
PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 29.03.12

Present: Councillor Keith Marshall (Chairman);

Councillors:- Anwen Davies, Margaret Griffith, Selwyn Griffiths, John Gwilym Jones, Dewi Llewelyn, Dafydd Meurig and Gareth Thomas.

Portfolio Leaders: Councillors Dyfed Edwards and Siân Gwenllïan; Councillor R. H. Wyn Williams (for item 9 on the agenda only).

Also, Councillor Peter Read (for item 9 on the agenda only as the Chairman of the Care Scrutiny Working Group).

Also Present: Harry Thomas (Chief Executive), Geraint George (Head of Strategic and Improvement Department), Dilys Phillips (Head of Democracy and Legal Department), Arwel E. Jones (Senior Manager – Strategic Direction), William Jones (Senior Finance Manager), Gareth James (Scrutiny and Operational Manager), Gareth Williams (Efficiency Account Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Committee Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Stephen Churchman, Alwyn Gruffydd, Trevor Roberts and Dyfrig Siencyn.

1. BEREAVEMENT

Condolences were expressed to Dilys Phillips, the Head of Democracy and Legal Department, on the loss of her father.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any member present.

3. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 9 February, 2012 as a true record.

4. FINAL REPORT OF THE PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS WORKING GROUP

Portfolio Leader: Councillor Dyfed Edwards

(a) Submitted - the report of Councillors Dewi Llewelyn and Gareth Thomas, the representatives of this committee on the Partnership Scrutiny Arrangements Working Group that had been established to prepare a detailed model to scrutinise the partnership work of Gwynedd and Anglesey. The committee was asked to scrutinise the joint scrutiny model along with the work and the recommendations of the working group.

(b) When submitting their report, both members emphasised:-

- (i) that the working group was of the opinion that securing the correct outcomes was the most important measure of success from the point of view of the scrutinisers.
- (ii) that there was a need to measure the benefits of collaboration.
- (iii) at some point, there would be a need to decide which scrutiny methods to use.
- (iv) that there was a need to ensure that the targets and outputs had been set out clearly at the start so that they could be scrutinised at a later date.

In response, the Head of Strategic and Improvement Department noted that there was a need to acknowledge that a major change was facing this Council and the Isle of Anglesey Council and that over the coming months there was a need to consider bringing those members from both councils, who would be involved in scrutiny, together in some way, before starting on the scrutiny work.

- (c) Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

RESOLVED to thank the working group for its work and accept the scrutiny model, along with the recommendations of the working group, namely:-

- (a) That ensuring the accountability of services to members and citizens of both counties separately is a basic principle, therefore, generally, the arrangement of scrutinising on a county basis should be adhered to, with specific emphasis on scrutinising what have been identified as priorities and achieving them rather than scrutinising the arrangements.**
- (b) That there is room for experimenting with joint scrutiny where priorities are obviously consistent across both counties.**
- (c) That the scrutiny arrangements should therefore follow this pattern initially:-**
 - (i) The scrutiny arrangements of both counties to challenge the priorities chosen by the new Board during the latter half of 2012/13.**
 - (ii) For 2013/14, that the county scrutiny arrangements consider and identify specific priorities to be scrutinised according to the scrutiny arrangements of both councils.**
 - (iii) That both county scrutiny arrangements agree on at least one matter, which is obviously a priority across both counties, in order to trial a joint scrutiny arrangement to assess its effectiveness.**

5. EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE MONITORING THROUGH A WORKING GROUP **Portfolio Leader: Councillor Dyfed Edwards**

- (a) Submitted – the report of Councillor Margaret Griffith, the Chair of the Performance Monitoring Working Group, presenting an evaluation of performance monitoring through a working group and asking the scrutiny committee to scrutinise the working group's conclusions and recommendations.
- (b) Councillor Margaret Griffith thanked the Scrutiny and Operational Manager and Assistant Scrutiny Officer for preparing the report on her behalf.
- (c) Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. During the discussion, the following main issues were highlighted:-
 - (i) In response to an enquiry, the Head of Strategic and Improvement Department explained that the Ffynnon system had not been available to members for technical reasons thus far, but that it was intended to give priority to resolve that.

