



**POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**10.30 am WEDNESDAY, 24 JANUARY 2018**

**COMMITTEE ROOMS 1/2 - PORT TALBOT CIVIC CENTRE**

**PART 1**

1. To receive any declarations of interest from Members
2. To receive the Minutes of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee held on 20 November 2017 (*Pages 5 - 14*)
3. To receive the Minutes of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee held on 13 December 2017 (*Pages 15 - 20*)
4. To receive the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2017/18. (*Pages 21 - 24*)

**To scrutinise information and monitoring issues being reported by:**

**Report of the Head of ICT**

5. Telephony System Presentation
6. To select appropriate items from the Cabinet Board Agenda for pre-scrutiny (Cabinet Board reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members)
7. Any urgent items (whether public or exempt) at the discretion of the Chairman pursuant to Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972
8. Access to Meetings to resolve to exclude the public for the following

item(s) pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the relevant exempt paragraphs of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act

## **PART 2**

9. To select appropriate private items from the Cabinet Board Agenda for pre-scrutiny (Cabinet Board Reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members)

**S.Phillips**  
**Chief Executive**

**Civic Centre**  
**Port Talbot**

**Thursday, 18 January 2018**

### **Committee Membership:**

**Chairperson: Councillor A.N.Woolcock**

**Vice  
Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman**

**Councillors:** M.Crowley, J.D.Morgan, C.Edwards,  
S.E.Freeguard, M.Harvey, S.K.Hunt, H.N.James,  
A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, L.M.Purcell, S.M.Penry,  
A.L.Thomas, J.Warman and S.Paddison

### **Notes:**

- (1) *If Committee Members or non-Committee Members wish to have relevant items put on the agenda for future meetings, then please notify the Chief Executive/Chair eight days before the meeting.*
- (2) *If non-Committee Members wish to attend for an item of interest, then prior notification needs to be given (by 12.00 noon on the day before the meeting). Non-Committee Members may speak but not vote, or move or second any motion.*

- (3) *For pre scrutiny arrangements, the Chair will normally recommend forthcoming executive items for discussion/challenge. It is also open to Committee Members to request items to be raised - though Members are asked to be selective here in regard to important issues.*
- (4) *The relevant Cabinet Board Members will also be invited to be present at the meeting for Scrutiny/ Consultation purposes.*
- (5) *Would the Scrutiny Committee Members please bring the Cabinet Board papers with them to the meeting.*

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## POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

**Members Present:**

**20 November 2017**

**Chairperson:** Councillor A.N.Woolcock

**Vice Chairperson:** Councillor S.Rahaman

**Councillors:** M.Crowley, J.D.Morgan, S.E.Freeguard,  
M.Harvey, S.K.Hunt, H.N.James, A.Llewelyn,  
S.Miller, S.M.Penry and S.Paddison

**Officers In Attendance** H.Jenkins, Mrs.K.Jones, D.Rees, D.Michael,  
S.John, Mrs.S.Rees and R. George

**Cabinet Invitees:** D. Jones

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### 1. **CONSULTATION ON BUDGET AND DRAFT SAVINGS 2018/19**

Members scrutinised the report which provided further information around the current Corporate Services draft budget consultation exercise.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services provided Members with an overview of the budget position explaining that the Council's net revenue budget for 2017/18 was £274.677 million and together with grants and incomes resulted in a gross budget of £418 million in Council services across the County Borough. The Director also highlighted that the Authority invests approximately £50 million per year through its capital programme.

The Corporate Director then reminded Members that on 8 November, 2017, the Council's Cabinet approved the commencement of the public consultation exercise on its draft budget savings for 2018/19 to 2019/20. The Committee was informed that a projected financial saving of £10.24 million would be required to set a balanced budget for the next financial year with a further £13 million needed in the following financial year.

Following on, the Head of Human Resources then proceeded to provide Members with an overview of the budget proposals for the Human Resources division for 2018/19.

Members were informed that the division was formed in 2009, with a budget of £2.92 million which has reduced to £2.25 million in 2017/2018 mainly achieved through reduced staffing costs.

The Head of Human Resources then provided an overview of the work of the various teams within the division including the HR Employment Support Team, HR Workforce Information Team, Health and Safety, Occupation Health Services, Emergency Planning, Learning, Training and Development as well as the three Professional Teams.

In outlining the specific budget savings proposals the Head of Human Resources highlighted that that the division, in relation to staffing levels, was the smallest within the Council and, as such, opportunities for savings had become very limited.

For Members reference, it was also explained that while non-staffing budgets will continue to be scrutinised and reduced wherever possible, as 93% of the budget is allocated to staffing costs, the only source for any significant savings will be through reducing the number of people employed within the division. Any further significant reductions in staff numbers will result in services, either ceasing altogether, or being significantly reduced.

Members then proceeded to scrutinise specific proposals with the initial questions being raised in relation to Health and Safety, Occupational Health and Learning, Training and Development.

In relation to Health and Safety, Members enquired as to how confident the Head of Human Resources was that such savings could be achieved without having an adverse effect particularly in relation to health and safety practices and procedures.

The Head of Human Resources pointed out that the Health and Safety unit was currently working with ICT officers to progress the installation and usage of improved digital administrative systems.

In addition, it was highlighted that a pilot scheme had been undertaken over the past 12 months with the creation of a new administrative post (Grade 3) which had proven successful in

ensuring the unit's programme of work capacity remained robust while also allowing for further budget savings to be achieved.

Members then proceeded to pursue another line of enquiry asking whether it would potentially be cost effective to provide psychological counselling to staff who were being treated for significant medical conditions.

The Head of Human Resources informed Members that the authority does already provide a counselling service via the Occupational Health Unit for Members of staff. A total of six standard sessions are available, following referral, with further support potentially available subject to professional assessment.

Turning to Learning, Training and Development Members asked whether there was any possibility to progress the development of online training for Members and Officers due to the difficulties in car parking arrangements at the Council Offices located in The Quays, Briton Ferry and to potential secure further cost savings.

The Head of Human Resources explained that access to online training was developing and pointed to the establishment and usage of the All Wales Academy website portal. Members were informed that the online resource provides a variety of training courses and learning tools which are readily available.

In addition, use of video call software such as WebEx is also being considered to assist with the development of training requirements going forward.

Members were then informed that in relation to specific training that needed to be conducted 'face to face' the Head of Human Resources, with the assistance of the Head of Property and Regeneration, was looking to try and identify an alternative training venue with more adequate car parking provision, particularly in relation to the delivery of social care welfare training, however no immediate solutions have been identified.

A supplementary question was then asked by Members enquiring as to whether the Council paid expenses for Members of Staff undertaking work based training.

The Head of Human Resources referred Members to the Council's Travel and Subsistence Policy which outlined what costs employees could reclaim in relation to work based training.

The Head of Legal Services then proceeded to provide Members with an overview of the Legal Services 2018/2019 budget savings proposals.

Members were provided with a brief overview of the service areas within the department before the Head of Legal Services outlined the budget savings proposals for the division.

It was explained that the budget for Legal Services consists almost entirely of expenditure on staffing. Provision for legal fees and legal library is limited and substantial savings are not available in these areas.

The Head of Legal Services went on to explain that the Licensing section was almost entirely self-funded although it is not legally entitled to make a profit from the service.

In relation to the fees for the Registrar's Office fee levels are also almost entirely set by the UK Government.

Members were also informed that over recent years capacity has been taken out of the Property and Litigation Legal teams and last year posts were deleted in the Childcare Legal team.

Looking ahead to the next financial year the Head of Legal Services outlined that the division would have to turn to the teams that provide administrative support to Legal Services, the Directorate and the Council corporately, as well as the Land Charges team, to consider what further savings proposals could be realised to enable additional rationalisation.

Providing additional context to the saving proposals the Head of Legal Services pointed out that the very services which are called for in current circumstances are those very service areas which very often contribute towards the council's efforts to transform services and cut expenditure.

These services include procurement, contracts with third parties and all collaborations such as Western Bay and the Swansea Bay City Deal to name a few. The Head of Legal services then emphasised



that where there are challenges to decision-making these require a significant amount of legal work and both internal and external advice and this becomes increasingly difficulty with reduced capacity.

As a result, it was highlighted to members that the resilience of the legal teams to deal with events such as the recent landslip in Pantteg is considerably diminished. Furthermore, if the in-house administrative support continues to reduce and the work is still there, the only other alternative is to put more work out to private contract at greater cost.

The Head of Legal Service made clear that due to the year on year budget savings any absence of staff or sudden increase in workloads now has a marked effect on the efficiency of the section and service delivery suffers as a result. Summing up the Head of Legal Services advised Members that the loss of experienced staff and anticipated retirements will mean that the service will need to be rebuilt in the short to medium term.

Following the conclusion of the budget saving summary Members asked if the potential budget savings were implemented did the Head of Legal Services feel that staff could manage in relation to the current and future work demands.

The Head of Legal Services referred Members to his previous comments and emphasised that the savings were manageable but emphasised that the skill and knowledge level of the department would need to be monitored and rebuilt in due course.

Moving on Members were then provided with an overview of the budget proposals for the Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services division 2018/2019.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services detailed that the division had a budget of just under £3.8million and provided a brief overview of the key service areas including the Western Bay Regional Commissioning Team for substance Misuse responsibility for which had been transferred to the department.

It was pointed out to Members that new legislative burdens, for example, major changes to data protection legislation and the implementation of statutory requirements outlined around well-being of future generations as well as the Welsh Language were placing new financial pressures on the division, as well as requiring additional

work demand from the existing staffing arrangements for the service areas, particularly the corporate strategy unit.

In addition, the Head of Corporate Strategy highlighted the work that had been conducted during the past year in relation to the establishment of a combined joint Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) service with neighbouring authorities. However, despite best efforts this arrangement had proven to be unachievable.

As a result of these additional pressures, the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services also highlighted that a report looking at the organisational structure of the division was currently being prepared and would be presented to the Democratic Services Committee in the new year.

Similar to other Heads of Service the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services emphasised that budget saving proposals in relation to achieving increased income and reduction to non-staff savings presented the greatest risk in terms of the proposals put forward.

Members then proceeded to ask a series of questions in relation to the relevant savings proposals. Members first enquired whether there was any scope to increase funding to the Western Bay Regional Commissioning Team due to the level of substance misuse within the County Borough and subsequent link to an increase in mortality rates.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services explained to Members that the majority of funding available to the Council to support such work was provided by Welsh Government via the Substance Misuse Action Grant. It was further outlined that as part of the work programme of the Regional Area Planning Board an evaluation was being undertaken to look at how the grant funding was being spent and to maximise 'value for money' in key services as well as ensuring equity across the region in terms of what the funding provision was offering at a local level.

Due to the proposed re-organisation of the Cwm Taf Health Board, where there was a proposal to include the County Borough area of Bridgend within the Cwm Taf Health Board footprint, the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services made clear that it was important that the work of the Regional Area Planning in relation to this area of funding was carefully considered and advised Members that they would be kept informed of progress.

Members voiced their frustration at the current level of funding provided by Welsh Government in relation to funding to counter substance misuse, citing a recent statistic which highlighted that Port Talbot ranked as the second highest town within the UK in relation to deaths caused by drug use between 2014 - 2016.

In light of Members interest in this matter the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services confirmed that she would be more than willing to prepare a further report in relation to funding issues around substance misuse, including a breakdown of regional funding allocations for comparative purposes, in due course.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services also confirmed to Members that she had been elected to chair the Western Bay Regional Partnership Board for the next twelve months.

Moving on, Members then enquired about the levels of voluntary charitable contributions made to the various charitable causes supported by each incoming Mayor of Council asking whether any figures could be provided.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services explained that the amount of charitable funding raised varied year on year but on average between £15,000 - £20,000 was raised with all monies being given directly to the nominated charities without any administration fee imposed.

Members were also advised civic budget for administering civic events had in recent years been reduced from around £50,000 to £15,000. In addition, the Mayor of Council, with the support of the Deputy Mayor, attends on average between 250-300 engagements throughout the civic year. The Head of Corporate Strategy also informed Members that work was currently underway with the Mayor of Council to look at ways of renewing the civic event programme making it more relevant and reflective of local communities.

Members then proceeded to raise an operational enquiry in relation to Customer Services asking whether there was a possibility of simplifying the English and Welsh language automated message channels to ensure individuals using the system were able to have similar journey experiences lasting equally the same amount of time whatever language they preferred to use.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services noted the comment and confirmed that the current messaging would be examined to see if any potential improvements could be made to the user experience.

Following a number of other incidental questions Members then moved on to be provided with an overview of the budget proposals for the ICT and Procurement Services Division.

The Head of ICT and Procurement detailed that the division was responsible for providing support and all ICT functions across the Council's departments including its schools, while also retaining responsibility for all corporate procurement activity within the authority.

For Members information the Head of ICT and Procurement explained that despite continued budget and staff reductions, the division is still perceived as one that performs well, operates strategically and is extremely flexible in adapting its work programme to meet the Council's changing needs and priorities.

As a part of the budget savings proposals the Head of ICT and Procurement highlighted that the division had a budget of just over £4.2 million and similar to other Heads of Service provided a brief overview of the key service areas with a savings target.

In looking to achieve the division budget savings the Head of ICT and Procurement told Members that this would undoubtedly result in a reduction in development support capacity with service requests taking longer to complete. Furthermore, a number of posts currently underpinned by departmental reserves would be exhausted by March 2019.

Nevertheless, the Head of ICT and Procurement pointed out that continued effort would be maintained to maximise income generation and/or collaborative opportunities to offset job losses and service issues.

Members were also informed that due to a number of unexpected Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy (ER/VR) staff departures in 2017/18 will partly go towards achieving savings targets in 2018/2019. In the medium term however, the Head of ICT and Procurement highlighted that in order to help other departments meet their service needs and FFP savings will require the ICT division to

restructure in order to maximise the skills and resources it has available.

The Head of ICT and Procurement concluded by making clear that further work to ascertain whether additional income could be generated for subsequent years was ongoing and if opportunities could not be found then this would impact in staffing, capacity and services provision within the department.

Turning to the Financial Services division Members were then provided with a brief summary of the relevant budget proposals by the Head of Financial Services which included the reduction in staffing levels across the various teams as well as a requirement to reduce spend on non-staff expenditure heads.

Similar to the other Heads of Service the Head of Financial Services provided an overview of the service areas and budget savings targets pointing out that the division had a budget of just over £3.5 million.

For the assistance of Members the Head of Financial Services provided an example of a review of systems to help with proposed reductions in departmental resources. Members were informed that this would involve the removal of face to face service for Council tax enquiries in the Port Talbot Civic Centre to be replaced by a telephone service.

The Head of Financial Services explained that the number of people using the current face to face service remained very low and whilst staff who provide service are able to carry out other duties while not dealing with the public, the low numbers mean that this isn't an efficient use of resources.

It was explained to Members that a trial of the proposal had been carried out over eight working days to establish any impacts of removing the face to face service, with a report on the proposed change and its impacts due to be brought before the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board in due course.

In summation Members enquired in relation to all the budget savings proposals detailed by the Heads of Service what overlying risks remained to achieve the required over-arching budget savings.

The Corporate Director for Finance and Corporate Services informed Members that the Corporate Services total cash limit in 2017/18 amounted to just over £16.55 million. The Corporate Director

continued by explaining that this budget was underpinned by the use of specific reserves totalling £250,000, which once used will require further service reduction in future years.

In relation to the current year's budget monitoring position, the Corporate Director highlighted that this showed a projected underspend on the total corporate services budget of some £100,000. As such, provided existing reserves are made available in 2018/19 they should be sufficient to underpin the proposed base service level for the directorate.

However, the Corporate Director made clear that once these reserves had been spent additional service savings would be required to balance the budget from April 2019 onwards.

In conclusion, Members made clear their support for officers in maintaining careful risk management monitoring in relation to achieving the various budget savings while voicing their concern for the ongoing long term mental health and physical well-being of all members of staff who will be required to ensure the savings are obtainable. In addition, Members also emphasised their desire to ensure that all current and future budget savings proposals remained fair and equitable with no one division or department taking an unreasonable level of budget cuts.

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

## **CHAIRPERSON**

## POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

**Members Present:**

**13 December 2017**

**Chairperson:** Councillor A.N.Woolcock

**Vice Chairperson:** Councillor S.Rahaman

**Councillors:** J.D.Morgan, C.Edwards, S.E.Freeguard,  
S.M.Penry and J.Warman

**Officers In Attendance** D.Rees, C.Furlow, Mrs. R. Headon and  
Miss.C.Davies

**Cabinet Invitees:** Councillors A.J.Taylor, C.Clement-Williams and  
D.W.Davies

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### 1. **MEMBERS DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

The following Member made a declaration of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

Councillor D.W.Davies - Report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services in relation to Third Sector Grant Funding as he is a Member of the Black and Ethnic Minority Association from Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

Councillor A.N.Woolcock - Report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services in relation to Third Sector Grant Funding as he is a Board Member of 'Y Banwen'.

Councillor. S.Rahaman - Report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services in relation to Third Sector Grant Funding as

he is the Secretary of NPT BME  
Community Association Local  
Authority Representatives

Councillor. S.M.Penry -

Report of the Director of Finance  
and Corporate Services in relation  
to Third Sector Grant Funding as  
she is a Member of the CVS,  
Member of the Board MCC and  
Member of the Age Connect on  
the Board.

2. **MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE HELD ON 1 NOVEMBER 2017**

The Committee noted the minutes.

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

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

It was highlighted to Members that a special Policy and Resources  
Scrutiny Committee had been scheduled for 31<sup>st</sup>, January 2017, that  
members were requested to attend.

4. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following items:

**Cabinet Board Proposals**

4.1 **Quality Performance Management Data 2017/18 – Quarter 2  
Performance**

Members received information on the quarter 2 performance  
management data for the period 1st April 2017 to 30th  
September 2017 for Chief Executive's and Finance & Corporate  
Services Directorates and the performance management data  
for the same period for services that are within the remit of the  
other four Cabinet Boards as contained within the circulated  
report.



Members noted that the percentage of school days lost due to fixed-term exclusions during the academic year in Primary Schools and Secondary Schools had increased, and requested that further information on pupil numbers be included in the data for future reports.

Members asked for further information on the Wellbeing and Behaviour Team. Officers confirmed that the team was newly established and committed to obtaining details on and the dates that the team was established, the impact the team has had since being implemented and clarification on why the data was showing a downward trend to provide to Members.

Members highlighted that the performance indicators 36 and 37 detailed on page 41 of the circulated report are below the Welsh average and felt that the explanation provided was not adequate.

Members queried the full time education provision provided by the Authority and asked for further information on the home schooling provision. Officers confirmed that they would get a response from the relevant officers to provide to Members.

Members noted the downward trend of children being supported to live with their family and asked for further information in relation to Looked After Children (LAC) and the support that is offered.

Officers confirmed that they would get a response to Members from the relevant Officers.

Members were concerned that that the percentage of children seen by a dentist within 3 months of being looked after hasn't increased.

Members asked for information on the process of recruiting social workers to ensure good quality applicants.

Members highlighted that there was an error at the end of page 61 and that the word 'Gage' should be spelt 'Gauge'.

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

#### 4.2 Developing a Language Promotion Strategy

Members received information on the development of a Language Promotion Strategy to meet the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards as contained within the circulated report.

The Chair highlighted to the Committee that representation had been received from Cllr.A.Llewelyn, requesting that he be considered for the membership of the Task and Finish Group.

It was agreed that the current Chair and Vice Chair of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, be automatically included in the Membership and sustain their roles of Chair and Vice Chair.

Members asked what responsibilities fall to the Council in relation to the Welsh Language Strategy. Officers confirmed that the Authority is not wholly responsible for improving or maintaining the number of Welsh Language Speakers.

Members commended the idea of developing a Task and Finish Group.

The Deputy Leader informed the Committee that the Task and Finish Group would have a smaller membership than the main Committee and would be politically balanced.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board taking in consideration of the requests from the Committee.

#### 4.3 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter and Report

The Committee received information in relation to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter as contained within the circulated report,

Members asked why the number of complaints received in relation to Roads and Transport is more than double the national average. Officers confirmed that the relevant Officer would respond back to Members.

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

5. **ACCESS TO MEETINGS**

**RESOLVED:** that pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following items of business which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

6. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following items:

Cabinet Board Proposals

6.1 Council Tax Write Offs

Members received information on Council Tax Write Offs as contained within the circulated report.

Members asked for further information in the form of a comparative report from another Council on Council Tax write offs. Officers stated that while this would be possible, the comparison would be difficult as the figures from a different Authority would be different to how the figures are collated in this Council.

Members queried if officers collate the reasons why Members of the public do not pay Council Tax and if there is a common thread. Members asked for a Case Study on 3 individual case studies to be brought back to a future meeting.

Members highlighted that Ward Members previously received letters on changes of public in their ward and asked if these letters could be reintroduced.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

**CHAIRPERSON**

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**(DRAFT)**  
**Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee**  
**Forward Work Programme 2017/18**

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Officer
14 June 2017	Sickness Update Report – Quarter 4 (2016/17)	
25 July 2017		
20 September 2017		
1 November 2017		

20 November 2017	Special Budget	
13 December 2017		
9 December 2017	Task and Finish (Workshop) – NPT PSB Local Wellbeing plan	Karen Jones
24 January 2018	Telephony system presentation	Steve john
31 January 2018	Public Services Plan and response to wellbeing plan	Karen Jones
(Special)		

7 March 2018	Community Profile Language update	Karen Jones/Rhian Headon
	Workforce plan update	Sheenagh Rees
18 April 2018	Update report on new system and implementation on the new write offs system	Dave Rees

- To monitor the Local Government Association Subscription Bi-annually

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