



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 19TH JULY 2011 AT 5.15 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor J. Taylor - Chairman

Councillors:

H.A. Andrews, L. Binding, D. Bolter, J.B. Criddle, D.T. Davies, L. Hughes, G. Jones, D.V. Poole, D. Rees, K.V. Reynolds, A.S. Williams

Also Present:

Cabinet Members: Councillors C.P. Mann (Corporate Finance, Procurement and Sustainability), and J.E. Fussell (Human Resources)

Together with:

N. Barnett (Deputy Chief Executive), P.S. Evans (Head of Information, Communications and Technology Services), D. Perkins (Head of Legal Services and Governance), N. Scammell (Head of Corporate Finance), A. Bolter (Group Manager, Strategy and Funding), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), R. Thomas (Committee Services Officer)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.C.W. Bailie, Mrs V. Jenkins, Mrs M.E. Sargent, Mrs M.A. Tucker

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were received at the start of the meeting in regards to agenda item 6(1), Community Cohesion Fund 2010-11, as follows: Councillors H.A. Andrews, J.B. Criddle, D.T. Davies, L. Hughes, G. Jones, K.V. Reynolds, J. Taylor. Details are minuted with the respective item.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee (Performance Management) held on 16th June 2011 (minute nos. 1 - 2, on page nos. 1 - 3), be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee held on 7th June 2011 (minute nos. 1 - 10, on page nos. 1 - 4), be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment:

The Council's Annual Welsh Language Monitoring and Improvement Report 2010/11 (Minute reference 7, 5th paragraph)

First sentence be amended to read, "Further discussions took place in which Members questioned whether Menter Iaith Sir Caerffili youth clubs were exclusively for Welsh speakers and the need for equality across the county borough was raised."

3. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There were no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

4. CABINET REPORTS

The Cabinet reports listed on the agenda had not been requested to be brought forward for review at the meeting.

5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE FINANCE, PROCUREMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Councillor C.P. Mann, Cabinet Member for Corporate Finance, Procurement and Sustainability, gave a verbal report to Members and made reference to the following:

Sustainability - The Sustainable Futures Commissioner for Wales visited last month and viewed a number of the Authority's projects. He was very complimentary about Caerphilly's achievements relating to sustainability/green agenda. Last week the Authority received a Construction Excellence Wales award as Greenhill School won the top award in the zero/low carbon category.

Corporate Finance - Facilities for local residents to make payments in Post Offices is to go live in the next three to four weeks. This will make it easier for people to pay bills and will help to support Post Offices as a more viable business.

The Council continues to perform well against the late payments indicator target for 2011 and a similar target for small and medium enterprises.

Housing Benefits - The turnaround time for housing benefit payments has been improved from 10 days to 9.5 days. This is a substantial achievement given that the department is operating with four less staff and a higher claims workload.

Insurance Fund - There is a £1.1 million surplus in the Council's Insurance Fund. Congratulations were given all officers involved in the efficient operation of insurance matters.

Procurement - A report entitled 'The Economic Impact of NHS Procurement : A study of the Aneurin Bevan Health Board' was well received at last week's launch at the National Assembly. Congratulations were given to the Chair, Vice-Chair and other members of the working group that were involved in the production of the report. It was believed this could be a pre-cursor for similar initiatives in the future.

Customer Service - The "Tell us Once" initiative has been delayed due to the failure of a private contractor.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member for his presentation and clarification was given on a number of points. The Head of ICT confirmed he would progress a report on the possible introduction of payment facilities for gas/electricity at Council offices.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

6. COMMUNITY COHESION FUND 2010-11

Declarations of interest were received, as follows: Councillors H.A. Andrews, J.B. Criddle, D.T. Davies, G. Jones, K.V. Reynolds and J. Taylor (as members of their local Community Partnerships) and Councillor L. Hughes (as a member of the Valleys Regional Equality Council). The Head of Legal and Governance advised that Members' declarations of interest were of a personal nature and as such they could remain in the meeting and take part in the debate.

The report gave Members a summary of projects supported by the Community Cohesion Fund in 2010-2011 and highlighted the key issues relating to the management and administration of the Fund.

Members were informed of additional consultation responses received since the report was printed, including an update on the "Research into Hate Crimes in Schools" project.

Members discussed the report and indicated their disappointment that a sufficient number of projects had not been found to ensure the full budget allocation had been used. A demonstration of the challenges faced during the past year was given and Members were assured that lessons had been learnt. Procedures were now in place that should ensure the full allocation is spent on projects in the county borough during the current year. This included greater liaison with Community Safety Partnerships and Community Partnerships.

It was recognised that this will be the final year of Community Cohesion Funding and a Member requested a report on the impact of Community Cohesion Funded projects within the borough, with evidence of achievements. Officers advised the report would be better placed to be brought before the forthcoming Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report along with the implementation of improvements to the process and efforts to engage with Community Partnerships.

7. NEW FURNITURE COST

The report responded to a Councillor request at the Policy and Resources Scrutiny meeting on 19th April 2011 for information on the cost of new furniture purchased to facilitate the move of Social Services to Penallta House, together with reasons for the costs and savings arising from the move.

Members discussed the report and gave general comments on its contents.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

8. REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PRINTING OF COUNCIL AGENDAS AND REPORTS

The report outlined alternative proposals for the printing of council agendas and reports and sought Members' recommendation prior to consideration of the report by full Council on 26th July 2011.

Members discussed the report and considered the advantages and disadvantages of retaining the existing system, in comparison with the alternative options detailed within the report. Concerns were raised that due to the existing technology in use, it was not practical to move away from the existing system. Health and safety considerations, potential savings and IT security were also discussed. The Head of Information, Communications and Technology Services advised there was an upgrade due shortly. It was anticipated that a pilot exercise would commence shortly with the potential to go live from May 2012. Comments made by Members regarding the existing systems would be investigated.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the report and recommended to Council that those Members wishing to receive paper copies of agendas and reports for all meetings, regardless of whether they are members of that committee, continue to do so. Any member wishing to opt out of this service and receive only paper copies of the agendas and reports for a committee they are members of (and copies of agendas without reports for all other committees) will then receive an electronic link to the Council's intranet where the latest list of committee agendas and reports will be published.

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

Councillor K. Reynolds requested sight of the Valleys Regional Equality Council's (VALREC) quarterly monitoring reports, covering the last twelve months, at the next available meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

10. INFORMATION ITEMS

The following reports were received and noted:

- (1) Treasury Management and Capital Financing Prudential Indicators Outturn Report for 2010/2011;
- (2) Write Off Debts – 2010/11;
- (3) Members Allowances and Expenses 2010/2011;
- (4) Summary of Members' Attendance – Quarter 1;
- (5) Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme;
- (6) Minutes of the Local Service Board held on 14th April 2011;
- (7) Minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee held on 23rd May 2011;
- (8) Minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee held on 1st June 2011.

The meeting closed at 6.35 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2011, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN