

Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel Update

1. Remit of the Panel

The overarching purpose of the Panel is to ensure that the Council's budget, corporate and service improvement arrangements are effective and efficient.

2. Introduction

The Panel is focused on contributing to the budget process and annual improvement process by providing a critical friend for the Cabinet, and helping to ensure accountability.

3. Key Activities

The Panel held six meetings between February and June 2016. This involved speaking to a range of Cabinet Members (4) and officers about performance, improvement and budget monitoring. This has resulted in seven convener's letters being sent to Cabinet Members. The main issues covered were as follows:

10 February

- Budget Pre-decision Scrutiny – including public Q&A session with Leader

9 March

- Q&A Session with Cabinet Member for Services for Children & Young People to discuss the implementation and impact of budget decisions within her portfolio.
- Q&A Session with Cabinet Member for Adults & Vulnerable People to discuss the implementation and impact of budget decisions within her portfolio.
- 3rd Quarter Budget Monitoring

13 April

- ICT – End of Project Report (The Move to and in-house ICT Service)
- 3rd Quarter Performance Monitoring

11 May

- Annual Work Plan review

6 June

- Pre-decision scrutiny of Waste Management Commissioning Review Report

22 June

- Corporate Plan 2016/17

4. Achievements / Impact

- **Budget Scrutiny**
 - Held the Leader (Cabinet Member for Finance & Strategy) to account through a discussion session on the budget with Panel members

- Provided an additional opportunity for the public to engage with the budget process by providing a public Q&A session with the Leader and 4 members of the public attended
 - Raised concerns regarding the level of public consultation in the budget process. Therefore we recommended that all of the Commissioning Reviews should ensure that robust public engagement takes place, where applicable, on the various options for future service delivery, and noted that scrutiny should also be involved in this consultation process.
- **Pre-decision scrutiny of Commissioning Reviews**
The Panel agreed that as the Commissioning Review process is a key part of how the Council is seeking to address its financial issues, therefore it is important that scrutiny maintains an oversight of the process and the emerging decisions. The Convener met with the Cabinet Member for Transformation & Performance and the Director of Place in order to agree a process to ensure consistency and awareness amongst all Councillors, Cabinet Members and officers of the importance of this work.

The first pre-decision scrutiny session took place in June on the Waste Management Commissioning Review and the Panel made the following recommendations to Cabinet relating to the review process:
 - All future commissioning review reports should include a section on stakeholder involvement/consultation
 - Ensure that the process for in-house transformation of services is clearly set out
 - Provide full details of the financial implications of the selected options within all commissioning review reports
 - **Budget and performance monitoring**
The Panel regularly receives quarterly and annual performance and budget reports. This enables it to maintain a good level of understanding of performance and budgetary issues.

5. Future Work Programme

The Panel will be considering the following items over the next four months:

- Briefing on the Council's full range of Fees and Charges and process for increases year on year
- Continuing quarterly and annual budget and performance monitoring
- Reserve up-dates and reserves policy
- Mid-year budget statement
- Wales Audit Office Annual Report
- Additional meetings planned to carry out pre-decision scrutiny of Commissioning reviews. Up-coming items include Corporate Building and Property (August) and Highways and Transportation (September) and any other Commissioning reviews within our remit

6. Action required by the Scrutiny Programme Committee

None.