

POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1/2 - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

20 September 2017

Chairperson: Councillor A.N.Woolcock

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Councillors: M.Crowley, J.D.Morgan, C.Edwards, M.Harvey,
S.K.Hunt, L.Jones, A.Llewelyn and S.M.Penry

Officers In Attendance Mrs.K.Jones, D.Rees, Mrs.S.Rees,
Mrs. N. Sparkes, Mrs.R.Headon, P.Lynch and
Miss.C.Davies

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors D.Jones and A.J.Taylor

1. **MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 JULY 2017**

Members noted the Minutes.

2. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18.**

Members noted the Forward Work Programme.

Members discussed a request made by a councillor who is not a Member of this committee that Council expenditure on staff uniforms be scrutinised. Given the very small level of expenditure involved, Members decided that they did not wish to pursue the item.

3. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

4.1 Award of Contract for Managed Service for the Provision of Agency Workers

Members received information on making an award to and entering into contract with Comensura Ltd for the provision of a Managed Service for the supply of agency staff.

Officers highlighted that there was an error in the recommendation of the report and should read 1st January 2018 to 7th October 2018 and not 1st January 2018 to 7th April 2018 as detailed in the circulated report.

Members queried who the Authority is using as agencies. Officers highlighted that they have data from 2010 containing information on what agencies are used which would be circulated to the committee.

Members queried whether consultants come under the same category as agency. Officers confirmed that consultants are not included in this category of expenditure and are separately accounted for.

Members queried which directorate spends the most money on agency labour within Neath Port Talbot Council. Officers highlighted that Social Services is the highest spending Directorate, However, Members were also advised that this contract does not include agency cover for Teaching Staff as Teaching is covered by a different contract.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that Cabinet Board be asked to consider the following recommendation:-

It is recommended that the Authority utilise the direct award provisions in the NPS Framework to enter into contract with Comensura to re-appoint Comensura as the managed service provider for agency staff from 1st January 2018 to 7th October 2018 with the option to extend the arrangements for up to a further 12 months.

4.2 Proposals for a Welsh Language Bill

Members received information on the proposals for a Welsh Language Bill and were invited to provide advice to the Cabinet Board to inform a response to the Welsh Government's consultation as contained within the circulated report.

Members noted an error in the report, where Appendix 5 should read Appendix 1.

Part 1 – Promoting the Welsh Language

Members asked for clarity on the type of body detailed in option 4 as it was not made clear. Officers confirmed that an independent body was proposed.

Officers clarified that Option 4 proposes a single body responsible for promoting the Welsh language while there would be 2, or 3 bodies, sharing the responsibility in Options 2 and 3 respectively.

Members' preference was option 4.

Part 2 – Governance and Accountability

Following discussion Members' preference was option 3

Part 3 – Welsh Language Standards

Members queried what was meant by reasonable and proportionate as detailed in option 4.

Officers reminded Members of the Welsh Language Commissioner's stance in relation to reasonable and proportionate during the investigation and challenge process. It was agreed that it would be important for there to be a shared view on how reasonable and proportionate should be interpreted and that this should be included in the Council's response.

Additionally, Member's preference was option 2.

Classes of Welsh Language Standards

Members discussed the proposals; redefining Standards and developing Language Planning Duties. Further clarity in relation to the proposed scope of language planning duties would be expected in due course from Welsh Government.

Members felt it was important that this was a fundamental part of work to ensure equality, akin to the equalities duties set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Complaints

Members fully supported the principle that organisations should exhaust their internal complaints processes before the Welsh Language Commissioner would become involved in individual cases

Tribunal

Members commented that it does not seem 'just' that a decision on whether a case has merit should be pre-determined. This may not be what is intended and could be merely poor drafting of the document.

Part 4 - The Scope of Bodies Covered by Welsh Language Legislation

Members discussed the proposals and confirmed that they were happy with them.

Members asked Officers where the Council currently stands with the Welsh Government Standards. Officers confirmed that agreement had been reached on the majority of the Standards that the Council had challenged and this had been detailed in the report to the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board in June. However, the Council were still awaiting clarity on some of the other standards.

Members queried how the Council is going to assist with helping Welsh Government in attaining its target of 1 million speakers. Members highlighted that it will take time to increase the number of Welsh Speakers and the Council need to support it.

Members queried that there needs to be amendments to the planning procedures to allow Welsh to be made a requirement for the sector.

It was further agreed that the response agreed by Cabinet Board, would be circulated to the Committee Members for information.

4.3 Quarterly Performance Management Data 2017/2018 – Quarter 1 Performance (1 April 2017 – 30 June 2017)

Members received information on the quarter 1 performance management data for the period 1st April 2017 to 30th June 2017 for the Chief Executive's and Finance and Corporate Services Directorate. Members also received performance management data for the same period on the services that are within the remit of the other four Cabinet Boards, as detailed in the circulated report.

Members queried that Neath Port Talbot Council are still ranked 22nd in all wales for the number of visits to Leisure Centres per 1,000 population and queried whether it was too expensive for public to visit. Officers highlighted that the All-Wales data was 22nd due to the fact that the Aberavon Leisure and Fitness Centre was not open. However, the latest data shows that the position has now improved significantly and the Council is now ranked 15th in the All-Wales data. This will be detailed in the Quarter 2 performance management data report, in a future meeting of the Leisure and Culture Scrutiny Sub Committee.

Members queried why there had been such a big decrease in the number of care and support plan reviews in Adult Services and whether there were going to be any improvements. Officers highlighted that the decrease in the number of care and support plan reviews can be attributed to a number of staff vacancies and a change in documentation due to the introduction of the Social Services Well-being (Wales) Act. This necessary change had lengthened the process of undertaking a care plan review. Officers are currently recruiting to address the staff vacancies which would improve the situation, Team Managers are actively targeting care plan reviews with staff within their teams and care plan reviews have been given a high priority by senior management.

Members asked for a breakdown of the Core Subject Indicators in terms of the core subjects for Key Stage 2 results. Officers confirmed that the core subjects were English, Maths, Science and either Welsh First Language or Welsh Second Language.

Members queried that they had recently had an all-member seminar on the involvement of the NPT Library Service to support the introduction of the UK Government's Welfare Reforms. and felt that there was conflicting information from the information in the seminar and the performance management data on Libraries. Members queried what support the Council can provide to voluntary staff on providing services and activities within libraries. Officers noted that the all-Member Seminar on Welfare Reform did not provide enough time for Members to ask all of the questions they had and would review this for a future Seminar.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

CHAIRPERSON