

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE JOINT CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS STEERING GROUP HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON TUESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2016

PRESENT: County Councillor D R Jones (Chair)
County Councillors K W Curry, S C Davies, D R Jones, JG Morris and Mr J Brautigam

In Attendance: County Councillors W B Thomas (Leader) and R G Brown (Portfolio Holder for Commissioning, Procurement and Children's Services) (for Item 4)

Officers: Liz Patterson (Scrutiny Officer), Clive Pinney (Solicitor to the Council), David Powell (Strategic Director - Resources), Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services) and Gareth Jones (Senior Manager - Central Support Services) (for item 5)

1.	APOLOGIES	JCSG58 - 2016
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Members: None

Officers: Jeremy Patterson (Chief Executive), Paul Griffiths (Strategic Director – Place), Peter Jones (Professional Lead – Corporate Insight), Lisa Richards (Scrutiny Officer)

2.	DRAFT NOTES - FOR CONSIDERATION	JCSG59 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- Draft Notes – 18th October, 2016

Issues Discussed:

- Page 6 – Brecon High School finance report not ready as yet. The Leader indicated that he and the Cabinet Manager would be looking at the process as to when reports should be ready to fit into the scrutiny process. The Strategic Director – Resources indicated that the report had now been received from the school and finance staff had again been sent into the school to support it as the financial position was still not where it was required to be. The final report would be presented to Cabinet on 20th December with scrutiny undertaking a pre-scrutiny in December (Audit Committee)
- Page 8 – Speaking at Cabinet Meetings. The Scrutiny Manager outlined the process for reviewing this process.

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

3.	DISCUSSION WITH THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE,	JCSG60 - 2016
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	STRATEGIC DIRECTORS REGARDING POTENTIAL SCRUTINY ITEMS	
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Documents Considered:

- No issues were raised for discussion.

4.	COMMISSIONING AND PROCUREMENT	JCSG61 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- Local Government Association (LGA) - Local Government Procurement Review Action Plan
- Briefing Note to the Joint Chairs and Vice-Chairs Steering Group 18th March, 2016
- Cabinet Response to the Briefing Note – 18th October, 2016

Issues Discussed:

- The Portfolio Holder indicated that previously the Commissioning and Procurement Board (CPB) was looking at minutiae although this was good background work. However, it would now be focussing on a more strategic overview. The response to the Joint Chairs in October was prepared by officers rather than the Portfolio Holder. The LGA document had not been considered yet by the CPB (which had received a verbal report from the LGA) and was due for consideration in December.
- Members commented that a number of issues of concern had arisen from considering the minutes and agendas of the CPB. Some of the items of concern could not be linked to the response from officers.
- The Portfolio Holder had challenged officers regarding the lack of the strategic overview by the CPB as it is a challenge body rather than a decision making body i.e. a challenge of officers by Cabinet Members. Members felt that there was no evidence of this.
- There are boards for individual projects but there is a role for the CPB. Some targeted scrutiny is also happening. The CPB was looking at contracts ending in 18 months but the list was too long and therefore unworkable. Now the Board wants to look at the larger contracts all of which should come to the CPB for discussion.
- Services monitor contracts with assistance from the Central Commissioning Team. There are also less requests for extensions of contracts now. All larger contracts have an assigned contract manager. It was suggested that when scrutiny wanted to look at the arrangements for the monitoring and renewal of contracts then the relevant Head of Service and the contracts manager if appropriate could be called to the scrutiny meeting.
- It was suggested that perhaps the terms of reference of the CPB should be reviewed and clarified. It should also have a separate forward work programme which could link to the scrutiny work programme. It was also suggested that summary reports from the CPB to the Cabinet should be

- made outlining discussions and matters for decision without disclosing any confidential information to assist the transparency of the work of the CPB.
- Concern was expressed regarding the capacity and capability of the Council to deliver the proposed plans, even though the workforce planning tool was an useful tool.

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
That a further report be made to the Steering Group once the CPB had considered the LGA report and decided the way forward.	17 January 2017	WR / LR

5.	EDUCATION AND HIGHWAYS	JCSG62 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- Briefing Note – Home to School and College Transport Budget Position

Issues Discussed:

- Mainstream and SEN transport contracts retendered in last few years. Table 2 shows accounting position, table 3 shows position as it would have been with the “housekeeping” adjustment. Payment to contractors is now made on a 1/12ths basis. There was an adjustment in 2014/15 due to retendering and paying contractors for prior work which was undertaken on the basis of numbers of days. Next year there will be a split of costs by routes so it will be clear if there is an overspend per route.
- Special school routes are not paid on the 1/12th basis as there is much variation in this group compared to mainstream routes which do not vary much. This level of variation would cause too many adjustments in year and at year end.
- SEN – additional £400K costs following requests from schools and parents to provide additional routes which was agreed by the SEN Team. Members asked whether the Northgate fee for achieving savings was based on the £700K revised costs or the £400k original costs.
- Funding for 14-19 inter school transport is not included in the paper and **Gareth Jones was asked to provide additional information on these costs.**
- There is a £900k charge transferred in the budget for the transport of pupils on public service buses.
- The costs of the Highways and Education teams dealing with transport is £600k.
- Members queried the costs of route 74 as to whether this is home to school transport or a public service bus. **Gareth Jones to provide further information.**
- The entitlement for home to school transport is determined by the Schools Service (more than 2 miles for primary pupils, more than 3 miles for

