
CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 31.01.13

Present: Councillor Simon Glyn (Chairman).

Councillors Lesley Day, Elwyn Edwards, Gwynfor Edwards, Trevor Edwards, Gweno Glyn, Selwyn Griffiths, Jason Humphreys, June Marshall, Dafydd Meurig, Mair Rowlands, Gareth Thomas and Eirwyn Williams.

Also present: Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager Corporate Commissioning Service), Vera Jones (Democratic Services Manager), Gareth James (Members' Support and Scrutiny Manager), Ann E. Roberts (Assistant Performance Improvement Scrutiny Officer) and Gwyn Parry Williams (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Present for item 3 below:-

Councillor John Wynn Jones (Cabinet Member for the Economy);
Nicola Day (Corporate Procurement Manager)

Apologies: Councillors Aled Evans, Charles W. Jones, Dyfrig Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Michael Sol Owen

Welcome

The Chair welcomed representatives of the Wales Audit Office and a Peer Group from Conwy County Borough Council to the meeting to observe the committee.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

2. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 13 December, 2012 as a true record.

Matter arising

Item 3 – The Rural Agenda

In relation to the reference in the minutes that there would be adequate fibrespeed in most of Gwynedd by around March, a member enquired about the latest situation.

In response, the Cabinet Member for the Economy noted that he had reported at the last meeting that he was hopeful that it would be operational by this March. Unfortunately, there had been slight slippage in the timetable for various reasons, but it was expected that the work would start during June 2013.

RESOLVED to note the information.

3. SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT POLICY

Cabinet Member: Councillor John Wynn Jones

- (a) A progress report was presented by the Cabinet Member for the Economy on the success of the Sustainable Procurement Scheme, and areas for improvement.
- (b) An opportunity was given to members to make observations and ask questions. The Cabinet Member and the officer responded appropriately and the following main points were made:
- The Sustainable Development Tool had been developed to deal with contracts with a value of £500k and above.
 - A considerable amount of work was required for two contracts to receive attention from the Sustainable Procurement Working Group.
 - The fact that performance on contracts under £500k was unclear / appeared poor was because that this was only requested during the past year.
 - It was important to note the content of the procurement structure.
 - The Procurement Unit did not receive information on all Council contracts, but more work would be undertaken on this to identify these contracts.
 - A decision was made in November 2012 to sign up to the National Procurement Service regarding national contracts. It was noted that this service involved 15% of the Council's expenditure.
 - All the North Wales Councils had joined an Ambitions Board, with this Council taking the lead role in the area of Procurement.
 - It was a matter for the Economic Development Department to record details on the number of jobs created and safeguarded as a result of the contracts. It was important to develop the skills/apprentices which were required by the area's economy. The Council had contributed to the development of the Gwynedd Apprenticeship Company. It was agreed that details on the number of jobs would be submitted to the next committee meeting on 7 March 2013.
 - No savings had been identified through the Sustainable Procurement Scheme but there was a savings target against other schemes. The policy's emphasis was on maximising the benefits arising from economic, environmental and social matters.
 - The figure of 70% for 2010/11 in Appendix 1(b) of the report related to small and medium-sized enterprises in Wales and the figure of 35.7% in Appendix 3 of the report related to 2011/12 within Gwynedd.
 - The comparison between 2010 and 2011 could be found in Appendix 3 of the report noting Gwynedd's performance only. There was no comparison with other councils available.
 - The Working Group needed to see where the Council was spending outside Wales, and to receive information on the percentage of expenditure over £500k compared to expenditure between £50k and £500k.
 - As it was impossible for the Cabinet Member to respond to all the questions, it was agreed that the questions would be sent to him in more detail for a further response.

RESOLVED TO:

a) Support the progress to date.

b) Emphasise the need for services to use the procurement support available, and to comply with the sustainable procurement policy.

c) Establish a Working Group to consider holding a scrutiny investigation on the performance on contracts between £50k - £500k in value, to identify good practice and to recommend improvements.

ch) Hold a discussion at the meeting on 7 March on the type of Working Group that would be acceptable, but in the meantime that Councillors Gwynfor Edwards, Dafydd Meurig and Mair Rowlands should discuss the Working Group's brief etc with the Cabinet Member, and submit their recommendations to the next meeting.

