



Health and Care Scrutiny Committee – 27th January 2020
Economy, Residents, Communities and Governance Scrutiny
Committee – 29th January 2020
Leisure and Skills Scrutiny Committee – 30th January 2020

Scrutiny Observations to Cabinet on: 11th February 2020

The three Scrutiny Committee met on during the week commencing 27th January 2020 and considered the following documents:

- Cabinet report - Budget 2020-21
- Service Cost reductions proposals
- Individual Impact Assessment
- Fees and Charges Report
- Capital Programme
- Budget Simulator Public Consultation Exercise

The three Scrutiny Committee thank the Portfolio Holders and Heads of Service / Directors for attending scrutiny.

Health and Care Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny make the following observations:

Impact Assessments – in many instances the impact has been left blank. The Committee are of the opinion that any impact, positive or negative, is worthy of inclusion in the documents if they are to be of use. Furthermore, the format is considered to be too generic and greater value could be added if the impact assessments were service specific and had greater emphasis on outcomes.

Members would have welcomed more information on the budget for social care rather than limiting consideration to savings proposals. It was noted that an additional £5.7M was being included in the base budget for Children's Services but that £2.2M of savings were to be achieved leaving a net increase of £3.5M. Whilst it was explained that the information had been presented in this way for transparency, Members thought that the focus would be on the £5.7M increase when the budget was debated at Council. It would helpful if a summary from senior officers outlining the key reasoning behind the increased budget of £5.7 million for children's services could be given - this was helpfully given by senior officers at the scrutiny meeting and it would be of use for all councillors to have this information.

Significant savings were itemised, and Members sought assurance that these were achievable during the financial year 2020/21. The Committee had lengthy discussions with the Corporate Director and Heads of Service regarding transformation and ongoing improvements that were expected to continue to improve outcomes for service users and reduce costs over the longer term. However, concern remained that not all savings would be achieved in the forthcoming financial year given the influence of external factors beyond the control of the service.

The Committee acknowledges that legacy issues and new practices are having a significant impact on the budget but remain concerned regarding Children's Services' ability to deliver savings in the 20/21 year. In particular, the pump priming for the commissioning of new in-county children's homes - even if they are established in 2020/21, it will be impossible to deliver a whole year's financial saving. Although the Committee welcome the proposals a business case justifying the capital spend detailing how the savings have been quantified it is difficult to have confidence that such a significant saving can be achieved during the next financial year.

Whilst the efforts of the service are recognised in reducing the costs incurred in safeguarding Children Looked After (CLA) by reviewing the placements and establishing small scale children's homes within the County, we cannot justify large increases in the Childrens Service's Budget unless we have a better understanding of why there has been such a large increase in numbers. The Committee was informed that that the National Assembly was undertaking research into the reasons why numbers are increasing across Wales and the Authority must take note of such national research. Further reference was made to national approaches for working with partner agencies, to ensure that Powys' policies and any protocols reflect a consistent national approach.

A particular pressure on the budget is the cost of agency staff. The Committee continues to scrutinize comparative pay rates and initiatives to 'grow our own' social workers and encourage apprenticeships across the service in order to mitigate recruitment issues.

The Committee also sought assurance regarding the quantifying of savings and the need to for robust management processes to ensure that savings are linked and not double counted.

Corporate activities, such as travel costs present a challenge across the authority in delivering services in a rural area and must be dealt with at a corporate level in addition to service level.

Scrutiny's Recommendation	Accept (plus Action and timescale)	Partially Accept (plus Rationale and Action and timescale)	Reject (plus Rationale)
1. Impact Assessments to be further improved to become more service specific and add more value to the budget process			
2 Impact Assessments should reflect both positive and negative impacts for completeness			
3 A summary outlining the key reasoning behind the increased budget of £5.7M for children's services should be given			

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Membership of the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee on 27th January 2020:

County Councillors:

Dai Davies, Michael Williams, Kath Roberts-Jones, Emyr Jones, Stephen Hayes, Dan Rowlands, Amanda Jenner, Gwilym Williams (Chair), Jackie Charlton, Gareth Morgan, Roger Williams, Susan McNicholas, Liz Rijnenberg, Ange Williams

Economy, Residents, Communities and Governance Scrutiny Committee.

Scrutiny make the following observations:

Digital.

- IT03 – Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) – on mobile telephones – although Members had been advised that this was available, officers were uncertain of the take up. The Committee suggested that this be further promoted to Members.
- IT03 – The Committee asked the service to consider whether BYOD could be extended to include equipment such as laptops.

Workforce and OD

- WD06 – The Committee sought assurances that appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure staff using their own vehicles for business travel have the appropriate business insurance. The Council needs to recognise that this may cause additional cost to staff.
- WD06 – The Committee sought assurance that the 5p passenger rate reduction would apply to Members as well as officers.

Highways, Transport and Recycling

- HT01 – Markets – The Committee questioned the rationale for taking these services back in house as the aim should be to simplify the Council. Markets should be left with Town and Community Councils. There are difficulties in the proposal in that Town and Community Councils will have set their precepts for the next year which will account for the running of and income generated from markets.
- HT01 – The Council should be having more and earlier discussions with Town and Community Councils about other services which could be transferred to Town and Community Councils.
- HT14 – Toilets. The Committee did not think there has been any discussion with the two Town and Community Councils affected by this proposal to implement this change in 2020-21 and they have already set their precepts. It was accepted that communications should improve as the Council moves to budget planning over three years.

