

RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1A, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 31st January 2008 at 9.30a.m.

PRESENT

Councillors G.C. Evans (Chair), R.E. Barton, J.M. Davies, T.R. Hughes and S. Roberts.

Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee Members: Councillors N. Hugh-Jones (Chair), S. Frobisher, M.M. Jones and N.P. Roberts.

Observers: Councillors J. Thompson-Hill (Cabinet Lead Member for Finance), J.R. Bartley, M.LI. Davies, E.C. Edwards, G.M. Kensler and P.J. Marfleet.

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive, Interim Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning, Financial Controller, Head of ICT (P. Wickes), Head of Countryside and Leisure Services (T. Hughes), Principal Librarian (A. Jones), Head of Partnership & Inclusion (S. Jones), Head of Policy and Performance (Lifelong Learning) (J. Walley), Senior Management Accountant (V. Holland), Scrutiny Support Officer (S. Price) and Administration Officer (W.J. Harness).

WELCOME

The Chair extended a welcome to members of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee who had been invited to join the Resources Scrutiny Committee in their deliberations of the budget setting for 2008/09.

715 URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent matters for Members' consideration.

716 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th January 2008 (previously circulated) were submitted.

Accuracy –

Page 3 – Item No.3 - Budget 2008/09 Update – for clarity, (2007/08) should be inserted within the second sentence of the first bullet point so that it read – 'Confirmation of this year's funding (2007/08) was still awaited.'

RESOLVED that, subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the Resources Scrutiny Committee held on the 17th January 2008 be approved.

717 RISK ASSESSMENT – MANAGEMENT CAPACITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

The Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) that set out steps being taken to mitigate the risk of "lack of management capacity and effectiveness" (risk number 144 in the Joint Risk Assessment) as requested by the Committee at their meeting on 1st November 2007.

During consideration of the report, in response to various questions from Members, the Chief Executive advised that the review of senior salaries was in respect of Heads of Service and above. He added that that review was in the context of a review of the management structure of the organisation; that proposals were currently awaited from consultants, following receipt of which, a full Council decision would be required.

The Chief Executive also advised that senior management vacancies were being filled, either on a permanent basis or by use of interim managers, and that that exercise was being undertaken in conjunction with the collaboration agenda where, if the opportunity to collaborate arose and it was appropriate, a joint appointment would be made.

RESOLVED that the steps being taken to mitigate the risk of 'lack of management capacity and effectiveness' be accepted.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

718 BUDGET 2008/09 UPDATE

A report by the Corporate Director: Resources (previously circulated) was submitted that (i) advised Members of progress with the budget setting exercise for 2008/09 as reported to Cabinet on 29th January 2008; and (b) sought Members' views on the proposals for cost savings, Cabinet's response to Directorates' prioritised bids for additional resources for service pressures and the impact on Council Tax next financial year. The Committee's views would be made known to Cabinet at the next appropriate meeting.

The Chief Executive subsequently submitted his report, circulated to Members the previous day, that provided additional and detailed information for members of the Committee on savings/cuts being considered for the Lifelong Learning Directorate and a paper that was being considered by the Social Services and Housing Scrutiny Committee the following week on the steps that were being considered to ensure that Social Services delivered a balanced budget in the light of the proposed allocation of funding.

The Chief Executive referred to the fact that members of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny had been invited to join Resources Scrutiny Committee members in their deliberations on the budget setting following the discussion in Cabinet on 29th January 2008 which had identified that Lifelong Learning Scrutiny members required more information than they had considered at their meeting on 24th January 2008.

The Chief Executive added that Cabinet had not accepted the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee's suggestion that the savings for the directorate should be only £200k and that £70k of funding for activities previously funded by the Performance Incentive Grant should continue. Cabinet had confirmed that it expected Lifelong Learning Directorate to provide savings of at least £400k

The Interim Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning referred to the Chief Executive's report and confirmed that he considered that the target savings for Lifelong Learning Directorate were achievable. He subsequently circulated a further report that consisted of savings proposals for Lifelong Learning Directorate that were in excess of £400k in order to introduce some flexibility for Members to deliver the required savings.

The Chair subsequently reminded Members of the need to declare interests where appropriate.

During consideration of the savings proposals Members expressed their strong feelings in respect of the proposed reduction in the Beach Lifeguard Service, deletion of the Active Lifestyles Officer post, closure of the Llantysilio Green Public toilets, reduction of opening hours of leisure centres, particularly those of Corwen leisure

centre by 50%, alternative delivery of Mobile Library Service, reduction of funding of £50k to the Pavilion Theatre, Rhyl, reduction in library hours, and also made the following specific suggestions –

County Voice/Llais y Sir – that the contract for this publication should be reviewed with a view to reducing its publication by 50% or to discontinuing it altogether. Councillor E.C. Edwards referred to savings made in respect of the North Wales Police's newspaper Y Glas and suggested that the Scrutiny Committee could investigate potential savings from collaborative efforts with that publication.

Grounds Maintenance in Schools – within a controlled environment, that schools should be able to use contractors of their choice to undertake such work.

Organised walks in the County – that consideration should be given to those walks being organised and led by staff at the individual leisure centres as opposed to being organised on a countywide basis by staff from the Rhyl Leisure Centre.

ECTARC – that the proposed reduction be increased twofold in order to reduce the proposed reduction by 50% of opening hours at Corwen Leisure Centre

Llangollen Pavilion – that use of the pavilion should be reviewed

In conclusion, Members recommended that £400k of savings should be found by the Lifelong Learning Directorate in the following way (where different - former proposals in brackets) -

A. Partnership and Inclusion & School Improvement – total savings proposals of £118k as follows:

Joint working re: Mobility Officer	£3k
Review of use of Temporary Admin. Staff and other office efficiencies	£10k
Freezing of Partnership Manager's post (LL) initially for 6 months and which may realise further efficiencies if continued longer term	£10K £37k
Reduction in SEN administration	£6k
Increase income for delivering training to outside agencies	£5k
LEA "initiatives budget" reduced	£39k
Reduction in Music Tuition budget	£8k

Countryside and Leisure – total savings proposals of £78k made up as follows:

Leisure Centre Water Efficiency Measures	£5k
Reduced Staff Travel	£3k
Leisure Vehicles Reduction	£6k
Alternative Service Delivery (countryside)	£7k
Alternative Service Delivery (Barkby Beach Pitch and Putt)	£5k

Alternative Service Delivery (East Parade Bowls Centre)	£5k
Reduce Beach Lifeguard Service	£25k
Cut Active Lifestyle Officer post	£17k
Close Events Arena water feature/fountains	£2k
Close Llantysilio Green Public toilets	£0k (£3k)
Reduce opening hours of leisure centres Including Corwen leisure centre by 50%	£3k (£8k + £19k)

Policy and Performance – total savings proposals of £10k made up as follows:

Corporate Communications	£2k
Savings as a result of Strategy and Resources restructure	£8k

Tourism, Heritage and Culture – total savings proposals of £189.3k with £25k (shown in italics) of savings which were dependent on successful bids into the efficiency fund.

Impact of 'Historic Houses of Denbighshire' Invest to save proposals from increased Revenue

£5k*

A restructure of the Tourism, Heritage and Culture service over 3 years

£14k

Impact of 'invest to save' library debtors Initiative

£20k*

CADW to take over direct management of Denbigh Castle

£2k

Alternative delivery of Mobile Library Service – Lease costs, maintenance and fuel savings (alternative funding stream to be investigated)

Estimated savings from redeploying Library/driver assistant at other libraries

£0k (£15k)

Pavilion Theatre

£35k (£50k)

(NOTE: Members requested that a record of their voting be made regarding the proposed savings of £35k in respect of the Pavilion Theatre, Rhyl and the voting was recorded as follows –

For the Proposal –

Councillors G.C. Evans, J.M. Davies and T.R. Hughes

Against the Proposal –

Councillors R.E. Barton and S. Roberts

The proposal was, therefore, carried.)