- (ii) The Chairman praised the thorough work of the working group and the steps taken to include the remaining members of the committee in every step of the process and he expressed his hope that this procedure could be a model that could be built upon for the future.
- (iii) The importance of recommendation 7.1 at the end of the report, which underlined the need to reconsider all indicators, except for the statutory indicators, to ensure that the correct things were measured and to obtain value for money from the process, was emphasised. In response to this observation, the Head of Strategic and Improvement Department noted that all heads of department had been asked to review their measures so that the focus was on the citizen from now on.
- (iv) It was noted that the working group had managed to probe into the work of the departments and that the process had worked very effectively with a small number of members asking questions of the Portfolio Leaders.
- (v) Referring to the second part of recommendation 7.2, which recommended that there was a need to ensure that members understood that Portfolio Leaders were to be held to account and be responsible for the work of the heads and their departments, it was suggested that the heads of department needed to understand that also because as experts in their fields, there was a risk for them to answer questions on behalf of the Portfolio Leaders.

However, it was agreed that both of them needed to be present, with the head of department on hand to assist the Portfolio Leader, in accordance with the procedure in any democratic forum.

- (vi) The Chairman noted that the English version of part 5 of the report should be corrected to read as follows: *"The opinion of the following was sought on the arrangement of monitoring performance through a Working Group..."*

RESOLVED to accept the conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group, namely:-

- (a) That there is a need to reconsider all indicators, except those that are statutory, to ensure that the correct things are measured.**
- (b) As the role of scrutiny committees will change under the new governance arrangements and their work will focus on the task of calling the Cabinet and individual members of the Cabinet to account and scrutinising the impact of the Cabinet's decisions on service provision, it should be ensured that the members and heads of department understand that the Portfolio Leaders are to be held to account and be responsible for the work of the heads and their departments.**
- (c) That it must be ensured that members have electronic access to performance monitoring reports on all levels as they want to see the slippages and the good performance that are taking place.**
- (ch) To confirm what was agreed at the Principal Scrutiny Committee on 9 February, 2012 regarding the performance scrutiny arrangements for the future and to note, should performance matters that require attention be identified during the year, that the working group arrangement is the most effective way of accomplishing that role.**

6. PROGRESS REPORT: 2010-2013 SAVINGS STRATEGY**Portfolio Leader: Councillor Dyfed Edwards**

- (a) Submitted – the report of the Head of Strategic and Improvement Department asking the committee to scrutinise the progress of the Savings Strategy and to provide direction to those with executive responsibility for achieving the savings.
- (b) The Portfolio Leader set out the background and context of the report. He noted that the progress in terms of the ability to realise savings was generally very positive and that an increase had been seen in the total number of the £16m plans being assessed as green from 70% to 82%. He also noted that the initial projections in terms of realising the 1% Efficiency Plans were very promising, with 86% of the approved plans being assessed as green, and he thanked everyone who was making a great effort in this field.
- (c) The Head of Strategic and Improvement Department reiterated these observations and added that the arrangements for realising the savings were being supported by all heads of department and that there was a willingness to respond and take ownership of these matters.
- (ch) Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. During the discussion, the following main issues were highlighted:-
 - (i) Enquiries were made as to how the rest of the staff were responding to this. The Head of Strategic and Improvement Department replied that the leadership of the heads of department was being reflected in the progress seen in the field. An increasing attempt was made to include everyone in the development and realisation and the Portfolio Leaders also had a key role to ensure that matters were realised. He also noted that there was a need to accept that some changes would affect individuals.

Then, the Chief Executive referred to the role of the Senior Managers Academy and the Middle Managers Academy in terms of networking and sharing ideas about the things that were happening in the Council. He confirmed that the managers' response to this agenda had been very positive, that they appreciated the problem and that they had responded very maturely. He added that he had met with approximately 250 of the Council's frontline workers during a series of road shows across the county and that approximately 30 different ideas for savings had been presented by workers at each of those sessions. These ideas, although small, were important and created the mindset that one would wish to see across the entire business of searching for savings on an ongoing basis. He also referred to the launch of the "*Syniad Da / Bright Idea*" software that would enable staff across the Council to register their ideas.

- (ii) It was noted that there was a tendency to focus entirely on the Red and Amber plans, but that there was a need to congratulate those who had been working on the plans assessed as being Green also. It was noted also that it was encouraging to see that bridging funding had been identified to respond to slippages.
- (iii) The officers were thanked for their clear leadership in relation to the savings over the past years and it was noted, although the Council was often unfairly criticised in the press, that it was being praised by the people who mattered.

