

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 NOVEMBER 2018

Present: Councillor Walker(Chairperson)
Councillors Berman, Bowen-Thomson, Boyle, Cunnah, Hudson
and Mackie

32 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Lister and Murphy

33 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members had a responsibility under Article 16 of the Members Code of Conduct to declare any interests and complete Personal Interest Forms at the commencement of the agenda item in question.

34 : MINUTES

The minutes of the 3 October 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

35 : MANAGING THE ESTATE UNDER A CORPORATE LANDLORD MODEL

The Chairperson welcomed the following:

- Councillor Russell Goodway, Cabinet Member Investment and Development
- Neil Hanratty, Director of Economic Development
- Helen Thomas, Head of Property
- Donna Jones, Operational Manager Health & Safety
- Janine Nightingale, Operational Manager

Following an in depth scrutiny inquiry of the challenges to managing the estate under a Corporate Landlord Model, Cabinet undertakes to formally respond to the scrutiny committees recommendations. The Committee had the opportunity to consider the Cabinet response. Councillor Joe Boyle chaired this work by the Committee and the group included Councillors Mackie and Murphy and also Councillor Mckerlich who was a Member of this Committee last year.

Councillor Goodway explained the Cabinet considered the Task & Finish Groups, Managing the Estate under a Corporate Landlord Model at its meeting on the 12 July 2018. Six of the seven recommendations were accepted and R6 was partially accepted.

The Committee received a presentation which outlined information on the Recommendations and Corporate Landlord Model Implementation Work Streams.

The Chairperson thanked officers for the presentation and invited Committee Members to ask questions.

The Committee asked if the position of Corporate Landlord sat within Economic Development or Education.

The Committee was advised that the Property Relations resource from Education had moved to Economic Development. Janine Nightingale, Operational Manager would operate two teams:

- Planning of Places
- Corporate Programme

These would have their own governance, including Project and Programme Boards. The Programme Board was a Cabinet sub-Committee, membership consisting of Councillor Huw Thomas, Councillor Chris Weaver and Councillor Russell Goodway. The first meeting was held last week and the Board was looking at Band A and B schools.

The Committee was informed that Recommendation 6 was partially accepted as budgets had to be maintained and focus directed towards compliance.

Councillor Goodway drew attention to plans in place to reduce and mitigate current building issues experienced by some schools. The Mutual Investment Model (MIM) route had been considered for specific funding, along with analysing possible maintenance monies. It was essential that creative mechanisms be established in order to keep the school estate in operational use.

Janine Nightingale provided the Committee with information on the Band B projects. It was recognised there were backlogs in maintenance especially in schools built in the 1960s and 1970s. Allocation of £5million in capital would be used to look at priority areas such as health & safety and fire evacuation procedures.

Members of the Committee were advised that schools built in the 1960s and 1970s did have some asbestos. Surveys were in place to address the issue but a clearer picture of the asbestos issues was required before plans could press ahead, as the current information was slightly out of date.

The Corporate Landlord programme was developing and using in-house skills to address issues experienced in the estate. This achieved better value for money and officers were currently analysing works that could be delivered in-house.

The Committee heard it was vital to achieve maximum value for money, using a strategic approach to drive value in procurement.

Members of the Committee asked what the procedure was for schools carrying out minor works and when it was determined that schools could request private contractors for the works.

The Committee was advised that One Frontdoor had been established to ensure that all proposed school works get permission from the Corporate Landlord to carry out works. Schools were able to opt outside of the SLA, but controls were in place to use reputable contractors, through using One Frontdoor first.

Members of the Committee were pleased how RAMIS supported health & safety in schools and how it prioritised and monitored risk.

The Committee was advised of the Health & Safety support offered to schools and the support provided to Head Teachers.

Members of the Committee discussed the main contractors in place and how the procurement framework was managed.

The Committee was advised that the previously advertised role of Assistant Director Corporate Landlord would be part of a service area review to be considered by Cabinet in December 2018. The post of Assistant Director would not be appointed to.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey their comments and observations.

36 : FACILITIES MANAGEMENT BRIEFING REPORT

The Committee welcomed:

- Councillor Russell Goodway, Cabinet Member Investment and Development
- Neil Hanratty, Director of Economic Development
- David Lowe, Operations Manager Commercial Services

The Chairperson explained that during work programming discussions Members expressed an interest in scoping a scrutiny inquiry into Facilities Management. To progress the matter Committee Members requested a briefing of the full Committee on the issues and challenges faced by the Facilities Management service, with a view to commencing an inquiry in 2019.

