
N. Daniel, Head of I.C.T. and Corporate Policy;
J. Fearn, Head of Property;
R. Hemingway, Head of Financial Services;
J. Jones, Head of Regeneration;
H. Pugh, Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance;
L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law;
P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance);
J. Williams, Applications Development Manager;
D. Hockenhull, Marketing and Media Manager;
A. Kenyon, Senior Performance Management Officer;
N. Evans, Business Support Manager;
T. Thomas, Principal Business Development Officer;
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator;
E. Evans, Principal Democratic Services Officer;
E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer;
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer.

Virtual Meeting: 10.00 am - 12.50 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K.Madge and H.A.L. Evans, Executive Board Member – Environment.

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

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
S.M. Allen	4 - Chief Executive's Departmental Business Plan 2021/22 -10 Towns initiative;	Local Member for Whitland;
H.L. Davies	4 - Chief Executive's Departmental Business Plan 2021/22 -10 Towns initiative;	Local Member for Llandovery.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2021/22

The Committee considered the Chief Executive's Departmental Business Plan 2021-22 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. Due to the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic this was an abbreviated plan, usually it would include a review section but this had been covered in the Service COVID-19 Impact Assessments previously submitted to the Committee.

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

ICT and Corporate Policy

- It was noted that the experiences and feedback from staff and Members over the past year in terms of home working etc would contribute to the development of the future work programme and 'new ways of working';
- It was clarified that the highest risk score possible under 'Key Divisional Risks' would be 25 with the matrix utilized;
- In response to a concern over the reporting of 'Key Measures of Success' as percentages rather than targets it was clarified that this was set at an all-Wales level and monitored by Welsh Government. The 'high level' Departmental Plan was in fact underpinned by operational divisional business plans which contained significantly more detail and operational performance measures. These were reported to Committee on a quarterly basis. It was suggested that a refresher session on the PIMS system be arranged for the Committee;

Legal and Administration

- In regard to 'pooled budgets' with other authorities it was clarified that presently each authority retained control of its own proportion of the budget but that discussions on its spending were undertaken on a partnership basis;
- The Head of Legal and Administration, in response to a question, commented that the Legal Section was currently under-resourced and some legal work associated with social care and education in particular was having to be outsourced and paid for by the relevant services. Discussions were taking place with client departments with a view to identifying funding which would allow the in-house legal team to retain more work in-house;

People Management

- In response to a query the Assistant Chief Executive agreed to relook at the omission of the TIC team's performance from the 'Key Measures of Success' particularly in view of the efficiency savings identified to date and the possibilities for building upon that success in untapped areas such as commerciality;
- Reference was made to the current difficulties experienced by new employees due to the lack of in-person engagement with their colleagues and the need to create a team ethos. It was highlighted that Heads of Service could allow staff to return to the office for reasons associated with welfare issues, lack of space or broadband at home, training/induction and support for apprenticeships and new staff, or work requirements e.g. paper based working or the need to meet the public in-person;

Regeneration - Property

- In response to a query as to whether there was anything the authority could do to ensure any property it sold was actually utilised for the purpose originally proposed by the purchaser the Head of Regeneration commented

that whilst this was difficult there were, in some circumstances, ways in which future use could be influenced such as the retention of freehold of land until development was completed satisfactorily;

- In terms of quantifying the benefits to tourism from regeneration the Committee was advised that the County-wide economic recovery plan was based on 11 key themes which included tourism/events etc..

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to note the Plan.

5. CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2021/2022

The Committee considered the Corporate Services Departmental Business Plan 2021-22 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.

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

- In regard to the two maximum risk scores of 25 within the Revenues and Financial Compliance division it was stated that these were in high priority areas but controls were in place to ensure service delivery which included continuance monitoring;
- In response to a question it was stated that the Corporate Risk Register submitted to the Audit Committee detailed the initial risk and the reassessed risks which took account of controls put in place.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to note the Plan.

6. ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2021/22

The Committee considered extracts of the Environment Departmental Business Plan 2021-22 relating to the Property Division which were relevant to the Committee's remit. The Plan extracts 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 Head of Property, in response to a question, agreed to explore opportunities to add to the list of key measures of success.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to note the Plan.

7. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY 2021-2024

The Committee considered the proposed Digital Transformation Strategy 2021-2024 which detailed the Council's strategic digital priorities and aspirations and outlined what it planned to do to achieve its vision for a Digital Carmarthenshire over the next 3 years. It was noted that the reliance on technology to deliver critical frontline services throughout the covid 19 pandemic had demonstrated how pervasive digital technology was across all sectors and fully integrated in many aspects of life. It was considered that Carmarthenshire County Council needed an innovative, exciting, Digital Transformation Strategy because digital technology had the proven potential to transform the County and the lives of residents while generating long-term savings for the council.

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

- It was commented that the report made no reference to the percentage of 'not spot' areas referred to in previous meetings and the question was

asked as to whether the pace of reducing this percentage was likely to increase substantially. In response the Committee was advised that the authority worked closely with officers involved in the City Deal and this would play a key role in terms of helping to improve broadband access / connectivity in these areas;

- The Head of ICT & Corporate Property emphasised the significant work being undertaken to improve connectivity for all including the voucher scheme available to communities which were experienced problems with broadband. It was emphasised that whilst the Council was able to offer wi-fi connectivity in some of its public buildings such as libraries and leisure centres it was not an internet service provider as this was a private sector initiative. It might, however, be possible in the future for communities to benefit from connectivity to rural schools.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the content of the Digital Transformation Strategy 2021-2024 be endorsed.

8. POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2021/22

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme for 2021/2022 which had been prepared in accordance with the Council's Constitution which required Scrutiny Committees to develop and publish annual forward work programmes identifying issues and reports to be considered at meetings during the course of the municipal year.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee's 2021/22 Forward Work Programme be endorsed.

9. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting to be held on the 10th June, 2021 be received.

10. MINUTES - 29TH MARCH 2021

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 29th March 2021 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE