

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

12 September 2018

Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

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

Officers In Attendance A.Evans, H.Jenkins, G.Nutt, S.Phillips,
C.Davies, C.Griffiths, C.Furrow and K.Jones

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors C.Clement-Williams, D.W.Davies,
D.Jones, E.V.Latham and P.A.Rees

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee noted the minutes of the 25th July 2018.

The Committee noted the Minutes of the 1st August 2018, subject to amending 'previous year's class numbers' to 'Previous Plasc numbers'.

2. PRE-SCRUTINY

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following items:

Cabinet Board Papers

2.1 Budget Setting – The context for Members

Members received an overview of the budget process over the next 6 month and received full information on the range of factors that may occur, as detailed in the circulated report.

Members highlighted that there are no commitments for funding in the Education Department, however, queried how much the

funding that are on offer would cover. Officers highlighted that where the ALNET Bill is concerned there would be a saving as the authority had challenged Welsh Government. However, as far as additional funding is concerned it was noted that there is the Additional learning Needs (ALN) Grant. It was noted that the Legal aspects of the ALN Grant is currently being looked into. Officers explained that other than this there are no additional funding and the Council would be required to consume the cost.

Members highlighted that teachers pay are well overdue and asked what conversations are happening with the Trade Unions. Officers highlighted that they are having extent discussions with teachers and there is a Staff Council meeting on Monday to discuss these issues with the trade unions.

Members highlighted that the Barnett formula had been mentioned and asked what the consequences on that would be. Officers explained that Welsh Government are claiming that it is recycled money. The officer highlighted their views and explained that the Barnett formula would not be reformed.

Members highlighted the concerns for the care agenda, members felt that the care strategy needs to be rethought. Officers highlighted that the Local Authority need assistance from the Health Board. It was noted that we are aware of the current pressures and would need to adapt our strategies and have adequate funding for the social care element.

Members showed concern in relation to the lack of insight from health, however, highlighted that the Council delivers really well for people that are at retirement age. Officers gave a brief response and explained that there are currently difficult discussions between the authority and ABMU.

Members highlighted an aspect of the report which is in relation to the Valleys initiative in the Council and highlighted that for the Social Services Directorate there needs to be more localised strategies to deliver. Officers agreed and highlighted that the point was well taken.

Members highlighted that the Environment department continues to take the brunt of the budget cuts.

Members highlighted that there is reform with no infrastructure and Welsh Government have the ALN reform and asked what is being done about that. It was noted that there needs to be a change in terms of stepping down from ABMU and asked what the Council and the Health Board doing about this. Officers highlighted that it's not just about continuing health care, it was noted that the boarder of the authority is quite poor and that the issues are addressed in the report.

The Cabinet member highlighted that report highlights all of the issues. It was noted that if the council is struggling then vulnerable people would be affected. The Cabinet Member commended the public and highlighted the efforts they put in to the community. It was requested that the report be circulated to all members.

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

2.2 Operational Risk Register

Members received the monitoring report on the operational risk register covering the various services within the Finance and Corporate Services Directorate.

Members asked whether there would be any operational risks with the Brexit fall out. Officers highlighted that the capital funding and European funding there would be a difference until next march with the European arrangements. Mainly workways would be affected. It was noted that there would be more clarity in 2020. Members asked for a more broad response rather than grant based. Officers highlighted that they were unsure and would just have to see what the results of Brexit would be.

Members asked if there are currently any employed staff that are European. Officers highlighted that in terms of procurement don't know yet however in terms of staff, Human Resources are aware of the number, however, it is very small.

Members asked whether the risk 'The failure of the HR Division to deliver critical services, as a result of reductions in staff numbers linked to the FFP' will result in getting into a high risk as it is currently medium. Officers explained that it will currently remain a medium risk.

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

2.3 Annual Report - Part 2 (Corporate Plan 2017-22) Period: 1 October 2017 to 31 March 2018

Members received information on part two of the Annual Report for 2017-2018.

Officers highlighted that the main document is technical in nature, due to the compliance requirements of the various pieces of legislation. However, there is a summary version to highlight the main achievements during the year and there will also be a video that would help to make the key messages more accessible. The video will be available at Council.

Members understood why the annual report had been produced in two parts this year, due to the changes to the Council's Corporate Plan in 2017/8. Officers confirmed that the position for 2018/19 would revert to normal arrangements is one annual report would be produced at the end of the financial year.

Members highlighted that there appeared to a problem in activating the links within the report on the ipads and officers undertook to explore why this was the case.

Members asked for the actual figure on the performance indicator relating to the percentage of households threatened with homelessness successfully prevented from becoming homeless for 2017-2018. As the information was not available at the meeting, officers undertook to circulate the information to committee members after the meeting.

Members highlighted that the authority are delivering good services but noted that the authority's performance relative to other authorities had deteriorated in a number of indicators. Officers advised that the Chief Executive had asked for more detailed analysis to be undertaken on comparative performance. Members enquired as to whether this could be accounted for by the reduction in headcount but officers observed that all authorities were being affected by the continued climate of austerity.

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

2.4 Wales Audit Office - Annual Improvement Report 2017-2018

Members received information on the Wales Audit Office's Annual Improvement Report 2017-18. Members were provided with an update on progress to address proposals for improvement and recommendations contained within the Wales Audit Office's Annual Improvement Report 2016-2017 and the Wales Audit Office's Annual Improvement Report 2017-2018.

It was noted that the Council had yet to formulate its response to the proposals for improvement made by the WAO on Scrutiny. Members were of the view that the pre-scrutiny model should be retained and also pointed to examples of policy development and post-scrutiny practice which could be further developed. Officers advised that the proposals for improvement were to be discussed with the chairs and vice-chairs of all scrutiny committees in the near future with a view to identifying what further improvement work Members would wish to take forward. Officers highlighted that these proposals were drawn up during the end of 2017 and since the field work had been completed scrutiny practice had matured.

In terms of the recommendations made by Estyn following their review of education arrangements in the Council, Members asked who would take the lead on taking action to address the safeguarding management issues identified during the inspection. Officers highlighted that these issues had been addressed at the time of the inspection.

In terms of tracking the progress of recommendations officers advised that there is a role for scrutiny committees and there is also a role for the Audit Committee.

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

2.5 Corporate Plan Key Performance Indicators 2018/2019 Quarter 1 Performance (1 April 2018 - 30 June 2018)

Members received information on the quarter 1 performance for the Council's Corporate Plan Key Performance Indicators for the period 1st April 2018 to 30th June 2018.

Members had a brief explanation on the new Traffic light system detailed in the report as the visual aspect of the report was different.

Members asked whether the automated message is included or not included when the telephone calls are abandoned after 5 seconds. Officers undertook to check this and update Members accordingly

Members asked how the traffic light system operated. It was explained that a tolerance from the targets for the period were used to identify whether performance was flagged as a cause for concern, or not. There would be training for Members in due course on the system where these issues could then be explored in more detail.

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

3. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 18/19**

Members noted the forward work programme and requested that the following be added:

- To view the impacts of the decisions on the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and the Valleys Action Plan annually.
- Periodic report on the progress of work against the Wales Audit Proposals for Improvement on a 6 monthly basis.

CHAIRPERSON