
CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 04.02.16

Present: Councillor Dyfrig Jones (Chairman);
Councillor Jason Humphreys (Vice-chairman).

Councillors:- Anwen Davies, Elwyn Edwards, Aled Wyn Jones, W.Roy Owen, Eirwyn Williams and John Wyn Williams.

Officers present: Vera Jones (Members Manager - Democracy Services) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Present for item 3 below:-

Councillor Dyfed Edwards (Council Leader)
Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer)
Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery)

Present for item 4 below

Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member for Housing, Customer Care and Libraries, Deprivation and Equality)
Hawis Jones (Strategic Planning and Performance Manager)

Present for item 5 below

Councillor Peredur Jenkins (Cabinet Member for Resources)
Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department)
Huw Ynyr (Senior Information Technology and Transformation Manager)
Rhys Roberts (Information Technology Account Managers Team Leader)

Apologies: Councillors Lesley Day, Trevor Edwards, June Marshall, Michael Sol Owen, Gethin Glyn Williams and R.H.Wyn Williams.

Councillor Aled Wyn Jones was welcomed to his first meeting of this committee.

Reference was made to the recent death of former councillor Eddie Dogan and condolences were extended to the family in their loss.

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 committee meeting held on 3 December 2015 as a true record.

3. DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) BILL

Cabinet Member: Councillor Dyfed Edwards

Submitted - the report of the Leader inviting the committee to prior scrutinise the Council's likely response to the draft Local Government Bill before it would be formally approved at the Cabinet on 16 February.

The Leader set the context and the committee considered the first draft and the comments included as part of the report.

The following observations were submitted:-

Part 1

- It was recommended that the Cabinet demanded evidence from Welsh Government on the financial savings that were to derive from the merger, i.e. the Council needed a business case for the merger. In addition, it should be challenged and assurance should be sought regarding who was to fund the "re-organisation costs" during this period of financial unrest.
- The Corporate Scrutiny Committee wished to recommend 3 Councils for North Wales. This opinion was based on considering linguistic matters, economic needs, as well as administrative / geographical arrangements. It was also stated that the (internal) language policy had strengthened the broader language policy within the county, and there would be implications for this with the merger.

Part 2

- Local Government arrangements needed to be looked at jointly, as well as looking at broader arrangements (in terms of local Government, the Assembly Government and the British Government) to ensure a sensible merger.
- The Corporate Scrutiny Committee wished to note that it agreed with the general principle of "general competence", but there was a need for a culture-change between Welsh Government and local Government - not micro-managing, but rather concentrating on the outcomes.

Parts 3-7

- Agreed with the draft observations in the report

General

- The Scrutiny Committee also wished to note that it was of the opinion that the opportunity should be taken to note a general message that it opposed the principle that the local authority had a responsibility for other bodies, e.g. community councils training etc.

The Leader and the officers were thanked for the discussion.

4. GWYNEDD STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2016-20 **Cabinet Member: Councillor Ioan Thomas**

The committee was invited to scrutinise the Strategic Equality Plan before it would be finally submitted to the Cabinet on 15 March 2016 for adoption.

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Customer Care and Libraries, Deprivation and Equality which set the context and responded to questions provided beforehand in relation to:-

- The basis of the four objectives chosen.
- Resources' adequacy to deliver the projects.
- Arrangements to raise officers' awareness of the plan and its content, and the duties of each officer.
- Plans to raise awareness amongst elected members of the plan and the role of members in the equality field.
- The procedure for ensuring equality training for members and officers and the number of members who had attended equality training thus far.
- What would be different within a year of adopting this plan.

The Cabinet Member and the Strategic Planning and Performance Manager responded to further questions/observations from members.

The Chairman summarised the main message of the discussion as follows:-

- Acknowledged the good work regarding forming the plan.
- The need to monitor progress against project outcomes.

The Cabinet Member and the Strategic Planning and Performance Manager were thanked for the discussion.

5. IT STRATEGY

Cabinet Member: Councillor Peredur Jenkins

Submitted - the draft IT Strategy and a presentation was given by the Senior Information Technology and Transformation Manager on the content of the strategy, detailing:-

- The process of reviewing the strategy
- The considerations of the new IT Strategy
- What was not included in the new Strategy
- What was in the new Strategy
- Themes
- Principles

The Senior Information Technology and Transformation Manager responded to questions/observations from the members.

The Head of Finance Department distributed a paper noting that a report which had been prepared by KMPG on the "administrative" costs of Welsh councils explained that the cost of IT in Gwynedd remained lower than the Welsh average and that this Council had moved from the 13th position to the 14th position throughout Wales. He noted that customer satisfaction figures were quite good, but that it was necessary to look at all aspects to ensure value for money and efficiency.

The Chairman summarised the main messages of the discussion as follows:-

- It was recommended that clarity should be ensured on the success of the previous strategy and that that should be explained, using it as a basis for the new strategy. This would allow us to measure progress. It was recommended that there was a need for the service to identify and assess where the Council had reached, what lessons had been learned thus far, by incorporating the information as a basis to the new strategy.
- The IT Strategy needed to be flexible to respond to the customer's requirements (when that was clear) and to be as flexible as possible within security restrictions.
- Ffordd Gwynedd intervention to the IT Service should be considered soon. The intervention could release resources which could be used in the fields discussed in the Strategy.

The Cabinet Member and the officers were thanked for the discussion.

The meeting commenced at 2.30 pm and concluded at 4.35 pm

CHAIRMAN