
CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 15.01.15

Present: Councillor Jason Humphreys (Vice-chairman in the chair).

Councillors:- Gwynfor Edwards, Elwyn Edwards, Aled Evans, Siân Gwenllian, Michael Sol Owen, W.Roy Owen, Eirwyn Williams, John Wyn Williams and R.H. Wyn Williams.

Officers present:- Geraint George (Head of Strategic and Improvement Department), Debbie Anne Williams Jones (Members' Manager – Democratic Services) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Present for item 3 below:-

Councillor Ioan Thomas, Cabinet Member – Customer Care

Present for item 4 below:-

Councillor Ioan Thomas, Cabinet Member – Customer Care
Huw Ynry (Senior Information Technology and Transformation Manager)

Present for item 5 below:-

Alwyn Evans Jones (Head of Human Resources Department)

Present for item 6 below:-

Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, Deputy Leader (deputising on behalf of the Leader)
Vera Jones (Members' Manager – Democratic Services)

Apologies: Councillors Lesley Day, Dyfed Edwards, Gweno Glyn, Simon Glyn, Annwen Hughes, Peredur Jenkins, Dyfrig Jones, June Marshall and Gethin Glyn Williams.

Also, Andy Bruce, Wales Audit Office.

Councillors John Wyn Williams and R.H. Wyn Williams were welcomed to their first meeting of this committee.

The Chairman noted that a discussion was needed at the end of the meeting regarding the membership of the Local Development Plan (Collaboration) Scrutiny Investigation.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

2. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 13 November, 2014 as a true record.

3. ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Cabinet Member: Councillor Ioan Thomas

- (a) Submitted – the report of the Cabinet Member for Customer Care, responding to specific questions raised at the last Preparatory Meeting, held on 27 November 2014.

Further to the content of the report, the Cabinet Member explained that he was no longer responsible for the engagement field as a result of recent changes to the responsibilities of Cabinet Members, but as the report reported on what had already happened and had been prepared before implementing the changes to the Cabinet, he was in the best position to respond to members' questions.

- (b) Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer their observations. During the discussion, the Cabinet Member responded to questions / observations regarding:-
- The ambition to improve engagement and the need to be realistic in light of the new financial challenge that the Council faced.
 - The need for more local engagement and improved engagement in light of the cuts that were on the horizon.
 - The emphasis that various departments placed on engagement.
- (c) The discussion concluded that engagement was vital, but was also a significant challenge which was impossible to meet fully, but that the Council would do everything in its power to realise the requirements of the Strategy.

4. EFFICIENCY SAVINGS INITIATIVE C25 – DISSOLUTION OF THE OUT OF HOURS IT SUPPORT PROVISION

Cabinet Member: Councillor Ioan Thomas

- (a) Submitted – the report of the Cabinet Member for Customer Care in response to the Cabinet's request on 16 December, 2014 for the Corporate Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise what effect efficiency savings initiative C25 would have on the relevant services' ability to maintain a service out of hours if the systems were to fail.

Further to the content of the report, the Cabinet Member explained that he was no longer responsible for the information technology field as a result of recent changes to the responsibilities of Cabinet Members, but as the report had been prepared before implementing the changes, he was in the best position to respond to members' questions.

- (b) Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer their observations. During the discussion, the Cabinet Member responded to questions / observations regarding:-
- The effect of the savings scheme on the most vulnerable cohorts of society given that most of the problems in the care field arose on weekends, especially during holiday periods such as Easter and Christmas.
 - The importance of being able to share data with other organisations 24/7.
 - Concern regarding abolishing the support for care workers unless there was an alternative arrangement in place.
 - The reliability of the information technology systems.
 - The need to evaluate all the information technology systems.
 - The worst case scenario if the IT support was not available.

- The feasibility of trialling the proposal for a year initially.
- (c) It was agreed to communicate the message to the Cabinet that this committee had given thorough consideration to the potential effect of the proposal and that the members were generally concerned that the risks had not been evaluated adequately, and that the practical aspects had not been considered in sufficient detail, and rather than reacting after things went wrong, it would be better to try to prevent such a situation in the first place.

5. CHEAPER ENERGY PROCUREMENT

Cabinet Member: Councillor Peredur Jenkins

- (a) Submitted – the report of the Cabinet Member for Resources, responding to specific questions raised at the last Preparatory Meeting, held on 27 November 2014.
- (b) Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer their observations. During the discussion, the Head of Human Resources Department responded to questions / observations regarding:-
- How best to advertise the scheme and to reach the communities that needed it most through the housing associations?
 - Ensuring the quality of the service provided by the new energy suppliers.
- (c) Councillor Eirwyn Williams was thanked for bringing this matter to light in the first place, and the councillors were asked to spread the message about the scheme in their wards.

6. PROPOSED JOINT LOCAL SERVICES BOARD SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

Cabinet Member: Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn (on behalf of Councillor Dyfed Edwards)

- (a) Submitted - a joint report by the Senior Gwynedd and Anglesey Partnerships Manager, Gwynedd Council's Democratic Services Manager and the Isle of Anglesey County Council Scrutiny Officer outlining the three different options for establishing the Local Services Board's scrutiny arrangements, recommending to progress with Option B (i.e. establishing a Joint Gwynedd and Anglesey Local Services Board Scrutiny Panel), requesting that officers progress to complete the practical arrangements, to include matters such as membership arrangements, operating and training arrangements, and a list of meeting and locations.
- (b) Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer their observations. During the discussion, the Cabinet Member and the officers responded to questions / observations regarding:-
- The feeling that the Council and the LSB did not share the same priorities and the need to understand what the panel's role and influence was and to whom it reported.
 - A concern that the panel would move away from local accountability and that there would be more power and status related to a joint scrutiny committee between Gwynedd and Anglesey with elected members serving on it, but with the right to co-opt others according to the need. This would also strengthen the political accountability in the proposed arrangements.

- A suggestion that one representative from the voluntary sector would be sufficient so that there were four elected members from both councils serving on it to ensure clear political accountability.
 - The fact that the two County Councils were the only democratic bodies on the Local Services Board and that this should be reflected in the membership of the panel / committee?
 - How would the work be funded?
 - The need to be careful that the committee did not make decisions that could not be justified, funded or supported.
 - The need for the partnership to take this seriously, as well as a concern that organisations without voting rights would not send representatives to the meetings.
- (c) It was agreed to progress with re-considering Option B following officers forming the practical arrangements noted, but that those arrangements, along with the reporting arrangements and the situation in terms of the panel's political accountability would be submitted to this committee before the members came to a final conclusion on the matter.

7. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION - COLLABORATION

- (a) It was noted that only three members had put their names forward for the investigation thus far, and the committee was asked to either nominate two other members or consider whether they should proceed with the investigation at all.
- (b) It was agreed to circulate the brief once more and discuss this field and any other possible research fields in the next Preparatory Meeting on 12 February.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 12.05pm.