



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY
20TH JANUARY 2009 AT 5.15 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor J Taylor - Chairman
Councillor M E Sargent - Vice Chairman

Councillors

H.A. Andrews, L Binding, D Bolter, D.G. Carter, J.B. Criddle, K. Etheridge, J E. Fussell, L.Hughes, S. Jenkins V. Jenkins, G. Jones K. Lloyd, D.V. Poole, K.V. Reynolds, A.S Williams, J.M. Wilson

Also present:

Councillors C. P. Mann (Finance, Resources and Sustainability), and A.J. Pritchard (Human Resources and Constitutional Affairs)

Together with:

C. Jones (Head of Performance and Policy), P. Evans (Head of Information, Communications, Technology and Property Services), N Scammell (Head of Corporate Finance), J. Jones (Scrutiny Coordinator), L Lucas (Head of Procurement), D Perkins (Head of Legal Services), P Gomer (Assistant Director Education), D Petit (Assistant Director Social Services), P Mears (Chief Planning Officer), D Thomas (Policy Officer Welsh Language), J Ware (Policy Officer), J Elliot (Research Officer) and G. George (Committee Services Manager)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Blackman and D.T. Davies.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the meeting.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the committee meetings held on 11th November 2008 and 30th October 2008 (Performance Management) be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

3. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THIS COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE

No matters had been referred to this committee in accordance with the call in procedure.

4. REPORT BY CABINET MEMBERS

Councillor C. P. Mann (Finance, Resources and Sustainability reported that some cash offices had been transferred to the Customer First Unit, i.e. Pontlottyn, Blackwood, Ty Penallta and Risca and it was now timely to transfer the other cash offices from Corporate Finance to Customer First. Staff will transfer retaining their current terms and conditions and new Customer First Centres opened they would have an opportunity to take up posts as Customer First Advisors.

Many of those present had attended the recent seminar on Treasury Management. As requested at the seminar Richard Bason from Sector Treasury Management Advisors would be giving a presentation to Council on Tuesday, 27th January, where there would be an opportunity to clarify relevant issues.

In the meantime all departments were challenging themselves to achieve the economies that are needed to produce a budget that was financially deliverable and, failing that, unpalatable decisions may have to be made.

5. SCRUTINY REPORTS

PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2009/2012

In addition to the report members received a presentation on the Procurement Strategy for 2009/2012. This strategy has been developed as part of ongoing development of the procurement activity within the Authority and was the second procurement strategy for the authority.

The Authority currently spent in the region of £180m each year on external goods, works and services via third parties. The strategy set out six key principles for managing the authority's spends which was diverse and complex. It highlighted areas for development such as collaboration, development of the supply chain and efficiency savings.

After a question and answer session members noted that the Procurement Strategy 2009-2010 would be represented to Cabinet on the 17 February 2009

6. DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION & LEISURE PROCUREMENT – UPDATE & FORWARD PLAN

The report advised members about Education and Leisure contracts as at 1st November 2008 the contracts covered goods, work and services supplied internally to the directorate of Education & leisure and schools. Although many of the contracts had been subject to competition there had been little consultation with the procurement team therefore the main focus will be to establish working relationships with key officers within the Directorate and Property services to ensure the best possible procurement options were being considered and the authority maximized its use of collaboration and development of the supply chain.

The team will also, where possible, evaluate the option of collaborating with other contracting bodies such as the Office of Government Commerce, Value Wales Procurement and the Welsh Purchasing Consortium with a view to achieving efficiency savings, both cash releasing and process improvement.

Members noted the current situation regarding contract arrangements within the Education & Leisure directorate and the financial implications associated with current committed contracts.

7. WELSH ASSEMBLY GRANTS ALLOCATION 2009/10

This version of the report was deferred as it did not contain the information requested on the number of grants received from Government (Welsh Assembly Government, UK and EU), their intended destination and the use to which they were eventually put. A report as requested would be submitted to the next meeting.