- secondary pupils) and the commissioning is then undertaken by the Transport Unit. Members queried the terms closest v allocated schools. Members were advised that this is being reviewed as part of a policy review. Some of the current policies go back to pre 1996. The plan is now to bring a new policy to the Cabinet in Spring 2017 which will look at the whole issue. There will then need to be a consultation on transport to the closest school. There will also need to be transition arrangements in place for the new policy.
- With regard to schools on the border with England, Welsh Government advice is preferably pupils should go to Powys schools, but the Council should transport pupils if the closest school is in England. Parent conveyors are paid on a mileage rate. However this is only offered where it is economically viable to the Council i.e. in place of providing a taxi. The mileage claimed is door to door.
 - There has been an increase in the demand for transport – PRU and Looked After Children are the areas where there seems to be an increased cost e.g. foster children requiring to go to the same school but having moved residence. There are sound reasons for this (maintaining some stability in the child's life). However, this is for reasons associated with children's services rather than education and therefore there is a debate to be had around from which budget the increased charge on school transport should be assigned to, as at present this is paid for from the Education budget. These two areas are also subject to the greatest variation. There are cases where a Powys child is for example fostered in Ceredigion and needs to attend a special school with the closest being in Carmarthenshire or Pembrokeshire as Ceredigion does not have its own special school provision. Members questioned whether when a foster child who is statemented is moved, is the statement reviewed, so that the provision in mainstream schools provided by Ceredigion might be appropriate rather than a special school. It was noted that there were communications issues between Social Services and the Education Service with social workers making decisions on transport
 - Powys is usually a net gainer for children from out of county placements e.g. placements at Penmaes. However, there was no information available on transport costs. Overall there is a better level of information now on costs due to the decision to budget at route level, but this has only been in place for about 18 months. Costs are available for transport appeals with the most expensive ones being transport provided from Brecon to Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera and to Builth Wells High School - £91k cost from Brecon to Builth Wells for two routes for Welsh Language stream provision.
 - The budget has not been adjusted to take account of school closures. Members indicated that budgets should be actioned and transferred for school closures from the schools delegated budget to the transport budget. The £95k budget reduction is not achievable and it was suggested that this reduction was not agreed by the Education Service. It was suggested that the Strategic Director - Resources should review this saving and see if it had been achieved. Members agreed that all new routes should be approved by the Education Service for inclusion in the budget. Members also questioned what impact the changes to numbers on roll and admission age would have on the budget. The impact was not known as yet but the costs were expected to be minimal.

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
Additional information – 14-19 inter school transport costs		GJ
Clarification of costs for route 74 – home to school transport or public service bus		GJ
The Strategic Director – Resources review the £95k budget saving and whether it had been achieved.		DP
<p>Recommended to the Cabinet:</p> <p>(i) that recommendations be made to address the £500k overspend;</p> <p>(ii) That Children’s Services should be responsible for the transport costs of children looked after by the Council;</p> <p>(iii) That budgets be actioned and transferred for school closures from the schools delegated budget to the transport budget.</p>		WR / Chair
That a briefing report be presented to the Cabinet on the discussion by the Steering Group on the school transport overspend.		WR / Chair

6.	ROLE OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES	JCSG63 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- Draft Revised Terms of Reference / Areas of Responsibility for Scrutiny Committees

Issues Discussed:

- The draft document was prepared following a discussion at the previous meeting. The Scrutiny Manager commented that the workload would always rest with the People Scrutiny Committee due to the service areas that they covered. It was therefore suggested whether Education and Social Care should be split between the 2 scrutiny committees to try to balance the workloads of the 2 committees. Any changes agreed would come into force from May 2017.

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
Re-draft the terms of reference splitting Education and Social Care Services between the 2 scrutiny committees.	17 January 2017	WR

7.	WORK PROGRAMME	JCSG64 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- Forward Work Programme
- List of items for Pre-Decision Scrutiny as discussed by the Leader and Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees.

Issues Discussed:

- The items for Pre-Decision Scrutiny had been discussed by the Leader and the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees at a meeting prior to the Steering Group meeting. The Steering Group agreed that the items be included in the work programme and that Portfolio Holders and officers be notified.

Pre-Decision Scrutiny Items – December 2016 to March, 2017.

Cabinet Meeting	Date Report required by Central Services	Item	Scrutiny Cttee	Dates where Working Group will Meet
20/12/16		Domiciliary Care	People	06/12/16
20/12/16		PCC Care Homes	People	06/12/16
17/01/17	06/12/16	School Asset Management Plan	People	12/12/16 to 16/12/16
07/02/17	03/01/17	Health and Care Strategy 10 Year Plan	People	10/01/17 to 16/01/17
07/02/17	03/01/17	Education	People	10/01/17 to

		Standards Report		16/01/16
07/02/17	03/01/17	Review of Fair Funding	People	10/01/17 to 16/01/17
28/02/17	24/01/17	Highways Asset Management Plan	Place	01/02/17 to 06/02/17
28/02/17	24/01/17	Home School Transport Policy	to Place	01/02/17 to 06/02/17

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
That the list of pre-decision scrutiny items be approved and included in the work programme	17 January 2017	WR
That Portfolio Holders and officers be notified of the items to be pre-scrutinised.	30 November 2016	WR

8.	PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD	JCSG65 - 2016
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9.	DRAFT NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S)	JCSG66 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- Draft Notes – 9 June, 2016 and 20 October 2016

Issues Discussed:

- None

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

10.	PSB DATES - FOR INFORMATION	JCSG67 - 2016
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- 1 December 2016

- 9 March 2017
- 8 June 2017
- 21 September 2017
- 21 December 2017

11.	DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS - FOR INFORMATION	JCSG68 - 2016
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- 17 January 2017
- 28 February 2017
- 21 March 2017
- 11 April 2017
- 20 June 2017
- 11 July 2017
- 19 September 2017
- 10 October 2017
- 7 November 2017
- 5 December 2017

County Councillor