
CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3/12/15

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

Councillors:- Anwen Davies, Lesley Day, Elwyn Edwards, Trevor Edwards, Gweno Glyn, June Marshall, W.Roy Owen, Eirwyn Williams, Gethin Glyn Williams, John Wyn Williams and R.H.Wyn Williams.

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

Present for item 3 below:-

Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies (Cabinet Member for Economy)
Arwel Evans (Corporate Procurement Manager)
Geraint George (Special Projects Leader)
Meilys Heulfryn Smith (Senior Business Manager)
Colin Morris (Business Support Manager)

Present for item 4 below:-

Councillor Peredur Jenkins (Cabinet Member for Resources)
Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department)
Steve Barnard (Organisational Development Manager)
Carey Cartwright (Learning and Development Manager)
Catrin Love (Health, Safety and Welfare Advisory Service Manager)
Eurig Williams (Human Resources Advisory Service Manager)

Apologies: Councillors Simon Glyn and Michael Sol Owen.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 11 June, 2015 as a true record.

Councillor Lesley Day noted that she had sent an apology for the meeting due to personal interest, but that reason had not been recorded. It was explained that it was not usual to note the reasons behind absences in the minutes and that members were able to include such information in their annual reports.

3. GWYNEDD COUNCIL PROCUREMENT STRATEGY - CATEGORY MANAGEMENT AND KEEPING THE BENEFITS LOCAL

Cabinet Member: Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies

Everyone introduced themselves, and at the Chairman's request, the Corporate Procurement Manager gave a short description of the meaning of the term category management and how it worked on a practical level.

The Cabinet Member for Economy set the context by emphasising the importance of keeping the momentum and ensuring that everyone was aware of the new arrangements.

Submitted – the Corporate Procurement Manager's report updating the committee on the progress of the new Procurement Strategy by responding to the Preparatory Meeting's questions in relation to:-

- Achievement in terms of embedding Category Management in the Care field together with progress against the work programme and the timetable.
- The lessons learned from applying Category Management in the Care field, which were important to keep in mind for the other two Category Management fields.
- The work programme for embedding Category Management in the other two fields.
- How the procedure in the Care field encouraged operating differently from the old procedure and what had improved in terms of the new procedure.
- The Managers' readiness to buy into the Category Management procedure in the care field and across the Council and any difficulties that were encountered.
- The impact of the arrangements on the Council's efficiency and effectiveness.
- The intentions in terms of securing opportunities for local providers in the Care field and across the Council.
- The background work completed in terms of identifying needs and identifying the market in the Care field and across the Council.
- The latest about the performance on spending with 'local' companies in Gwynedd and on a North Wales and Wales level.
- The steps taken to promote liaising with local companies and selling locally.
- Methods of ensuring wider benefits to the county via the social clauses.
- The percentage of invoices that were paid within 30 days.
- The role of the Economy and Community Department in terms of the Keeping the Benefits Local Project and what had been achieved to date.

The Cabinet Member and officers expanded on the written responses in the report, and also responded to further questions / observations from the members in relation to:-

- How the new system would raise awareness of procurement across the Council and ensure that it happened in a unified and strategic way.
- The options in terms of helping people to establish new businesses.
- The limitations of European procurement legislation and rules.
- The importance of the Economy and Community Department's input in terms of keeping the benefits local and the contact with local contractors.
- The challenge, in moving to a central procedure, of trying to persuade small local companies to apply for contracts, (and that) without certainty of any work at the end of the process.
- The flexibility of the procurement process and its ability to change and adapt constantly in order to identify the local market's needs.
- The challenge of identifying and creating opportunities for social enterprises.
- The need to be aware of the impact of introducing the living wage and the Council's ability to acquire contracts.
- Changes in processes.
- The impact of any cuts to the Economy and Community Department and the procurement field as it was dependent upon the business support it received from the department.
- Monitoring and managing contract standards.
- The definition of a "local" company.
- Imposing a language condition.

- The practical arrangements in terms of the teams who would be responsible for purchasing in the entire field.
- The desire to see an example of good practice in order to get a better understanding of the work, together with a progress report in 6 months' time.

