

MEETING	CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	16 JUNE, 2016
TITLE	CABINET RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS PRESENTED BY THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
PURPOSE	Report to Scrutiny Committee following presenting the recommendations to Cabinet
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INTRODUCTION

1. Following recent observations in a report by the Wales Audit Office and in a questionnaire amongst Cabinet members and senior officers, the need to improve the link and dialogue between individual scrutiny committees and the Cabinet has been identified in order to secure greater continuity following scrutiny work.
2. As a pilot, a paper was presented to the Cabinet on 15th December drawing the Cabinet's formal attention to the recent work of the committee, in order have a formal public discussion on the response of the Cabinet as a whole and individual Cabinet Members to scrutiny recommendations. The item was a success, and therefore it was decided that all scrutiny committees would follow the same pattern.
3. The Chairman of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee presented recommendations from recent scrutiny committee meetings to the Cabinet meeting held on 3rd May, 2016. There was an open and honest discussion with the Cabinet, and they stated that they appreciated the chance to understand the context of the discussion around a few recommendations. The web-cast of the discussion is available, but in Welsh only as there were no non Welsh speakers present at the meeting <http://www.gwynedd.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts> (See item 4).
4. The purpose of this report is to report formally back to the Scrutiny Committee on what was agreed by the Cabinet. For the committee's information, the Cabinet's conclusion was that the discussion was beneficial and it was agreed to continue with the system of discussing matters arising from Scrutiny Committees at Cabinet meetings in the future, with a minute of that discussion being circulated amongst the Scrutiny Committee members.

ITEMS

5. Three items were presented for the Cabinet's attention. They are summarised here together with the response to each:-

A. ITEM – GWYNEDD COUNCIL PROCUREMENT STRATEGY - CATEGORY MANAGEMENT AND KEEPING THE BENEFITS LOCAL

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Considered – A report by the Economy Cabinet Member (Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies) on the developments to date of introducing category management as the new procurement arrangement for the Council, including any lessons learnt through the experiences in the Care sector to date. Ensuring that benefits were kept local whilst procuring was also considered, along with any steps taken to encourage local businesses to develop.

Resolved

- a) There was no evidence to date whether category management arrangements worked better than the previous arrangements. Progress on the procurement strategy should be monitored by this committee in 6 months' time, and regularly thereafter.
- b) Note concern regarding the impact of any possible cuts on departments' abilities to support. Particular concern was noted for the Economy and Community Department, to drive the local element and the impact of that on the county's economic success more generally.
- c) Rooting the strategy in Ffordd Gwynedd principles, by consistently listening to the messages that come back from the local sector and adapting the strategy accordingly.
- d) That there was a need to offer support in promoting and creating opportunities for local businesses, social enterprises, etc., to develop businesses by identifying the gaps in the market, including encouraging individuals to establish new businesses
- e) The message about the new arrangements should be spread across the Council, so that everyone knew about and understood clearly what the new arrangements are.

CABINET RESPONSE

Cllr. Mandy Williams-Davies noted the aspiration to increase the benefits that are kept local and explained the need to raise awareness, both within and outside of the Council. She also noted her readiness to update the Scrutiny Committee every 6 months and welcomed any further discussions. It was confirmed that progress on the procurement strategy, with particular attention to category management will be revisited in 6 months.

Note – the report can be scheduled for the October meeting of the committee.

B. ITEM – DRAFT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Considered – A report by the Resources Cabinet Member (Councillor Peredur Jenkins) and the Senior Information Technology and Transformation Manager on the content of the draft Information Technology Strategy. As part of the discussions, efficiency and value for money were discussed, with information about costs and customer satisfaction scrutinised.

Resolved

- a) It was recommended that clarity should be ensured on the success of the previous strategy and that it should be fully explained, using it as a basis for the new strategy. This would allow progress to be measured. It was recommended that there was a need for the service to identify and assess where the Council had reached, what lessons had been learned thus far, and incorporating the information as a basis to the new strategy.

- b) The IT Strategy needs to be flexible to respond to the customer's requirements (when they are known/ clear) and to be as flexible as possible within security restrictions.
- c) Ffordd Gwynedd intervention to the IT Service should be considered soon. The intervention could release resources which could be used in the areas discussed in the Strategy

CABINET RESPONSE

As the Cabinet were discussing the item later on the agenda of the meeting, only a brief discussion was held on this item. Cllr. Peredur Jenkins welcomed the points presented by the Scrutiny Committee and thanked the Committee for its part in the discussions.

C. ITEM – THE BENEFITS TO GWYNEDD FROM RETAINING BUSINESS RATES

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

In a discussion relating to business rates in the full Council in October 2015, an Elected Member drew to the attention of the Council that central Government in England has decided that English local councils are to keep all business rates to invest locally. It was explained that this is not the situation in Wales.

Considered – A report by the Resources Cabinet Member (Councillor Peredur Jenkins), the Head of Finance and the Senior Manager Revenues and Risk outlining the probable outcome in Gwynedd should the Welsh Government adopt the same provision in Wales. The Scrutiny undertaken was to assess whether the same regime in Wales would be likely to lead to benefits, losses, opportunities, or risks for Gwynedd. Following that work, the Council could decide if it wanted to contact the Welsh Government.

Resolved

- a) It appears that the situation in England is complex. Following consideration of the information presented, there is no assurance that Gwynedd would benefit from the same provisions. Indeed, it appears that there would be substantial risks to Gwynedd.
- b) The Committee therefore recommends that the Council should not, at this moment, proceed to write to the Welsh Government asking for the same provision in Wales.
- c) Should further information arise with regards to similar developments in Wales, it is recommended that further work be undertaken at that time by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

CABINET RESPONSE

Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn welcomed the points presented by the Scrutiny Committee and noted the recommendation that the Council should not, at this moment, proceed to write to the Welsh Government asking for the same provision in Wales as is present in England.