Property, Planning and Public Protection

- PP02 – Planning Services – The Committee expressed concern regarding the cost reductions in Planning Services. Although the Head of Service provided assurances that a statutory service could be delivered, the Committee was concerned that there is a significant risk that this cannot be achieved despite the medium risk score in the Impact Assessment.

Housing and Community Development

- HC03 – Housing – The Committee expressed concern that the proposed changes over three years to the homelessness service would have a knock on effect and

impact on the demand for social care services which had not been taken into account.

- HC08 – Countryside Services – The Committee was concerned about the full three years' proposals as staff reductions would lead to less staff available to train volunteers and to apply for grants. There is also a deterioration to the rights of way network currently with blocked paths which was a concern as doctors were prescribing green prescriptions to patients. The Committee was concerned that the proposed changes to service might lead to a further deterioration of the rights of way network
- HC01 – Arts Funding – The Committee considered that arts and culture is an important part of the Well-being agenda. The Committee was concerned that the proposal would reduce the Council's ability to achieve its well-being goals with the proposed cost reduction. The Impact Assessment highlighted that the proposal would have poor and very poor impacts on residents and communities without mitigation. The Committee was frustrated that the Impact Assessment did not contain any mitigating actions to reduce the risk and impact of the proposal.
- HC01 – The Committee was concerned that the communication to organisations had been too late with many of the organisations affected having already set their budgets for next year. The Committee believes this presents a further risk to the delivery of services.

Finance / Housing and Community Development

- FS02 – The Committee was advised of a project in North Powys where the contractor was from England and that contractor was bringing in materials from England rather than using local suppliers. The Committee accepted that whilst there were improvement in retaining the Powys Pound (an additional £1million per quarter in 2019-20) the procurement process requires further amendment to address issues such as:
 - Contractors from England using Powys / Welsh suppliers for materials rather than bringing in supplies from England;
 - Adjusting the framework agreements to do more to ensure that Powys businesses are given greater opportunities to become sub-contractors;
 - That tenders need to be repackaged to allow individual businesses in Powys more opportunities to tender for relevant elements of Council projects.

The Committee also commented that the standard of Impact Assessment required improvement as some of the assessments submitted lacked detail which could lead the decisions of Council vulnerable to legal challenge/review. The Committee noted that Council is required to fully assess the impact of its budget decisions and asked for the Assessments to undergo Quality Assurance.

Scrutiny's Recommendation	Accept (plus Action and timescale)	Partially Accept (plus Rationale and Action and timescale)	Reject (plus Rationale)
1 Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) (mobile phones) – The Committee suggested that this be further promoted to Members			
2 That the ICT service consider whether BYOD			

could be extended to include equipment such as laptops			
3 That the Cabinet seek assurances that appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure staff using their own vehicles for business travel have the appropriate business insurance			
4 That the 5p passenger rate reduction would apply to Members as well as officers			
5 HT01 – Markets – That the Cabinet review the rationale for taking these services back in house as the aim should be to simplify the Council. Markets should be left with Town and Community Councils			
6 The Council should be having more and earlier discussions with Town and Community Councils about other services which could be transferred to Town and Community Councils			
7 That the Cabinet reconsider the following cost reductions proposals in light of the Committee's concerns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PP02 – Planning Services • HC03 – Housing • HC08 – Countryside Services • HC01 – Arts Funding 			
8 That the procurement process be further revised to address the concerns raised by the Committee			
9 That the standard of Impact Assessment			

requires improvement and should undergo a quality assurance process			
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Membership of the Economy, Residents, Communities and Governance Scrutiny Committee on 29th January, 2020:

County Councillors:

David Evans, Gareth Jones, Phil Pritchard, Iain McIntosh, David Selby, Kelvyn Curry, James Gibson-Watt, Matthew Dorrance (Chair)

Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee.

Scrutiny make the following observations:

Impact assessments – it was disappointing that these were received late and in the case of £109k of savings not received at all but scrutiny appreciate the special circumstances that have prevailed this year with the post inspection activity. It is expected that impact assessments for any savings proposals next year will be prepared in line with all council timeframes.

The impact assessments for £109k of cost reductions were not provided. It was confirmed that these cost reductions did not relate to staff restructures and had been found at a late stage from budget lines no longer needed. Scrutiny were content that this cost reduction is appropriate.

Scrutiny were however pleased to note that the impact assessments show no impact on pupils or schools.

Governor training cost reductions – it is noted that these are being claimed with the intention to move to on-line provision. Scrutiny are aware that this has been promised for a number of years and has yet to materialise. As the role of Governors is central to good leadership of schools it is imperative that quality training is available. Scrutiny will be monitoring the progress of this programme.

Membership of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee on 30th January 2020:

County Councillors:

Jake Berriman, David Jones, Karen Laurie-Parry, Lucy Roberts, Gwynfor Thomas, Pete Roberts (Chair), Bryn Davies, Sandra Davies

Co-Opted Members: A. Davies, S. Davies, M. Evitts, G. Robson.