

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE - CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 16 February 2016

Present: Councillor M McLaughlin (Chair)

Councillors R Abbey T Anderson
P Brightmore D Burgess-Joyce
C Muspratt W Clements
W Smith A Sykes
M Sullivan S Williams
KJ Williams P Gilchrist
J Williamson I Williams

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Doughty and B Kenny and from Mr M Harrison.

26 CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST RELEVANT AUTHORITIES (DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS) REGULATIONS 2012, INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS

No declarations of interest were received.

27 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 December 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

28 2016/17 BUDGET CONSULTATION FINDINGS - PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation by the Senior Manager: Marketing and Communications on the feedback from the Budget Consultations that had recently been undertaken.

The Committee noted that the key messages from the public consultation process were as follows:

- The Council was required to save £28 million during the coming financial year.

- This was part of an ongoing programme of savings which totalled £129 million over the next few years, up to 2020-21.
- The vast majority of savings this year had been found without a massive impact on services and staff.
- There were, however, a series of proposals which had been published on 18 December 2015 and had been subject to consultation with the public.
- This consultation concluded for the majority of proposals at the end of January 2016.
- The Cabinet would consider the results of the consultation and use them to inform its budget proposal to the Council.

The Senior Manager: Marketing and Communications reported on the methodology behind the process and the number of responses (10,000) and their geographical break down from 2010/11 to 2015/16. He also informed that there were three petitions in respect of the Council's budget proposals in relation to:

- Save Girtrell Court Respite Home.
- Stop the Job Cuts, Stop Service Cuts.
- School Crossing Patrol, Christ Church School.

The Committee noted that there was support for the following proposals:

- Shared Services.
- Charging for Services.
- Alternative Delivery.
- Commissioning Services.
- Reviewing the use of Council owned buildings, provide services from a smaller, more cost effect number of locations.

The Committee also noted the responses in respect of the following proposals:

Garden Waste Charging

201 comments had been received from residents on this proposal. The general themes of the feedback were:

- A large proportion of comments received actually supported the proposal to increase the cost, stating that a £5 increase in the annual cost was reasonable.
- Those people who disagreed with the proposal expressed concern that it could lead to increased levels of fly-tipping and reduced recycling rates if people opted out of the service.

Re-Provision of Girtrell Court

189 comments had been received through the Council's consultation channels, which could be summarised as follows:

- Residents expressed concerns about the level and quality of alternative provision available in the private and voluntary sector; these concerns were being addressed in the ongoing consultation process.
- Residents were concerned that relationships with staff and other users of the Girtrell Court facility would be lost should the service be re-provided elsewhere.

Self-Assessment

48 comments had been received relating to this proposal, which could be summarised as follows:

- This proposal was generally supported provided that provision was made to support those people unable to complete self-assessments.

Community Safety

42 comments had been received related to this proposal, which could be summarised as follows:

- Residents were keen to ensure that any changes to the community safety services mentioned did not lead to a reduction in service.

Leisure Centre Concessions and Golf

114 comments had been received relating to this proposal, which could be summarised as follows:

- Residents were generally understanding and at times supportive of the proposal to reduce concessions to make leisure centres more cost-effective.
- Some concerns were expressed about the impact on health and wellbeing and suggestions were made about different proposals and pricing structures for the services which were currently available for free.

Re-Provision of Library Service

The Council had received detailed feedback on this proposal from the Friends of Wirral Libraries Steering Group, which had been considered as part of this consultation process. 90 further comments had been received, which could be summarised as follows:

- Residents expressed concerns that a library service relying more on volunteers and community support would be less reliable and quality would suffer.

- Some residents were in general agreement with this proposal if it resulted in no library closures, and other residents highlighted that a smaller number of better libraries would be the preferable option.
- A number of residents had expressed concern about the potential loss of professional librarians and their associated knowledge and expertise.

