

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, on Thursday, 9th April 2015 at 4.00 pm.

Present:

County Borough Councillor M Norris – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors:

S Carter	(Mrs) J Cass	J David
(Mrs) M E Davies	P Griffiths	G Stacey
(Mrs) J S Ward	E Webster	D W Weeks
C Willis	R Yeo	

Officers:

Mr P J Lucas – Director of Legal & Democratic Services
Mr P Griffiths – Service Director, Performance & Improvement
Mr R Waters – Service Director, Highways & Streetcare Services
Ms S Davies – Head of Education & Financial Reporting
Mr C Jones – Development Control Manager
Ms J Wakeford – Planning Officer
Ms Ann Edwards – Scrutiny Support Officer

48. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors S Lloyd, S Rees-Owen and (Mrs) M Tegg. Apologies for absence were also received from County Borough Councillors R Bevan, Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Planning and (Mrs) M Webber, Cabinet Member for Council Business and Corporate Affairs.

Apologies for absence were received from Ms J Cook, Director of Planning and Regeneration, Mr N Elliott, Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing, and Mr S Gale, Service Director for Planning.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct there were no declarations of interest in relation to the agenda.

50. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee held on 29th January 2015 be approved as a correct record.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

51. EXCEPTION REPORT - COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 31ST DECEMBER 2014 (QUARTER 3)

The Service Director, Performance and Improvement presented Members with the Exception Report which outlined the financial and performance management information for the Corporate Services Group and Chief Executive's Division for the period to 31st December 2014. He explained that the Exception Report related to those service areas that come within the remit of Corporate Services and the Chief Executive's Division and did not include 'Frontline Services' such as Street Cleansing and Waste Services as per the Council's new structure set out within the Quarter 3 Performance Report dated 19th March 2015.

Members were asked to consider the key issues extracted from the main report that had been presented to the Cabinet Performance and Resources Committee on the 19th March 2015 which included details in relation to revenue and capital budgets, Treasury Management position, overall performance indicator results and operational performance in terms of the Wales Programme for Improvement action plan: Improving our Communities - Social & Physical Regeneration. Members were also referred to Appendix B of the report which provided examples of the positive impact being made through the 'Improving our Communities' action plan. In addition, the Service Director explained that no Quarter 3 update had been provided in relation to Outcome Agreement performance as there had been no significant change in the performance position since Quarter 2; however, he indicated that a full update would be provided for Quarter 4.

Following the presentation of the report the Chairman invited questions.

A Member referred to the 'Improving our Communities' action plan and sought clarity on the delay in proceeding with those projects dependent on European Funding and asked if an update could be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to note the content of the report;
- (ii) that an update be provided at the next meeting of the Committee in respect of the position relating to planned projects which are dependent on European Funding being secured.

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, CORPORATE AND FRONT LINE SERVICES

52. TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2015/16 STRATEGY

The Head of Education & Financial Reporting presented the Committee with a detailed report on the Treasury Management Strategy for 2015/16; the Investment Strategy for 2015/16; Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2014/15 (actuals to January 2015) and 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18; and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement, which had previously been presented to Council on 25th March 2015.

The Head of Education & Financial Reporting explained that the Treasury Management Strategy was based on the assumption that interest rates would remain low and consequently investment income would remain low. She highlighted the continued low risk investment strategy adopted by the Council and reported that there would be continued monitoring of the interest rate environment. The Prudential Indicators would be monitored throughout the financial year with details reported to Members as part of the Council's quarterly performance reporting framework and reporting to scrutiny as required by the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice .

Members were informed that the Council's Local Authority Mortgage Scheme as now closed to any further applications as the indemnity had been fully utilised. In all there 70 loans had been supported.

The Head of Financial Reporting informed the Committee that the contract to provide treasury management advice to the Council had been awarded to Arlingclose Ltd. The contract is for 3 years with the option for a 2 year extension.

Following presentation of the report the Head of Education & Financial Reporting responded to Members' queries. Given the complexity of the topic a Member suggested that it might be helpful to the Committee in discharging its duty if further Member training could be provided.

The Head of Financial Reporting informed the Committee that the Council's Treasury Management advisors, Arlingclose Ltd, would be able to undertake this and that she would make arrangements.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to note the content of the report;
- (ii) that a training session be arranged for Members of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee in support of their Treasury Management responsibilities.

REPORTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

53. REPORT OF THE CIL SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP

The Director of Legal & Democratic Services provided the Committee with a report which set out the work undertaken to date by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Scrutiny Working Group which was formed to undertake the work as requested by Cabinet at the meeting held on 30th October 2014, "that the appropriate Scrutiny Committee be requested to include in its work programme the Community Infrastructure Levy paying particular regard to the Regulation 123 List and engagement with Town/Community Councils'.

The Director of Legal & Democratic Services reported that attached as an appendix to the report was a draft engagement strategy which set out details of the community engagement processes to be followed for areas with Town/Community councils and those without. He pointed out a typographical error within the appendix with regard to the labelling of the zone areas and confirmed that it was proposed to initially hold a series of CIL overview workshops for Town and Community Councillors and that these workshops would be grouped based on the CIL Charging Zones as follows:

- Zone 3 – Llanharan, Llanharry, Llantrisant, Llantwit Fardre, Pontyclun Taffs Well
- Zone 2 – Pontypridd and Tonyrefail
- Zone 1 – Gilfach Goch, Hirwaun & Penderyn, Rhigos and Ynysybwl

The Committee was also informed that the CIL Working Group would be considering the issues in relation to the Regulation 123 List in its subsequent meetings.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED**:

- (i) to note the content of the report;
- (ii) to endorse the draft CIL Community Engagement Strategy;
- (iii) that the draft CIL Community Engagement Strategy be passed to the Cabinet for consideration.

54. REPORT OF THE PLANNING SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP

The Director of Legal & Democratic Services provided the Committee with the findings and recommendations of the Planning Scrutiny Working Group which met on 16th March 2015. He reminded Members of the changes made to the Development Control Committee at the last Council AGM and the recommendation of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee that the Planning Scrutiny Working Group should report on the first year of its operation.

The Committee was informed that the Working Group had concluded that there were positive indications that the new smaller specialist Development Control Committee was making a difference and this was supported by data. However, the Working Group raised a cautionary note with regard to the premise that good performance in relation to planning could be demonstrated by fewer Member overturns. In consideration of the progress of the Planning (Wales) Bill, the Working Group also wished to point out the disadvantages of any attempt to micro manage the Planning system across Wales and would emphasise the need to retain local discretion for certain elements.

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services reported that the key finding from the Working Group's review is the need for further training for those Members not sitting on the new Development Control Committee to enable them to have a clearer understanding of the role which they can play in relation to development proposals within their ward areas.

The Committee debated the content of the report and the proposals put forward and in relation to the need for additional training it was also suggested that it might be useful if a brief 'aide memoir' could be produced as a guide for local Members.

Following consideration Members **RESOLVED**:

- (i) to note the findings of the Planning Scrutiny Working Group;
- (ii) to endorse the recommendations of the Planning Scrutiny Working Group as follows:
 - (a) that further Member training be provided for those Members not sitting on the Development Control Committee in relation to their role as local members and in order to ensure maximum attendance that this should take place immediately before a Council meeting;
 - (b) that any message to the Welsh Government in relation to the Planning (Wales) Bill should point out the disadvantages of any attempt to micro manage the Planning system across Wales and should emphasise the need to retain local discretion for certain elements;

M Norris
Chairman

The meeting closed at 5.10 pm.