
CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 14/04/16

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

Councillors:- Anwen Davies, Elwyn Edwards, Trevor Edwards, Gweno Glyn, Aled Wyn Jones, Charles W. Jones, Michael Sol Owen, 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 Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member for Housing, Customer Care and Libraries, Deprivation and Equality)

Sion Huws (Senior Solicitor - Corporate)

Meinir Williams (Service Improvement Officer)

Present for item 4 below

Councillor Peredur Jenkins (Cabinet Member for Resources)

Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies (Cabinet Member for Economy)

Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department)

Dewi Morgan (Senior Manager - Revenue and Risk)

Apology: Councillor Lesley Day.

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 committee meeting held on 4 February 2016, as a true record.

3. THE COUNCIL'S COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Customer Care and Libraries, Deprivation and Equality detailing the Council's Complaints Procedure and responding to questions provided in advance in relation to:-

- How the new procedure differed from what had happened in the past and how it was of benefit to the residents of Gwynedd.
- The outcomes for the residents of Gwynedd and evidence to prove that.
- The relationship with Galw Gwynedd and Siopau Gwynedd as the first points of contact
- The services' response to the new procedure.
- Staff training on the new procedure and how to deal with complaints.
- Lessons learnt over the past year and how they had been communicated.

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

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

- There was concern regarding the capacity of Galw Gwynedd to answer calls.
- It was recommended that information regarding formal investigations should be shared with local members if it was seen that a pattern of complaints had developed in a specific area.
- The fact that the support resource to co-ordinate the new procedure operated independently and looked at the situation from the customer's perspective, whilst responding to complaints in a timely manner, was appreciated.
- There was a need to ensure consistency and learn lessons from the Social Services' complaints procedure.

The Cabinet Member and the officers were thanked for the discussion and it was noted that they may be requested to come back before the committee in a year's time.

4. THE BENEFITS TO GWYNEDD FROM RETAINING THE BUSINESS RATES

The Chairman explained that:-

- During a discussion at the Full Council in October 2015, a member drew the Council's attention to the fact that the central Government in England had decided that English local councils would get to keep all the business rates to be re-invested locally but that this was not the situation in Wales.
- In response to a motion by the member to make contact with Welsh Government to ask for the same conditions in Wales, the Chief Executive had suggested that detailed scrutiny work should be undertaken prior to that, to discover whether the same regime in Wales would likely lead to benefits, losses, opportunities or hazards for Gwynedd.

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cabinet Member for Economy inviting the committee to scrutinise and consider the benefits and risks of retaining business rates locally and responding to questions provided in advance in relation to:-

- The content of the Chancellor's statement.
- The impact on local authorities in England.
- The implications for Gwynedd should the same conditions be available in Wales.
- The likelihood for Gwynedd to see benefits, losses, opportunities or hazards from retaining the business rates collected locally.

The Head of Finance Department and the Senior Manager - Revenue and Risk expanded on the written responses in the report, and also responded to further questions / observations from the members.

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

- That the Cabinet Members and the officers should be congratulated for writing a clear and coherent report on a very complex matter.
- Having looked at the opportunities and the risks, the committee had not been convinced at present that introducing the same conditions in Wales would bring any benefits to Gwynedd; rather, it was of the opinion that it would create significant risks.
- That it was premature to lobby the Assembly at present.
- Should more details emerge regarding similar developments for Wales, to recommend that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee carries out further scrutiny work on the matter at that time.

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

The meeting commenced at 2.30 pm and concluded at 3.45 pm

CHAIRMAN