Community Partnership: Parks

The Wirral Parks Friends Forum had expressed concerns in relation to this option around the availability of volunteers, and the wider deliverability and impact of the proposal. 55 comments had been received relating to this proposal, which could be summarised as follows:

- Residents expressed how valuable Wirral's parks were to their local communities and the wider environment.
- Many residents were generally supportive of this proposal, provided volunteers were provided with enough advice and support.
- People made a number of other suggestions related to income and efficiency to further protect Wirral's parks and open spaces.

Charges for Pest Control

38 comments had been received, which could be summarised as follows:

- A number of residents disagreed with implementing a charge for this service.
- Around an equal amount of residents did agree, with many of these stating that a form of means-testing should be employed to ensure the most vulnerable were still able to access the service if required.

Highways and Road Safety

The Council had received a petition in relation to part of this budget proposal. 72 further comments had been received, which could be summarised as follows:

- This proposal had received mixed feedback, with most comments focussed on ensuring safety was paramount when making any changes.

DHP and Welfare Advice

A number of letters had been received specifically in relation to the Council's welfare advice services, which had been considered as part of this consultation. A further 60 comments had been received, which could be summarised as follows:

- Residents were generally comfortable with the proposal in relation to Discretionary Housing Payments.

- Comments had mainly focused on the welfare rights service provided by the Council, with residents expressing how valued the service was.

The Committee was informed that the Council was required to set its budget and Council Tax Levels during March 2016 for the following financial year. The Council's budget meeting was on 3 March 2016. The Cabinet would meet on 22 February 2016 and agree a budget to recommend to the Council.

Following the presentation Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and Officers responded to them as appropriate. Issues considered included the following:

- Whether the consultation feedback had provided a quantitative or qualitative picture and whether it was broken down into constituencies as they may have different priorities.
- Libraries and volunteers to run them – community management and the need to consider the findings of the Mori Poll.
- The consultation findings had been transcribed by Officers and were available online.
- There had been a consultation exercise but only a small number of consultees had taken the time to set out what they thought.
- The response rate to the consultation was correspondingly low for Wallasey. A mechanism was required to represent Wallasey. However, it was possible to get a feel for this as those who did respond to the consultation usually made the same points.
- There was an overwhelming response to the consultation online rather than hard copy.
- People who are unhappy will respond to consultation.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Senior Manager: Marketing and Communications be thanked for his presentation on the feedback from the Budget Consultations that had recently been undertaken; and**
- (2) the content of the presentation be noted.**

29 **2016/17 BUDGET SCRUTINY REPORT**

A report by the Strategic Director – Transformation and Resources set out the work of the three Policy and Performance Committees regarding the scrutiny of the 2016/17 budget options. This followed a series of workshops held in January for Members of each of the Committees to explore in more detail the various budget options being put forward. A separate report was provided for each Committee and these were attached to the report as Appendices 1 – 3. Each of these reports contained a brief summary of the options reviewed with the comments of Members in attendance. The Committee was requested to

acknowledge these reports as the scrutiny response to the 2016/17 budget proposals and refer these on to the Cabinet.

Councillor M McLaughlin informed that the Policy and Performance Committees had adopted the same workshop approach as they had in the previous year. She also informed the Committee that it would not be debating the budget proposals at this meeting. That would be done by the Council at its budget meeting. The report was presented to inform Members of the views expressed on the consultation.

Councillor M McLaughlin reported on the proceedings of the Policy and Performance Committee - Families and Wellbeing's Workshop which had been very well attended and had gone well. Fourteen Members had attended and everyone had contributed something. The discussions held were against a backdrop of the requirement to make huge savings as a result of the Council having experienced grant reductions and the need to balance that with the need to do as much as possible to protect those services which support our most vulnerable residents.

The Workshop had examined both positive and negative impacts and made suggestions on how to mitigate negative impacts. It had also considered how Leisure concessions could operate in the future.

Councillor P Gilchrist made reference to an email he had sent to each of the Committee's Members the previous day regarding the proposal to close Girtrell Court – a respite centre.

