

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4TH SEPTEMBER, 2019

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors: G. Paulsen
M. Cook
M. Cross
P. Edwards
H. McCarthy
C. Meredith
L. Parsons
J. Wilkins

Leader of the Council/Executive Member – Corporate Services
Councillor N. Daniels

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Corporate Director of Education
Chief Officer – Commercial
Chief Officer - Resources
Head of Community Services
Service Manager Policy & Partnerships
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

WITH: David Wilson, Wales Audit Office
Kath Bevan Seamore)
Mike Doverman) SRS Representatives
Cath Bernard)

| ITEM | SUBJECT | ACTION |
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| No. 1 | <p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p> | |
| No. 2 | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: G.L. Davies, J. Hill, M. Moore and D. Wilkshire.</p> | |
| No. 3 | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p> | |
| No. 4 | <p><u>CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 24th June, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p> | |
| No. 5 | <p><u>SPECIAL CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Special Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 10th July, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p> | |
| No. 6 | <p><u>EXECUTIVE DECISION SHEET</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Executive Decision Sheet.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Executive Decision Sheet be accepted.</p> | |

No. 7

WALES AUDIT OFFICE REVIEW SERVICE USER PERSPECTIVE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Governance & Partnerships which presented the findings of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) review Service User Perspective: Community Engagement and the management response to the proposals for improvement.

The representative from the Wales Audit Office spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

The Executive Member – Corporate Services commented that the findings of the WAO review were an accurate assessment of where the Council was in relation to community engagement and reflected the commitment to continued development and learning to do things better. The Council would continue to work with the WAO and others to capture their views to help improve community engagement through areas such as street scene.

The WAO representative said that the Council had undertaken a vast amount of consultation but needed to ensure they reached the right people on the right subject. Many staff members worked for the Local Authority and in relation to these the focus needed to be on service change.

A Member pointed out that in relation to engagement between pupils and teachers there was a project currently in place in some schools called Seasaw that addressed this issue. The WAO representative said that this had been included in the presentation as an example as young people had their own views on how to engage with others.

The Executive Member – Corporate Services commented that he and the Executive Member for Education had learned a lot from meetings with schools and the Council would look to broaden how it engaged with young people especially at secondary level in light of discussions on reducing the voting age.

A Member commented that the WAO review had been challenging but fair. Community engagement to offer valid

explanations of why services were changing was challenging and the Council needed to improve on this.

A Member enquired regarding public feedback. The WAO representative said that there had been some negative feedback as local people were not always able to take part in engagement in a way that was effective and impactful. The Service Manager Policy & Partnerships said that the Engagement Strategy was based around 6 key features, one of these features was around gathering public feedback and take users views into account. He advised that if members of the public had difficulty attending daytime meetings such as the Citizen's Panel, they could engage through emails, telephone calls etc.

A Member pointed out that some Members held surgeries in the community and a two way dialogue was already taking place. The WAO representative said that good practice needed to be captured and shared. The Service Manager Policy & Partnerships said that through its Action Plan briefing session had been arranged whereby community groups could identify key individuals that could open doors for the Council to engagement with difficult to reach groups.

A Member commented that communication could take place through a number of avenues e.g. social media; facebook etc.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely:

- (i) That the WAO review Service User Perspective: Community Engagement findings and the management response and the report and appendices be accepted as provided prior to it being submitted to the Executive Committee.
- (ii) Following approval by the Executive Committee the report would be presented to Audit Committee for assurance; and
- (iii) Receive a mid-term review of progress on the Corporate Engagement Strategy as part of the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

No. 8

PROGRESS REPORT CONTRACTS OVER £500K

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Community Services which was presented to provide Members with updated information on the progress of capital projects over £500,000 in cost, undertaken within the Authority and, where appropriate, seek the necessary Executive Committee approval required under the Contract Procedural Rules to additional expenditure incurred on a particular project.

The Head of Community Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

A Member enquired about the potential for future Highway Improvement works if any residual funds remained. The Head of Community Services said when outturn costs and current commitment were finalised from this year's programme and with the likelihood of further capital funding from Welsh Government for 20/21 he was optimistic that a further programme of works could be developed for 1920/21.

