

POLICY AND RESOURCES/ CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

26 July, 2017

Chairperson: Councillor A.N.Woolcock

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Councillors: M.Crowley, S.E.Freeguard, S.K.Hunt,
H.N.James, A.Llewelyn, J.D.Morgan,
L.M.Purcell and A.L.Thomas

Officers In Attendance S.Phillips, H.Jenkins, G.Nutt, A.Evans,
N. Jarman, Mrs.K.Jones and A.Manchipp

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors A.J.Taylor, D.W.Davies, D.Jones,
E.V.Latham, A.R.Lockyer, P.A.Rees,
P.D.Richards and A.Wingrave

1. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2017/18

The Committee received an overview of the report in relation to Revenue Budget Monitoring for 2017/18. Members then raised the following issues:-

- In relation to CORP704 whether the proposal to delete the vacant post of assistant HR officer was cost effective in the long term. Members were advised that cost saving measures such as this were required in order to balance the Head of Service budgets. In relation to Human Resources specifically, the Chief Executive advised that discussions were ongoing regarding the configuration of the Section as there were capacity issues. The interface with schools, for example, was a particular issue as it was felt that School Governors and Head Teachers needed to deal with HR issues in a more focused manner and not escalate these to the HR Section, as was the case at present. There was therefore an unrealistic

expectation on HR, which did not have the capacity. Members then asked whether schools would be required to 'buy in' the assistance of HR and were advised that this would be considered as part of the review. The Chief Executive urged those Members, who were also School Governors, to address the noncomplex HR issues within the school and not rely on the Authority's HR Section.

- Members were concerned at the management of the large number of variances particularly in the Social Services Directorate and were advised that budgets needed to be controlled. The Children's Services Budget was however particularly volatile as each package of care could be very expensive, dependent on the level of care required. The Director expected that there would be in the region of £675k underspend as the numbers of Looked After Children had fallen. This would also have a knock on effect to Child Care Legal costs. Members expressed concern that any cuts made would not increase risk and were advised that none of the service changes to date had been detrimental to either the quantity nor quality of service. The Director advised Members that savings could be realised through a further transformation of services.
- In relation to the 21st Century schools project, Members noted that the project had been profiled and that the spend was under control.
- Members questioned the position in relation to the Princess Royal Theatre and noted that the summer months were usually quiet and that there was normally an increase during the autumn/winter. There had also been an increase in the booking fees and it was envisaged that this together with the increase in bookings would mitigate the overspend. Members also noted that there would be a review of the Arts provision throughout the County Borough with a view to generating income for the Authority.
- The Director of Environment confirmed that the income streams referred to in the circulated report, for the Environment Directorate were achievable. Those referred to under the Corporate Section (ICT) were achieved through such things as the secondment of staff to the Western Bay and also hosting such services as the Registrars.
- In relation to Home Care, the percentage of cases undertaken by the Authority had fallen from 20% to 14% and were usually the more complex cases. This was due, in part, to the fact that the in house provision was more expensive than the private

sector. Members noted that Dynamic Purchasing would be in operation in August, which was in effect an on line auction for care packaged.

- Members asked how the overspend in external provision could be addressed and were advised that this could not be done but that the Authority had reduced the rate of admission to hospital as a result of assessments not resulting in over provision. The Chief Executive added that the Authority could not guarantee that there would be an in house provision in 5 years as the service was too expensive.
- Members suggested that perhaps there were opportunities for income generation in such areas as the Registrars Service, which could provide a service in relation to such things as genealogy.

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

2. **CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2017/18**

Committee noted a typographical error in the report wherein the new school in Margam should be referred to as a 3-16 facility, and not a Comprehensive school.

Members scrutinised the above report and commented on the compensation provided by Welsh Government in relation to the Peripheral Distributer Road in Port Talbot.

In relation to the Local Transport Fund, Members asked for details of the spend to date-this would be provided outside of the meeting.

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

CHAIRPERSON