- (iv) Concern was expressed regarding the failure to reach the aim with cross-departmental plans and collaboration plans with other councils. The Council was under pressure to collaborate and identifying savings was a part of that collaboration. In response, the Head of Strategic and Improvement noted, in terms of those plans now depended on in terms of achievement, a challenge was faced in converting the changes into financial savings. He referred specifically to the collaboration plan in the procurement field and explained that other councils had benefited more than this Council as Gwynedd was procuring in a slightly better way already. He added that the officers were confident that it was possible to realise those plans under the control of this Council only, but as the process was taking much more time than expected for various reasons, this reality had been reprofiled when setting out the Financial Strategy that had been adopted by the Council on 1 March.

The Chief Executive noted that the savings deriving from collaboration across the north was not a high percentage of all the savings, and that this was intentional, as such savings were more difficult to realise since the individual councils had less direct influence over the situation. However, he noted that successful projects were in progress and as an example of this he explained that Gwynedd had led on the project relating to standardising the specification for Information Technology, personal computers and laptops that would save £330,000 per annum. Furthermore, he noted that in addition to the ideas regarding the strategic direction in the short and medium term, that efforts were also being made to consider developing a preventative strategy for the longer term which considered not only the provision side, but how to vary the demand for services by influencing how people thought and behaved, so that there was less demand for the services. Then, he noted that he had raised a question at the North Wales Leadership Board regarding the deficits of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, because of the concern, should they fail to reach their targets, that they would transfer more costs on the boundary between health and care, to the councils. Also, should the health boards fail on the whole across Wales, the Ministers would move money from the council sector to the health sector in order to fill the gap. He added that the deficits of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board had been £90m by mid March and that they intended to adopt a budget for one month only.

A member noted that people felt despondent because of the position of the Health Board and he thanked the Chief Executive for giving prominent attention to this.

- (v) In response to an enquiry by the Chairman, the Head of Strategic and Improvement Department confirmed that there was no reason why plans number 9, 11 and 14 in the 2012/13 savings list, namely Day Services – Older People, Enablement (2) – Increase use of the Enablement Service and Learning Disabilities Day Care, could not be realised.

The Portfolio Leader added that some of the efficiency savings related to the transformation of services and that Enablement was an example of that. This offered an opportunity, not just to generate savings, but also to provide a more suitable service for the residents of Gwynedd and perhaps there was a need to speed-up the process for those two reasons. He added that the savings which were technical in nature and related to the internal processes of the Council, rather than people, and that they were relatively easy to achieve.

However, there were other fields that demanded more drive and more decisions and he believed that Enablement was an example of that. As a result, he was of the opinion that a message should be sent to the new Council that there was a need to speed-up this process of modernisation and of providing more suitable and fit-for-purpose services that would enable the Council to be more effective and efficient.

- (vi) The officers were congratulated on their professionalism and innovation when dealing with this difficult field which had led to identifying practical solutions to the financial deficit facing the Council. Staff were also thanked for how they had dealt with this process.

RESOLVED

- (a) To accept that the progress in terms of the ability to realise savings was generally very positive.**
- (b) To approve intensifying the arrangements of challenging departments in order to ensure their ability to realise savings in full and on time.**

7. DRAFT STATUTORY GUIDANCE, LOCAL GOVERNMENT MEASURE 2011 **Portfolio Leader: Councillor Stephen Churchman**

- (a) Submitted – the report of the Head of Democracy and Legal Department presenting the observations and response of the Members' Services Working Group to the draft statutory guidance of the Local Government Measure 2011. The committee was requested to consider the report and make recommendations in response to the content of the guidance.
- (b) The background and context to the report was set out by the Chairman of the working group, Councillor Selwyn Griffiths. Then, he noted that because the full Council appointed members to serve on the Audit Committee, he was calling on the leaders of the political groups to seek to select names beforehand in order to save time in the Council.
- (c) Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. During the discussion the following main issue was raised:-

In reference to the response of the working group to the guidance relating to the timing of the Council's meetings, namely to agree with the intention to hold a survey and seek to schedule meetings at the times that were most convenient for the majority of members, it was suggested that men would make the decision in reality as women were in the minority in the Council. Meeting times etc. could make a difference to women with families in relation to their ability to participate in the democratic process. With that, it was suggested in the short term that consideration should be given to how to assist those women elected to the new Council in May, and look in the long term at methods of attracting more women into the democratic process in an attempt to ensure that the Council's balance reflected the balance in society.

The Chief Executive agreed with the direction of the discussion and noted that other groups within society were under-represented on the Council also, such as young people.

RESOLVED

- (a) To accept the observations and responses of the Members' Services Working Group to the draft statutory guidance of the Local Government Measure 2011 as noted in paragraphs 2 to 10 of the report, but to amend the response to the guidance relating to the timing of Council meetings so that it refers to the need to also consider the views of minority groups, such as women and young people, when scheduling meetings.
- (b) To send the responses to the draft statutory guidance of the Local Government Measure 2011 to the Welsh Government by the closing date of the consultation on 30 March 2012.
- (c) To ask the new Council to consider its constitution in relation to the future membership and to also ask the political groups to consider the steps required to ensure that the Council's Constitution reflects a cross-section of the society in the county.

8. CARE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP REPORT

Portfolio Leader: Councillor R. H. Wyn Williams

- (a) Submitted – the report of Councillor Peter Read, the Chairman of the Care Scrutiny Working Group, drawing attention to the work of the Working Group in scrutinising the Care Programme Board that was of relevance to the Principal Scrutiny Committee. The committee was asked to accept, amend or refuse the working group's recommendations.
- (b) Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. During the discussion, the following main issues were highlighted:-
 - (i) This working group was praised on the basis that it undertook exceptionally good and hard scrutiny work and a call was made for it to continue in the new Council. It was also noted that Councillor Margaret Griffith had been a very active member of the working group and that she would be greatly missed after standing down from the Council in May.
 - (ii) In reference to paragraph 5.4 of the report, the Chairman noted that matters would sometimes come to the attention of the working group members when they asked questions of the Portfolio Leader or officer regarding issues that were unclear in the report and that the discussion would have been much more meaningful if the paperwork had been filled in in more detail. The Children and Families Commissioning Plan was an example of this as the working group had not been able to discover straightaway that this plan was behind schedule. In response, the Chairman of the Working Group noted that the working group had asked for this plan on many occasions since 2008, but that it had been discovered subsequently that it did not have to be completed until September 2012. As a result, it was not as much of a slippage as had been assumed originally.

The Portfolio Leader – Social Services added that the report was slightly late, mainly due to long-term sickness, but because of the delay, a much better and neater document had been obtained at the end of the day. The plan would be published at the start of the new Council term.

- (iii) The Portfolio Leader – Social Services referred to the matter that had been raised by the Chief Executive under item 6 above regarding the deficits of the Health Board and the likely pressure on Social Services in the future and he

reassured members that he and the Chairman of the Working Group would raise this matter at the Liaison Group with Ysbyty Bryn Beryl that afternoon.

- (iv) The Portfolio Leader – Social Services thanked the working group for its collaboration and noted that it had been of great assistance to the department as it was a working group that probed each subject in detail. He noted that Councillor Margaret Griffith in particular had probed into many subjects in detail, and he thanked her for her contribution and collaboration at all times.
- (v) It was noted that the working group now scrutinised the Care Programme Board as an experiment, but it was emphasised, should the model be extended to scrutinise the work of the other programme boards that there would be a need to ensure that an officer, who had an overview of all matters relating to the service, would act as a contact between the Programme Board and its corresponding working group. In response, the Head of Strategic and Improvement Department reminded members of the arrangements adopted for managing performance in the new Council and confirmed that a specific officer would be available to provide independent and expert advice to members so that they could undertake the reviews.

RESOLVED

- (a) That there is a need for the plans of the Programme Board to be clear enough so that members can scrutinise progress, or lack of progress, against clear and definite benefits.**
- (b) That there is a need to strengthen the arrangements of the Programme Board to focus more on:**
 - (i) Identifying risks and ensuring that the Risks Log relating to each programme is used in full;**
 - (ii) Putting appropriate risk management steps in place.**
- (c) That there is a need to continue improving engagement arrangements in terms of:**
 - (i) Sharing up-to-date information with members;**
 - (ii) Keeping the Third Sector and other key stake-holders in the picture.**
- (ch) That there is a need for a clear follow-up and reporting back arrangement for members regarding questions and issues of concerns that are noted;**
- (d) That firm guidance is needed on how to maintain the Council's Language Plan in partnership work.**

At the end of the meeting, the Chairman noted that this was the last meeting of the Principal Scrutiny Committee before the election and he gave particular thanks to the officers of the Scrutiny Unit for their hard work and guidance over the past four years. He also thanked the Committees Unit for administrating the committees.

The members thanked the Chairman for steering the meetings over the past two years.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.45am.