In relation to the sewer diversion contract, Welsh Government funding had been received and elements of this would be used to backfill and the remainder reallocated accordingly.

A Member commented that in relation to highway resurfacing it would appear that some Wards had a larger proportion of highways than others. The Head of Community Services said that it had been challenging to ensure that all Wards had some works carried out whilst balancing the need to ensure the poorest condition roads were given priority. He also said that nearly all Wards did in fact have resurfacing work undertaken proportionately with the length of highways located within those Wards.

Another Member commented that the highway matrix was fair and worked well.

A Member enquired regarding the additional options to be considered for Tredegar bypass. The Head of Community Services said that only one company dealt with the micro surface asphalt required and it had been prudent to

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| | <p>continue with the contract and specification, however, the works would not be carried out until next year.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that the information included within the report be accepted.</p> | |
| No. 9 | <p><u>TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT 1ST APRIL 2018 TO 31ST MARCH 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to give Members the opportunity to scrutinise the Treasury Management activities carried out by the Authority during the 2018/19 financial year.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the treasury management activity undertaken during the 2018/19 financial year be accepted prior to its submission to full Council.</p> | |
| No. 10 | <p><u>SHARED RESOURCE SERVICE PARTNERSHIP WORKING – HALF YEARLY MONITORING</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial which was presented for Members to scrutinise the performance of IT services provided to the Council from the Shared Resource Service (SRS), for the period February 2019 to July 2019.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Commercial spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein including that Blaenau Gwent had become the fourth partner to join the collaboration partnership in 2016. A new role of Partner Relationship Manager had been created in SRS to work closely with and across the Council.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the Strategic Board and the fee of £2.3m. The Chief Officer Commercial said that the</p> | |

Board was made up of elected Members and partner organisations and the £2.3m was the annual fee payable to the SRS for the provision of IT services across the Council.

A Member referred to the Memorandum of Understanding which binds the Council to the SRS partnership and raised concern regarding SRS support to Members. The Chief Officer Commercial said that a meeting between Members and SRS colleagues would be arranged to address any issues of support and concerns.

The Chair requested that a Members briefing session be arranged with SRS colleagues.

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

Another Member raised concerns regarding how often passwords needed changing. The Chief Officer Commercial said that this was one of the biggest issues affecting Members and the Assistant Director of Operations would address this issue at the meeting with Members.

A Member referred to the contract and enquired if schools had to absorb the costs. The Chief Officer Commercial confirmed that schools did absorb the costs as representatives from SRS provided technical support to schools. IT was a vital part of business and needed continual investment.

In relation to access to information the SRS representative said that from April 2020 Office 365 would be rolled out across Blaenau Gwent and would enable Members to have better access to their emails and attachments. A Member enquired why Office 365 was being rolled out in Blaenau Gwent last. The Chief Officer Commercial clarified that conditions had to be created to run Office 365 i.e. some equipment needed to be replaced and Windows 10 operating system needed to be installed. There were a number of older devices that needed to be replaced and a review of equipment would be completed in January 2020. All devices should be operating successfully in the next financial year.

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| | <p>A Member commented on the number of requests for password re-setting, the SRS representative said that the self service tool would be looked at as a priority.</p> <p>A Member commented on the mention of low sickness levels within the service. The SRS representative confirmed that sickness absence figures would be provided in future reports.</p> <p>A Member referred to collaboration, the Chief Officer Commercial said that Blaenau Gwent was an equal partner within the SRS service but with different requirements to other local authorities. The SRS managed supplier relationships and identified opportunities to collaborate within the Council and externally for improved resilience across the service.</p> <p>In relation to the new role of Partner Relationship Manager, the Chief Officer Commercial said that the role was created for realignment of resources and to strengthen the position across the core projects and offer increased transparency of work that was being delivered.</p> <p>The Committee FURTHER AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that comments in respect of the report and appendices be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 11</p> | <p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 16TH OCTOBER, 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee which presented the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 16th October 2019.</p> <p>Members requested a progress report on CCTV be presented to a future meeting.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 16th October, 2019 be approved.</p> | |