Councillor M McLaughlin informed that the areas Councillor P Gilchrist had highlighted in his email had been explored at the Workshop and she did not want to change the narrative of resulting report.

However, Councillor P Gilchrist considered that it was legitimate to receive information later as there had been concerns raised at various other meetings since the Workshop and they should be reflected upon.

Councillor M McLaughlin did not agree with the point being made and informed that she did not want to change the emphasis of the Workshop report as feedback from other consultation exercises would be fed into the process.

Councillor P Gilchrist informed that he had circulated a summary and some suggestions. He was aware some Members may not have seen it. He asked Members if any were in agreement to these being put forward.

With the Committee's agreement Councillor P Gilchrist proceeded to read out his email as follows:

'Dear Chair, Members and Officers,

The recent 'tradition' at Co-ordinating Committee has been that the Committee has received the report from the deliberations of the working parties. Onward transmission of the Committee's views has not often led to lengthy debate.

The process was reviewed in February 2015.

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=28024>

In broad terms the deliberations of the working parties have been transmitted to Cabinet as they covered the range of views expressed by Members.

I have also looked back at the scrutiny review of the original Girtrell Court project considered in Nov 2014.

It is worth recalling that the re-provision of the service has been under consideration for some time.

This is a summary of the issues raised recently -

Since the budget option on the services at Girtrell Court was outlined a number of parents have attended the Wirral South and Wirral West Constituency Committees.

In addition details of various alternative services known to be available have been circulated to carers.

Officers have embarked on a series of one to one consultations with carers.

Doubts have been raised about the suitability of the alternatives.

Requests have been made for developing alternatives that must meet the quality of experience at Girtrell.

Anxieties have been expressed that the alternatives might not be accessible or might not provide for the age ranges attending Girtrell Court.

The Department of Adult Social Services has recognised that detailed work is required to 'commission' services tailored to the needs of the service users. There has been a recognition that individual services at Girtrell Court should continue until alternatives are properly developed.

As we are only a few days from the Cabinet meeting on Monday morning I think that the Co-ordinating Committee should submit a specific, updated comment on the Girtrell Court issues.

I would like to offer this proposal –

That this meeting of the Policy and Performance Co-ordinating Committee wishes to highlight the concerns expressed by Members at the budget scrutiny working party relating to services offered at Girtrell Court.

During those deliberations it was recognised that

‘The key challenge is to match the needs of individuals with what can be provided’. ...

And that...

‘Assurances were sought about availability and quality of the independent sector provision and also how each person would have their needs assessed.

It was also reported that ...All respite will be honoured until March 2016, but provision will be continued until all reviews are complete and all users have alternative provision in place’

In view of the concerns raised since the Workshop met it is even more important that attention is given meeting the detailed needs of the families involved.

Services need to be offered at Girtrell Court until it is clear that a range of providers are in place and lined up to offer services truly tailored the physical, recreational and emotional needs of the users and are demonstrably appropriate to their ages and circumstances.

In view of the tight timescales that have caused concern the officers and Cabinet need to ensure that the transition to future provision is appropriately managed with clients able to use services at Girtrell Court until such time as alternatives are duly commissioned’.

This Motion was seconded by Councillor W Clements. It was put to the vote and lost (6 for, 8 against, 1 abstention).

A Member wished to ask a question on Government funding but was told that the appropriate Officers were not in attendance at the meeting to answer questions and it was not the intention for the Committee to debate the budget proposals.

Councillor J Williamson informed that the Policy and Performance Committee – Transformation and Resources’ Workshop had been held on 14 January 2016. It had provided the Committee with the opportunity to examine in greater detail a number of proposals affecting services that fell under its remit. Those budget proposals selected for further examination were those deemed to be of greatest significance in terms of value and the public interest. Overall the Workshop had been very beneficial and there had been some good discussions around the budget options, some agreement and some split opinion. Members were aware that the Policy and Performance Committee – Transformation and Resources would receive an update on welfare reform in March 2016.