4. SYSTEMS THINKING SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION
Cabinet Member: Councillor Peredur Jenkins

- a) Submitted – report by Councillor Gareth Thomas, Chair of the Investigation, providing details on the main issues highlighted by the investigation into two pilot schemes held in the Arfon Area, the Maintenance Service (Intervention Team) and the Homelessness Service. He gave a summary of the investigation's activities and its main findings.

He thanked his fellow members and officers for their work in relation to the investigation.

- b) Members were given an opportunity to make observations and ask questions. The Chair of the Investigations responded appropriately and attention was drawn to the following main points:

- The two areas had been chosen as they were both completely different in nature.
- The effect of the “systems” work on the staff working in the service had affected their morale. It was noted that the Vanguard Company had worked hard, especially during the initial period. There was a feeling that both the pilot schemes had run for too long.
- There was no intention to restructure departments but they should view things differently. It was not a tool to achieve savings, but rather a tool to change the way in which people viewed their work and to identify what was necessary to provide good service to the customer.
- It was essential for officers on a senior level to buy in to the “command and control” mindset. On a service manager level, there was a very thorough understanding of this systems thinking.

RESOLVED to request that the Cabinet Member for Resources considers the following recommendations –

a) To extend Systems Thinking across the Council.

b) To ensure that the Cabinet Members and Senior Managers have a thorough understanding of the principles of Systems Thinking to realise the potential of redesigning Council services for the customer's benefit.

c) Provide full support to maintain the “day job” while officers work on the systems thinking scheme.

ch) Develop the scheme across the Council by striking a balance between carrying out this work internally and getting external and independent input as necessary.

d) Consider the information obtained from the customers and partners thoroughly in order to assess the demand and the true needs of the customer.

dd) Consider the value of appropriate measures carefully to assess success and problems with implementing the scheme across the Council and reporting on any matters of concern to the Cabinet.

e) Note that the process so far has been too slow – it is crucial that the work proceeds more quickly in future.

f) That work is carried out immediately to assess the scheme's costs in order to identify the sum of the expenditure and any savings that have derived from it so far and to consider the projection over the life of this Council.

5. THE RURAL AGENDA

Cabinet Member: Councillor John Wynn Jones

The Chair's report was presented, referring to the observations made by the three area committees on this matter. He was of the opinion that it would be beneficial for a panel of two or three members to analyse these observations in order to suggest a way forward for the committee.

A member referred to the balance between rural and urban services and that if a working party was established, that there needed to be a rural/urban balance in its membership.

RESOLVED

a) To establish the following working party on the basis of rural/urban balance to analyse the observations made by the three area committees -

Councillors Lesley Day, Elwyn Edwards, Gweno Glyn, June Marshall, Gareth Thomas and Eirwyn Williams.

b) That the working Party meets to consider the brief and to submit it for the attention of the committee on 7 March 2013.

Corporate Scrutiny Committee Preparatory Meeting

The Chair noted that the preparatory meeting had been scheduled for the following day, 1 February, but due to the fact that "Sustainable Procurement Policy" and "The Rural Agenda" were items for consideration at the next committee meeting on 7 March 2013, he was of the opinion that these two items would be sufficient for that meeting. Therefore there would be no need for a preparatory meeting on 1 February 2013.

» The Members' Support and Scrutiny Manager reminded members that at the last preparatory meeting it had been agreed to invite various organisations such as Menter a Busnes, successful/unsuccessful contractors etc to the next meeting to discuss "Sustainable Procurement". As the format of the next meeting to be held on 7 March would be more informal, it was suggested that it should be held in a location outside the Council's offices.

RESOLVED to hold the next meeting on 7 March 2013 in Ystafell Dwyrdd, Contact Centre, Penrhyndeudraeth. But, if the majority of the representatives of the various organisations etc invited to the meeting came from areas outside Penrhyndeudraeth, the Committee's chair, in consultation with the Vice-chair should be given discretion to change the location if required.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 12.45pm.