

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 July and November 2016. This involved speaking to two Cabinet Members and a range of officers about performance, improvement and budget monitoring. This has resulted in five convener's letters being sent to Cabinet Members. The main issues covered were as follows:

27 July

- Revenue and Capital Outrun 2015/16
- End of Year Performance Monitoring Report 2015/16

15 August

- Pre-decision scrutiny of Corporate Building and Property Services Commissioning Review

31 August

- 1st Quarter Budget Monitoring Report

21 September

- 1st Quarter Performance Monitoring Report

2 November

- Mid-Year Budget Statement
- Reserves Up-date and reserves policy

23 November

- Corporate Complaints Annual Report
- New Digital Strategy
- 2nd Quarter budget Monitoring Report

4. Achievements / Impact

Pre-decision scrutiny of Commissioning Reviews

The Panel undertook pre-decision scrutiny on the Corporate Building & Property Services Commissioning review in August 2016 and made the following recommendations:

- a) Ensure that it is clear at the start of the report that value for money and quality of service are key elements of the commissioning review.
- b) Provide more detailed cost comparison information in order to clearly demonstrate that Corporate Building Services is providing value for money.

- c) Ensure that customers are better informed about the work that is undertaken to ensure that Corporate Building Services provides value for money
- d) Ensure that there is a robust plan in place to address falling income as the Council's building assets are reduced.

The Panel is keeping a close eye on the up-coming reviews and monitoring progress to ensure that all Commissioning Reviews within its remit are appropriately scheduled into its work plan. In addition, the Convener has recently written to the Leader to specifically request an up-date on the progress of the Libraries Commissioning Review as the Panel are unsure of the current position and when it will be scheduled.

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:

Capital Spend: The Panel are closely monitoring the Council's capital spend due to emerging large scale underspends.

Transformation Fund: the Panel has taken an interest on the progress of spend of the Transformation Fund which has a budget of around £1.7m. The funding is being used to progress the aims for Sustainable Swansea however the Panel plans to gain a better understanding of the projects that have been financed by this fund so that it can be assured that this is an effective way to spend the money. In particular the Panel is interested in the plans that are in place to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of these projects.

Budget variation: the Panel is using the quarterly budget monitoring reports to keep a close eye on the progress towards changing the Sustainable Swansea savings targets. The Convener has raised issues of concern regarding the savings targets via his letters to the Leader and other Cabinet Members, and the Panel will continue to monitor this.

5. Future Work Programme

The Panel will be considering the following items between December and the end of the municipal year in April 2017:

- Briefing on the Council's full range of Fees and Charges and the process for increases year on year
- Recycling & Landfill Annual Performance Monitoring
- Budget Scrutiny
- Welsh Public Library Standards – Annual Performance Report
- Continuing quarterly and annual budget and performance monitoring
- Additional meetings planned to carry out pre-decision scrutiny of Commissioning Reviews. Up-coming items include Parks and Cleansing (December), Highways and Transportation (January).

6. Action required by the Scrutiny Programme Committee

None.