Councillor Mike Sullivan the Chair of the Policy and Performance – Regeneration and Environment Committee informed that it had been agreed by the Group Spokespersons that all six budget proposals which were out to public consultation would be scrutinised at the Workshop as they were all considered significant in either the savings provided or the value of the service. To ensure that there was sufficient time for appropriate scrutiny to take place, the scrutiny of these budget proposals had been carried out through two dedicated workshops held on 11 and 18 January 2016.

The Workshop had discussed various issues and as a result it had been agreed that some task and finish work in relation to them would be carried out by the Committee.

Members reported that there had also been comments at the Regeneration and Environment workshop on the charge for garden waste and the potential impact on the cost of landfill. There had also been a difference of opinion in respect of the condition of the highway network.

A Member informed that she found it difficult “to bring the voice of the community” to the Committee. There was some agreement in respect of this and it was considered that there should be some discussion on how the process could be refined. There were issues associated with timing but not just in relation to the budget but on other matters too e.g. how the Wirral Plan was being implemented.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the three budget scrutiny reports as the scrutiny response to the 2016/17 budget proposals be noted; and**
- (2) these reports be referred to the Cabinet for consideration.**

30 **ANNUAL REPORT: EQUALITY PLAN 2014 - 17**

The Strategic Director – Transformation and Resources introduced his report that highlighted progress being made against the Council’s Equality Plan 2014 - 2017. The Committee was informed that the Equality Plan had been approved by the Cabinet in July 2014 and embracing equality had remained central to the way the Council had delivered services over the last year. It had taken into consideration the needs of its employees and customers in the decisions that it had made.

The report also set out some of the work that the Council had undertaken to support its priorities. Members noted that this was an ongoing process and the Council continued to focus on providing a workplace where employees felt comfortable to be themselves and perform to the best of their ability, and by ensuring services which met the current and future needs of the diverse residents of the Borough were provided.

A Member drew attention to the Performance Appraisal and Development form that now included best practice elements of the Equality Framework for Local Government and reasonable adjustments. This meant all staff members were now asked how they had promoted equality and diversity within their work. Plus, there was an automatic annual review of an employee’s reasonable adjustments as part of their appraisal. The Member was surprised that this was considered to be an achievement as performance appraisals currently had a RAG rating as not all staff had been through the performance appraisal process this year.

The Strategic Director informed that the latest position was that 76% of the workforce had received their performance appraisals and 89% of managers had received one. The process had been improved and the inequalities issues had been picked up. Performance appraisals were conducted on an annual process. The next round of them would commence on 1 April 2016. The figures in respect of this would be reported on a quarterly basis.

RESOLVED:

That the progress of the Equality Plan 2014-2017 and the planned activities for the forthcoming year be noted.

31 **2015/16 QUARTER 2 CORPORATE PLAN CORPORATE PLAN**

The Strategic Director – Transformation and Resources introduced his summary report on the Council’s Quarter 2 (July to September) performance against the delivery of the 2015/16 Corporate Plan (as approved by the Council at its meeting on 8 December 2014). A detailed report was attached to the Director’s report as Appendix 1 and detailed progress against a suite of agreed performance indicators. The performance indicators related to a

range of pledges under the three Wirral Plan themes of People, Business and Environment.

The Committee was informed that it had in front of it a snap shot in time. Issues associated with performance had moved forward. A Member suggested that more information be provided in writing to help the Committee to understand the current situation.

With reference to opiate users the Committee noted that the data set out in Appendix 1 was quite old now. However, the Council's performance did put it in the top quartile nationally.

A Member made reference again to the RAG rating in respect of performance appraisal and asked if they were carried out on a rolling programme because if they were not done quickly at the beginning of the new financial year performance against this target would dip. She asked if the staff would be appraised in equal numbers across the year.