The Committee received a presentation which outlined the following:

- Introduction to Property Services – Facilities Management (FM) was in the process of being re-branded to Property Services.
- Building Services
- Cleaning and Support Services
- Functions
- Building Management
- Pest Control
- Building Budget
- Challenge – Building Budget Issues
- Building Budget v Spend 17/18
- Building Budget – Going Forward

The Chairperson thanked the officers for the presentation and invited the Committee to ask questions.

The Committee noted there was an overspend of £559k. Therefore it was vital that Building Management improve compliance levels. Further the HRA charged out direct costs.

Members of the Committee referred to the customer base and were advised that overheads would be reduced. However, the Council would not be looking outside to expand the number of cleaning clients.

The Committee heard that contracts with school's made very low profits.

The Committee was advised there were incentives for schools to remain with Council's approved contractors, and paying the minimum wage was one of them.

Members were informed of the current process in place to deal with utilities and the paying of gas and electric bills. Departments needed to be mindful of spend in relation to utilities and look at how this could be managed at a departmental level.

The management of schools was discussed and how costs could be reduced. Schools should be responsible for costs along with ensuring sufficient quality was in place, with schools possibly meeting the landlords costs.

The Committee was advised that following a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) resources for Health & safety remained within the Council, to ensure works were carried out to an approved standard.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey their comments and observations.

37 : QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE 2018/19

The Chairperson welcomed the following:

Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation and Performance.
Christine Salter, Corporate Director Resources
Joseph Reay, Head of Performance and Partnerships
Andrew Simms, Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager.

The Chairperson explained that Members would review the Council's Quarter 2 Corporate performance position for the 2018/19 financial year. The Committee was responsible for monitoring the overall performance of the organisation and the actions taken to ensure that agreed targets and commitments set out in the Corporate Plan were delivered.

The Committee was advised of the projected £5m budget overspend at month 6. This would be balanced using £3m of contingency funds, a council tax surplus, a rates appeal refund on Council properties, and an underspend on capital charges.

The Committee drew attention to the links between Performance and Budget Management, and how this tied into target setting and performance management.

Councillor Weaver explained that in Social Services, Children's Services overspends were apparent. A realignment of the budget was made last year but additional pressures and demands had led to the service overspending further. Trends in overspends could not be identified and it was the element of demand that led the service into deficit and the scale of the overspend.

There was an inherent level of predictability in the Directorate and a process was in place to address how accurately predictions could be made. A degree of additional monies had been made available to the service, but genuine reasons were required to do that. The Welsh Government was aware of the situation in Social Services, and as changing working practices were not apparent, a contingency budget was introduced.

Members were of the view that cost controls should be put in place, with sound working practices established to support the packages in place.

The Committee was advised that a Brokerage Team had been created to support Social Workers. A Social Worker would carry out assessments with the Brokerage Team doing the cost effective work analysis. Work on prevention was also on-going and being challenged and tested. These new ways of working were being introduced in order to reduce the substantial requirement for realignment.

The Committee were concerned with the narrative in the report that related to the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub). The report made reference to the Amber RAG rating but did not elaborate on the pressures.

The Committee was assured the pressures referred to the high demand for the service and this was having an impact on resources. The MASH benefited from multi agency success and the new Director of Social Services was looking at new areas for improvement.

Members of the Committee drew attention to the number of referrals being address through the MASH and asked if the threshold had dropped.

The Committee was advised that the threshold had changed as more individuals were meeting the threshold previously. It was noted that the indicator in the report had not reported the information correctly.

Members of the Committee were advised that both Cabinet and the Senior Management Team addressed the Capital Ambition Programme using challenging and robust mechanisms.

The Committee drew attention to the recruitment of Social Workers and suggested that creativity be developed to promote and enhance recruitment to these roles.

The Committee drew attention to the number of children receiving free school meals and the attainment gap. Multiple causes were recorded including external factors, which Education were addressing through benchmarking and mitigation.

Members of the Committee asked how robust the self assessment process was, as it was vital that at Quarter 3 the Amber RAG status had not developed into Red. These issues should be raised at an earlier point and mitigation developed.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey their comments and observations.

38 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS REPORT

The Committee received a report which outlined Committee Business specifically:

- To seek Committee's agreement to the commencement of an inquiry into Scrutiny Impact, and for the Terms of Reference that would form the focus of its work
- To advise Members of the correspondence between Committee and Cabinet since commencing the 2018/19 work programme.
- To seek Members 2019/20 budget scrutiny training needs.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED:-

- To consider the scope, the proposed approach and agree the Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Impact inquiry.
- Noted the correspondence between the Committee and the Cabinet.

Agreed preferred arrangements for budget scrutiny training, requested that the budget scrutiny meeting starts no earlier than 1:30pm.

39 : URGENT ITEMS -AOB

None

40 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 12 DECEMBER 2018 AT 4:30PM