Pavilion Theatre, Rhyl – to change programming policy during 2009/10 in order to develop a more rounded offer of commercial, community and educational benefit	£5k
Bodelwyddan Castle Trust	£2k
Llangollen International Pavilion	£20k Est
ECTARC	£4k (£2k)
Reduction in Library Hours -	
Ruthin	£8k
Prestatyn	£10k
Corwen	£0.6k
Llangollen	£16k (£18k)
Rhuddlan	£0.7k
St. Asaph	£6k
Rhyl	£2k
Deletion of Senior Library Assistant Post at Rhyl Library	£30k
Reduction in staff hours at Denbigh Library/One Stop Shop	£9k

Councillor R.E. Barton asked that it be minuted that he was not happy that the Culture and Leisure element of the Lifelong Learning Directorate was bearing the brunt of the efficiency savings sought for that Directorate. He felt that the schools should not be exempt from identifying efficiency savings.

B. Social Services & Housing Directorate – Members agreed with the approach taken by the Social Services and Housing Scrutiny Committee in respect of the budget for 2008/09 for that Directorate.

C. Environment Directorate – Members noted the budget position 2008/09 in respect of the Environment Directorate.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *Cabinet be advised that the Resources Scrutiny Committee, together with Members of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee, recommended approval of the savings proposals for the Lifelong Learning Directorate as detailed in A above; and*
- (b) *Members noted the budgetary position in respect of the Social Services & Housing and Environment Directorates for 2008/09.*

719 CAPITAL PLAN 2008/09 AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CAPITAL STRATEGY GROUP.

Whilst a report by the Corporate Director: Resources (previously circulated) had been submitted in order for Members to be consulted on the recommendations of the Capital Strategy Group regarding projects for future capital funding and to enable the committee to comment upon those proposals, time did not permit Members to consider that report.

In the circumstances, it was –

***RESOLVED** that Members should forward any comments they had on the recommendations of the Capital Strategy Group to the Committee Chair who would make any necessary representations on behalf of the Committee to Cabinet.*

OPEN SESSION

Upon completion of the foregoing the meeting resumed in open session.

720 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN UPDATE

In view of time constraints, it was agreed that this report be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

721 PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

In view of time constraints, it was agreed that this report be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

722 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Support Officer submitted a report (previously circulated) that reviewed the proposed Work Programme for the Resources Scrutiny Committee and updated Members on previous issues highlighted by the Committee.

The Scrutiny Support Officer advised Members that – (a) Translation Services Review – as the key issues relating to the appropriate budget levels and procurement were being reviewed by an officer working group and the Bilingual Group, the County Clerk had advised that the outcomes would be available for Scrutiny on the 28th February 2008; (b) Estyn Action Plan and Use of Resources – Members agreed to consider the activities to align the use of resources to the Estyn Action Plan priorities in February (as highlighted during the pre-meeting briefing session); and (c) Fees and Charges – Officers had been unable to produce a report on the Directorates' proposals for increases in fees and charges for the next financial year, which had been listed for today's meeting. During consideration of this matter Councillor R.E. Barton expressed his concern that the report on fees and charges had not been available for today's meeting as he felt that its consideration was an important part of the budget setting process.

The Financial Controller advised that the issue of fees and charges had been considered in great detail during the budget setting process. He added that, in future, Members' involvement in the process should commence in May, following the County Council Elections this year not in September, and that a review of fees and charges should take place during the summer months.

Councillor T.R. Hughes suggested that the Managers of both the Rhyl Pavilion Theatre and the Llangollen Pavilion could be requested to attend a meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Committee in order to advise Members of their programme of activities and budgets therefor.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *the report should be received and the Work Programme for the Resources Scrutiny Committee, as contained in Appendix 1, be approved; and*
- (b) *reports in respect of – Sustainable Development Action Plan Update and Planning Obligations should be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.*

In conclusion, the Chair thanked Officers for their attendance at the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 2.05p.m.