The Strategic Director reported that all staff members should receive their performance appraisal on the anniversary of their last one but there was no reason why managers could not carry out their performance appraisals earlier.

The Committee took on board the point that the Member had made that there was potential for a dip in respect of the performance appraisal target.

A Member drew attention to the Corporate Performance Indicator – Rate of Looked After Children per 10,000 and that the narrative was getting stronger and stronger. There were targets set and reference was made to a decreasing target that had been set for this measure to bring Wirral more in to line with the North West average and that of the Council's statistical neighbours. The Member asked if there were strategies in place. Councillor M McLaughlin responded that this must be done safely and that she would raise it at the Policy and Performance Committee– Families and Wellbeing. She noted that this Council was out of line with other local authorities as it took more children into care and they stayed there longer.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of this report be noted.

32 **2015/16 QUARTER 2 CAPITAL AND REVENUE FINANCIAL MONITOR REPORTS**

The Strategic Director – Transformation and Resources introduced his report that provided the Committee with the Quarter 2 Capital and Revenue Financial Monitoring details, as reported to the Cabinet at its meeting on 5

November 2015. This was done to enable the Committee to scrutinise progress against the 2015/16 Revenue and Capital budgets and to highlight any areas for further clarification. The Revenue and Capital monitoring reports were appended to the Director's report.

A Member asked a question in relation to the Quarter 2 Capital Monitoring Report about phased payments for capital receipts and why payment was conducted in this way. It was agreed that the reply to this question would be circulated to Members after the meeting.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the contents of these reports be noted; and**
- (2) the Strategic Director – Transformation and Resources be requested to send a reply to the Member's question on capital receipts to all of the Members who are in attendance at this meeting.**

33 POLICY INFORM BRIEFING PAPERS

A report by the Strategic Director – Transformation and Resources introduced the January Policy Inform Briefing papers which outline the key features of the Autumn Statement and the Spending Review, which was announced on 25 November 2015. As a continuum the Policy Inform papers include any relevant policy developments that had emerged over the past three months.

Appended to the Director's report were:

- Appendix 1 – Policy Inform: Families and Wellbeing
- Appendix 2 – Policy Inform: Regeneration and Environment
- Appendix 3 – Policy Inform: Transformation and Resources

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the Policy Briefing papers be noted.

34 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME - UPDATE REPORT

A report by the Strategic Director – Transformation and Resources set out the Scrutiny Work Programme to enable the Committee to review progress as at the end of quarter 3. Members referred to the Committee's own Work Programme (Appendix 1) and noted that good progress had been made with the Cumulative Impact Scrutiny Review and it was expected that this review would be completed by the end of March. The Work Programme highlighted three other potential pieces of work as follows:

- Review of Constituency Committee decision-making
- Pre-decision scrutiny
- Review of the number of Councillors (following Notice of Motion in September 2015)

Members were requested to give consideration to how they wished to prioritise these pieces of work and when they should be scheduled.

The Director's report also set out the Work Programmes of the other three Policy and Performance Committees, (Appendices 2 – 4). These had been included to enable the Committee to undertake its constitutional role to 'determine the overall Work Programme for the Policy and Performance Committees, and ensure there was an overall planned approach to in-depth review'.

The Committee noted that the Scrutiny Work Programme needed to be developed as a means to support the delivery of the 20 pledges set out in the Wirral Plan.

Councillor M McLaughlin informed that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for 22 March 2016 which was the day before purdah commenced. She also informed that items for the next meeting should include the LGA Peer Review and the usual Monitoring Reports. She asked Members if they wanted the meeting to go ahead. There was general agreement to hold the next scheduled meeting but with a shortened agenda.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the content of the Scrutiny Work Programme across all Policy and Performance Committees be noted; and**
- (2) Members give consideration to the potential scrutiny reviews highlighted above to determine how they wish to prioritise and schedule these pieces of work; and**
- (3) the next meeting of the Committee will go ahead on 22 March 2016 with a short agenda.**