

Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel Update – July 2018

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 9 meetings between November 2017 and July 2018. These meetings included a Commissioning Review on Highways and Transportation and a Commissioning Review on Cultural Services Final Bidder Options as well as the Budget Meeting. There were various reports and presentations from a range of officers about performance, improvement and budget monitoring. This has resulted in 6 convener's letters being sent to Cabinet Members. Three Cabinet Members attended Panel meetings for specific items.

The issues covered were as follows:

December 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Review of Performance 2016/17 • Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring
January 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarter 2 2017/18 Performance Monitoring Report • Corporate Complaints Annual Report • Budget Proposals
February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring • Welsh Public Library Standards - Annual Performance Report
<u>Additional Meeting</u> Commissioning Review February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highways and Transportation Commissioning Review
<u>Additional Meeting</u> Budget Scrutiny February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Scrutiny
March 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarter 3 2017/18 Performance Monitoring Report • Annual Work Plan Review
<u>Additional Meeting</u> Commissioning Review June 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Programme – Final Bidder Options
July 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2017/18 • Charges Item

4. Achievements / Impact

Pre-decision scrutiny of Commissioning Reviews

The Panel undertook pre-decision scrutiny on the Highways and Transportation Commissioning Review in February 2018, below is an overview of some of the recommendations:

- 1. The commissioning review was too big. It may have been better to split the services out to create a more manageable document.*
- 2. Regarding Central Transport Unit – combining the services is the best way going forward and provides for more effective management of the services.*
- 3. Servicing vehicles and undertaking MOTs under a depot reorganisation would create a revenue stream which would be beneficial to the Council.*
- 4. It is important to remember that bus services are vital to many people. Any changes will be a huge pressure for the public and for us as a Council. There should be clear view of the subsidies and the reasons for them.*
- 5. In previous years there was an excellent relationship as part of the SWITCH group. It appears we are moving back (albeit informally) to this arrangement and this is a positive approach.*
- 6. The Panel were pleased to see that the bus station management is both effective and cost neutral. It is a much improved bus station and this is a good outcome.*
- 7. Not enough money is being spent on roadway and network maintenance.*

The Panel undertook pre-decision scrutiny on the Cultural Services Final Bidder Options Commissioning Review in June 2018, below is an overview of some of the recommendations:

- 1. Surprise by how long this process has taken considering the initial Commissioning Review concluded in November 2015.*
- 2. The process was as fair as it could have been and the assessment criteria was robust and well thought out.*
- 3. The prices, opening hours and access of the leisure facilities should remain unchanged for users.*
- 4. The Panel would also like to support the proposal that the staff terms and conditions of employment are protected going forward.*
- 5. Reiterate the commitment that all of the assets concerned remain in Council ownership.*
- 6. It is also very important that the borrowings for this endeavour are contained within the 'leisure' budget.*
- 7. An independent organisation should undertake the condition surveys of all of the buildings. The Panel do not feel that it would be appropriate for these surveys to be undertaken internally therefore an external provider should be considered.*

8. *The Council have addressed difficulties around condition surveys in the past and it needs to be ensured that lessons are learned from any previous experiences and therefore improve going forward.*

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. It is closely monitoring a number of key issues and has suggested areas for improvement in monitoring and reporting of information including:

Reserves: The Panel are still closely monitoring the Council's reserves and what they are allocated against.

Budget: The Panel understand that difficult decisions need to be made in respect to the budget again this year but the Panel will be looking intently at the changes and impact of these decisions.

Performance Monitoring Scoring System: The Panel are closely monitoring all areas but have made recommendations specifically around the way in which some issues are measured. The Panel have made comments about whether a scoring system is appropriate for issues such as Tackling Poverty and Building Sustainable Communities

Sickness: the Panel were concerned to read about high levels of staff sickness. The Panel received a breakdown from the departments but this item will be checked going forward.

5. Future Work Programme - New Items

The Panel discussed its work plan for 2018/19 in June. The Panel also have some new items coming to the Panel for monitoring this year, including but not limited to;

- The Planning Annual Report
- Equality Review Report
- Welsh Housing Quality Standards

6. Action required by the Scrutiny Programme Committee

None.