



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Service Improvement & Finance**

Committee Room 5 - Guildhall, Swansea

Wednesday, 14 February 2018 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor C A Holley (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

P R Hood-Williams
J W Jones

Councillor(s)

L James
C E Lloyd

Councillor(s)

P K Jones
I E Mann

Officer(s)

Bethan Hopkins
Cllr Rob Stewart
Cllr Clive Lloyd

Scrutiny Officer

Cabinet Member for Economy and Strategy

Cabinet Member for Service Transformation and
Business Operations

Ben Smith

Head of Financial Services and Service Centre

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): P Downing, M H Jones, B J Rowlands and D W W Thomas

Co-opted Member(s):

Other Attendees:

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

None

2 Public Questions

None

3 Scrutiny of the Annual Budget

Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel Budget Discussion Points

The following key points were raised:

- The report overall has been written well by Ben Smith, it is accessible and is the best we have seen in a long time. Compliments to Ben
- The consultation exercise was lacking. It was generic and it did not phrase questions properly to maximise information giving. The way you ask questions and who you ask is important. Should be improved going forward.

- The Capital Financing Charges are a major worry as there is no growth in money from Welsh Government
- It is important to consider details around some investments – for example gearing of rents in properties Council will lease out
- A £3m contingency/reserve budget for next year seems low

Schools Performance Panel

The following key points were raised:

- Are supportive of the education related budget proposals and of how monies have been allocated given the current budget situation.
- The issue of year on year funding from Welsh Government was raised especially in light of the need to plan services over the longer term (as referenced in the Wellbeing and Future Generation Act). The panel recognise that the authority does develop an indicative 3 year medium term plan but this will change year on year depending on the local authority's allocation from Welsh Government. The panel would encourage councils to work together to make representations to Welsh Government around developing a longer term funding plan. The Panel were also keen to see changes made that reduce the lag between allocation of grants from Welsh Government and actual receipt of that funding.
- The Panel had concerns about the impact that the 11% cut to the education improvement grant will have on supporting services in particular the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service but were pleased to hear that the authority are looking to fill the gap for some services from reserves for 1 year.
- The Panel heard that some schools were managing the difficult budgetary situation better than others: the panel felt that sharing good practice across schools in relation to this aspect would be highly beneficial.
- Could look to reduce the cost of school transport by using existing transport resources owned by the Council. Working across departments, for example using social services mini buses.

Adult Services Panel

The following key points were raised:

- Last year Adult Services was £3 million over budget. The Panel feels that the overspend was not controlled last year.
- There is a discrepancy in the figures – Panel told budget for Adult Services next year had been increased by £3.5 million. However on page 118 on the budget proposals it says £2.7 million and on page 182 on the budget proposals it equates to £4.5 million. Need clarification of the correct figure.
- The Panel is concerned over savings not being achieved this year despite being told they could be.
- The Panel was concerned that despite over 70% of consultees being opposed to the new charges for day centres, the recommendation is to go ahead and impose them.

Child and Family Services

The following key points were raised:

- Reasonably satisfied with the budget proposed for CFS for 2018/19 and with the improvements to be increased and enhanced
- Noted the increased budget for CFS is mainly to cover inflationary increases in salaries
- The panel feels that Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) needs to be monitored closely
- The panel feels that early intervention is really important. It welcomes the forward thinking but will want to monitor this going forward.

The meeting ended at 12.45 pm

Chair