

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
18 JANUARY 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 18 January 2018

PRESENT: Councillor Clive Carver (Chairman)

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Bob Connah, Paul Cunningham, Patrick Heesom, Andrew Holgate, Dave Hughes, Paul Johnson, Richard Jones, Hilary McGuill, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGY: Councillor Mike Lowe

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance; Councillor Billy Mullin, Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Assets; Chief Executive; Senior Manager, Human Resources & Organisational Development; and Corporate Finance Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

59. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 6 and 14 December 2017 were submitted.

Minutes of 6 December 2017

Minute number 2: Councillor Woolley referred to a number of typographical errors in need of amendment.

Councillor McGuill asked if the suggested Income Generation workshop had been followed up and was told that Members would be informed once arrangements had been made.

Minutes of 14 December 2017

Councillor Jones highlighted his concerns about the earmarked reserves where there was no movement to year end and said that further discussion was required on which amounts should be brought back into the budget. He reiterated his comments about treating revenue balances the same as capital before the end of the current budget process on which the Corporate Finance Manager agreed to provide details.

The Chief Executive referred to discussion on his and the Leader's absence from the meeting and explained that both had been attending meetings with Welsh Government Ministers.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the amendments on the minutes of 6 December 2017, both sets of minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

60. ANNUAL REVIEW OF APPRAISALS

The Chief Executive and Senior Manager, Human Resources and Organisational Development presented a report showing a detailed analysis of completion levels of appraisals across all portfolios.

The importance of appraisals was recognised in improving performance and meeting corporate policy. It was acknowledged that eligible employees should be receiving appraisals that were meaningful and consistent. Following a review in which a number of exceptions had been agreed, a more challenging revised annual target of 100% completion of appraisals applied to eligible employees. A breakdown of progress with appraisals within each portfolio was shared, which estimated that 77% were due for completion by year end.

The Chief Executive expressed his disappointment at the inconsistent progress with the completion of appraisals across portfolios. He was keen that improvements would be made, and to that end, an annual report on appraisals would be produced in future. The downturn in the percentage of completed appraisals between November 2016 and December 2017 was partly due to continued significant change across the workforce including the impact of Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) transfers.

The Chairman commented on slippage in progress and officers confirmed that outstanding appraisals had been scheduled. On the breakdown of figures across services, it was noted that those captured for 'Organisational Change 2' reflected the low headcount in that portfolio.

Following a question by Councillor McGuill, the Senior Manager spoke about ICT solutions being explored to support an improved drive on recording performance and identifying trends.

Councillor Jones asked about comparison with other public bodies to establish links between employee performance recorded through the appraisal process and the payment of annual increments. It was agreed that officers would look into this and report back on whether this could be implemented in Flintshire.

The Senior Manager responded to comments by Councillor Johnson on the preparation time required by managers to undertake appraisals. In

response to further remarks, she agreed to provide further information on spans of control by managers.

Councillor Woolley stressed the importance of regular contact between managers and employees to promote a sense of belonging, particularly for those working remotely. The Chief Executive spoke about the responsibilities and expectations on line managers in managing performance of their teams. This view was echoed by Councillor Mullin.

Following remarks by Councillor Hughes on raising the profile of appraisals, the Chief Executive suggested that the Committee defer any decisions until the year end position was reported.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes the progress made against the target set for completion of appraisals for portfolios and the Council as a whole;
- (b) That the officers investigate whether any linkages are made between employee performance, recorded through the appraisal process and the payment of annual increments within grades in other Councils and in the Welsh Public Sector;
- (c) That officers consider whether the introduction of such a scheme is feasible in Flintshire and report back to a future meeting;
- (d) That the Senior Manager, Human Resources & Organisational Development provide the Committee with details of manager spans of employee control; and
- (e) That an interim report to give assurance on progress be made to the April or May meetings.

61. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2017/18 (MONTH 8)

The Corporate Finance Manager presented the report on the revenue budget monitoring position for 2017/18 as at Month 8 for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA), prior to consideration by Cabinet.

On the Council Fund, the projected net in-year position (without mitigation to reduce cost pressures and improve the yield on efficiency planning) was that spend was forecast to be £0.846m higher than budget, reflecting a decrease of £0.416m from Month 7. The most significant projected variances were the underspend on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) where demand would continue to be monitored, and positive variance on the Council Tax collection fund due to the conclusion of the Single Person Discount review work. A significant increase was also reported in the underspend in Central & Corporate Finance, primarily due to a reduction in the in-year pension costs.

It was estimated that 94% of overall planned efficiencies would be achieved by year end. The potential impact of this on the 2018/19 budget was being closely monitored, along with a number of new risks emerging in-year such as possible use of reserves from the winter maintenance budget, dependent on weather conditions.

An update on reserves and balances showed £4.236m of contingency reserves projected by year end.

On the HRA, in-year expenditure was projected to be £0.035m lower than budget, with a closing balance of £1.081 of unearmarked reserves which was above the recommended minimum level.

Members asked that their thanks be expressed to the teams in Streetscene and Social Services for their work during the recent bad weather.

As discussed previously, the Corporate Finance Manager agreed to ensure that the red bracketed figure be reinstated for underspends in future budget monitoring reports. He also agreed to provide clarification on the Animal & Pest Control charges shown on Appendix 3 to the Cabinet report, as requested by Councillor Johnson.

Members raised concerns at the continuing overspend in Out of County Placements and asked that the matter be referred to the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

The Democratic Services Manager summarised the resolution, as agreed by Members, and would advise the Leader and statutory officers by email, with the Committee copied in.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2017/18 Month 8 report and confirms on this occasion that the issues which it wishes to have brought to the Cabinet's attention are concerns at the overspend on Out of County placements, as referred to in paragraphs 1.05 and 1.06 of the Cabinet report.

62. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

In presenting the current Forward Work Programme for consideration, the Democratic Services Manager suggested that the item on the 'equitable spend' approach be deferred to either March or April, given the amount of preparation work required by the Finance team.

On the same issue, Councillor Heesom said that further discussion was needed to address inconsistency across areas of the county.

Following earlier discussion, an update on appraisals would be scheduled for April or May.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme as submitted, be approved with amendments;
- A report on how to present the information (and frequency) of the 'equitable spend for towns' approach (as per the notice of Motion to Council in December 2017) to be moved to the March or April meeting from February;
 - That an Appraisals update report be made to the April or May meetings.
- (b) That the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Chairman, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, should this be necessary.

63. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10am and ended at 11.35am)

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Chairman