The Senior Business Manager gave an outline of her experience to date of using the category management procedure in the Care field, noting that she saw this as a very positive and inclusive development that sat comfortably with the principles of Ffordd Gwynedd. She explained that it was too early to share experiences of entire categories with the members, but she referred to examples of using the new procedure in the learning disability and home care fields where efficiency savings were successfully secured by looking from the perspective of providers and working with the providers to try to construct the service for the future. She also referred to difficult situations now that would not have existed had category management been in force at the time.

The Senior Business Manager responded to questions / comments from the members in relation to:-

- The emphasis on the needs of the individual rather than the price of the work alone.
- The method of monitoring home care packages.

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

- Spreading the message across the Council, so that everyone knew about and understood clearly what the new procedure was.
- There was no evidence to date whether the category management arrangements worked better than the previous procedure. Progress on the procurement strategy should be monitored by this committee in 6 months' time, and regularly thereafter.
- Noting concern regarding the impact of any possible cuts on departments' ability, especially the Economy and Community Department, to drive the local element and the impact of that on the county's economic success more generally.
- Rooting the strategy in Ffordd Gwynedd by consistently listening to the messages that come back from the local sector and adapting the strategy accordingly.
- That there was a need for the Economy and Community Department to be more proactive in promoting and creating opportunities for local businesses, social enterprises, etc., to develop businesses by identifying the gaps in the market, including encouraging individuals to establish new businesses.

The Senior Business Manager further noted that the stakeholder group intended to look at the field of day care for older people, following the category management through from start to finish, and that members of this committee were welcome to be a part of the work in order to see how the methodology worked in practice.

The Cabinet Member and the officers were thanked for all their work and for the discussion.

4. SUPPORTING AND ASSISTING THE WORKFORCE

Cabinet Member: Councillor Peredur Jenkins

Everyone introduced themselves.

The Cabinet Member set the context and the Head of the Corporate Support Department added that the Council took its duty of care seriously at all times and did everything to promote the support that was available among the workforce.

Submitted – the report of the Cabinet Member for Resources, detailing the provision for supporting and assisting staff in a period of cuts to services and major changes to the way that services were provided by responding to the Preparatory Meeting's questions in relation to:-

- The Council's best current assessment of the number of staff that could be affected by the cuts and the efficiency savings.
- The Council's strategy for preparing the workforce for the cuts and supporting them during the process, together with arrangements in terms of moving staff within the Council and finding other opportunities within the Council.
- Emotional support for staff who were facing job losses.
- Arrangements with other agencies for identifying staff's skills and redeploying staff with other agencies.
- Any ongoing work, or projects in the pipeline, to support current staff to establish their own businesses in order to meet the requirements for new / different provision.
- Any assessment conducted regarding stress on remaining staff, and its conclusions.
- Any steps taken for starting to prepare to support staff for the next reorganisation.

The Cabinet Member and officers expanded on the written responses in the report, and also responded to further questions / observations from the members in relation to:-

- Concern that jobs could disappear before other opportunities arose.
- The need to predict longer term opportunities and opportunities to retrain.
- The fact that the situation was not going to improve and that it was always local services that were hit.
- That the Council took the work of supporting and assisting seriously and that it had already helped individuals to remain in employment.
- The need to support the remaining staff in the face of the increased pressure that they would be under and the fact that it could be difficult for those staff to have the time to attend training sessions.
- The importance of links with the Economy and Community Department in terms of advising people who were leaving the Council's services and were keen to establish their own business, etc.
- The precursory dialogue before considering any redundancies.
- Difficulty relocating staff in some cases due to the rural nature of the county.
- The continuation of the appeals procedure and the number of likely cases.

In his closing comments, the Head of the Corporate Support Department noted that the Council's provision in the field of promoting the health and well-being of its staff had been recognised on a national level. The Council had been judged as a gold level organisation in terms of its corporate health and in April of last year, the Council had been invited to give a presentation on its work in the field at a national conference in London.

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

- Accept the report and give thanks for the support that was being offered.
- Monitor the situation as the effects of cuts become apparent during the next few months.

The Cabinet Member and the officers were thanked for all their work and for the discussion.

At the end of the meeting, the Chairman asked the officers to investigate the possibility of moving the preparatory meeting on 6 January from the afternoon to the morning in order to facilitate holding a meeting of the Holidays Homes and Taxes Scrutiny Investigation in the afternoon, and

also moving the 4 February and 14 March meetings of this committee to the afternoon, if possible.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.05 pm

CHAIRMAN