8. USE OF THE WORD 'BRITISH'

Members were referred to recent media coverage that had focused on the council Staff Equalities Handbook and advice contained that was given to staff about the use of the word "British". The Handbook contained a range of information on a variety of different equalities areas. One of the areas covered dealt with ethnicity and nationality and the sensitivity of individuals regarding this issue.

For clarification, Cllr R Davies was consulted in his capacity as the Equalities Champion not as the Director of Valleys Regional Equalities Council (VALREC).

Members noted the information.

9. THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL WELSH LANGUAGE MONITORING AND IMPROVEMENT REPORT - FEEDBACK FROM THE WELSH LANGUAGE BOARD

The Welsh Language Board required that all public bodies that had an agreed Welsh Language Scheme must submit an annual report to them detailing the progress and developments made during the previous financial year against the improvement targets within that scheme, and noting any areas of good practice and/or problem areas.

The Council's last report was approved and submitted to the Welsh Language Board on 30th June 2008. This report noted the Board's response

Members welcomed and congratulated all staff involved on the positive comments received from the Welsh Language Board on the Council's 2007/08 Monitoring and Improvement report.

10. DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME MONITORING REPORT

Members considered the Disability Equality Scheme monitoring report for Caerphilly County Borough Council. The Scheme set out how the Authority will comply with the legislation governing Disability equality, which included: -

- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Disability Discrimination (Amendment) Act 2005
- Equality Act 2006

Throughout 2007/2008 the council had made considerable progress in terms of supporting and raising awareness of the Equalities agenda. Equalities were supported within the Authority by a framework of working groups, which reported into the Executive Equalities Group chaired by the Director of Corporate Services. Each sub group dealt with one of the

council's four Equality Schemes.

Members noted and approved progress on the Disability Equality Scheme action plan.

11. GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME ANNUAL REPORT

Members noted that this was the first Gender Equality Scheme annual report for Caerphilly County Borough Council. It evaluated the development of the Authority's Gender Equality Scheme and its implementation since the publication of the scheme in May 2007.

The Gender Equality Scheme set out how the Authority will comply with the legislation governing Gender equality. Throughout 2007/08 the Authority had made considerable progress supporting and raising awareness of the Equalities agenda.

The Gender Equality Scheme had been updated to include the new action plan and also incorporates some new information on Domestic Abuse, as requested by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. This was on-going in Caerphilly county borough and so its inclusion did not alter the Scheme or the Council's commitments to Gender Equality.

Members noted and approved progress to date on the 2006/07 equality action plan.

12. VALUE FOR MONEY (VFM) SAVINGS

Members noted the value for money savings achievements made by Procurement Services and the mechanism utilised in order to calculate and record the savings. Procurement Services would evaluate the Value Wales electronic based Benefits Reporting Module, with the intention of rolling out across the organisation to capture a true picture of efficiency within the Authority.

If the electronic based Benefits Reporting Module were feasible then training would be provided to all staff that undertook procurement within the organisation.

13. INFORMATION ITEMS

Members noted the following information items

- Pensions Compensation Committee minutes of meeting held on 27th November 2008.
- Half yearly summary of members attendance - May to Nov 2008.
- Local Service Board - minutes of meeting held on November 4th 2008
- Community Councils Liaison Committee - minutes of meeting held on 15 Oct 2008

14. REQUESTS FOR AN ITEM TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

- Report requested on the committee's forward work programme, including the performance management meeting outcomes, to be tabled at the next Scrutiny Committee.
- Report to review charging of council tax on empty properties and council suspend its current policy for 12 months during the Credit Crunch.

15. EXEMPT MATTERS

Members considered the public interest test certificate from the Proper Officer and concluded that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest

in disclosing the information and it was: -

RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

16. FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE TENDER.

The purpose of the report was to agree the service specification for a Family Support Service, that would enable families of children aged 0-10 years, living in Caerphilly County Borough to improve parenting and reduce risk from harm to children in the family home.

Members supported the recommendations and recommended to Cabinet that

- The service specification for Family Support Services be agreed.
- Formal procurement process, be undertaken as per the timetable. The contract period be for a period of 2 years from 1st June 2009, with an option to extend up to an additional 12 months.

The meeting closed at 6.45 pm.

CHAIRMAN