

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (LIFELONG LEARNING)

MINUTES of a meeting held at Barry Island Primary School on 5th December, 2005.

Present: Councillor C.P. Franks (Chairman); Councillors Mrs. M.E.J. Birch, Ms. R.M. Birch, Mrs. C.V.L. Clay, J. Clifford, S.C. Egan, F.T. Johnson, C.L. Osborne, Mrs. S.I. Sharpe, B.I. Shaw and E.T. Williams.

Non-voting observers:

Mr. G. Beaudette, Mr. T. Cox and Mr. D. Griffiths.

Also present:

Councillor A.D. Hampton and A.J. Readman.

647 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE -

These were received from Councillors Ms. M.E. Alexander, E. Hacker, Mrs. V.M. Hartrey and Mrs. M. Kelly Owen.

648 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT -

The Chairman announced that it was his sad duty to advise of the tragic death of a child at Ashgrove School that day. Details of the incident were emerging but the Chairman assured Members that the Council had offered its full support to the parents of the child.

The Director of Learning and Development stated that he would circulate to all Members a copy of the press release issued by the Council.

649 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST -

The following Councillors declared the nature of their interests, being Governors of Schools within the Vale of Glamorgan, it being noted that the Standards Committee on 9th September, and 21st October, 2004 and 13th January, 2005, had granted them a general dispensation to vote upon any matter to be considered by the Scrutiny Committee (Lifelong Learning) in relation to matters of a general education matter in terms of policy, plans, policy framework, budget etc.:

Councillors C.P. Franks, Mrs. M.E.J. Birch, Ms. R.M. Birch, Mrs. C.V.L. Clay, J. Clifford, S.C. Egan, F.T. Johnson, C.L. Osborne, B.I. Shaw and E.T. Williams.

Councillors F.T. Johnson, J. Clifford and Mrs. S.I. Sharpe declared an interest in Agenda Items 6 and 7 in view of their membership of the Trust Committee.

Councillors C.P. Franks and S.C. Egan declared an interest in Agenda Items 6 and 7 by virtue of their membership of the Local Health Board.

650 MINUTES -

RECOMMENDED - T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 7th November, 2005 be approved as a correct record subject to:

- the deletion of the name of Councillor Mrs. S.I. Sharpe from the names of those Members who had declared an interest.
- the words 'by a member' being added following the words 'the view was expressed' in Minute No. 523 (page 718) relating to Youth Services Provision.

651 WELCOME -

Mrs. Hayward, Headteacher of Barry Island Primary School, welcomed all present to the school.

The school had opened in 1897. There were children attending the school whose parents and grandparents had also attended.

Mrs. Hayward stated that she had been headteacher of the school since 2002, since which time,

- the school had been redecorated throughout
- windows had been replaced
- walls and railings had been replaced
- a 20mph speed restriction was to be implemented outside the school
- the school operates a breakfast club from 7.45am each day, and closes at 6.00pm
- the school had been offered a plot of land for its use.

In addition, the school toilets required replacement.

In conclusion, Mrs. Hayward felt that both the school and Barry Island were facing exciting times, and the staff of the school looked forward to the challenges.

652 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT (DLD) -

Consideration was given to the information relating to Action Plan Monitoring and Performance Indicators contained in the Quarterly Performance Monitoring reports relating to:

- Lifelong Learning
- Access and Inclusion
- School Improvement
- Strategy Planning Performance

for the period 1st July to 30th September, 2005.

Mr. D. Prosser introduced the performance monitoring data in respect of the Lifelong Learning Services and Members were given an opportunity to ask questions on the Service's performance.

The Chairman enquired when the Open Learning Services were to be relocated (Sub Reference OR8) and was informed that an urgent need to transfer staff from the Civic Offices to Kenwood Road existed but that a final date had yet to be announced.

With regard to Sub Reference OR7, Members enquired if this included the provision of Hearing Loops, and were informed that the provision of Hearing Loops was a corporate issue.

Members requested that a report be brought before a future meeting of this Committee regarding the provision of Hearing Loops within Lifelong Learning establishments and it was

RECOMMENDED -

- (1) T H A T the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the request for a further report on the provision of Hearing Loops within Lifelong Learning establishments be agreed.

Sheila Kelly introduced the performance monitoring data in respect of Access and Inclusion. Members were advised that many of the Priority Actions had been completed and were now embedded within the Services.

RECOMMENDED - T H A T the contents of the report be noted.

Sandra Aspinall introduced the performance monitoring data in respect of School Improvement. Members were advised that a number of actions that had been previously reported were now embedded within the Service and had therefore been removed from the document now before Committee.

With regard to the Action "Develop a range of curriculum pathways, clear progression routes and an appropriate range of qualifications to enhance choice for 14-19 year old pupils", Members agreed to a suggestion that a future meeting of the Committee receive a presentation on this matter.

Members were advised that the Action "Provide all schools with a connection to the All Wales Broadband Network" would be completed within the target.

Members were requested to approve that the action contained within the sub-ref SIS 05/17 be amended to read "Provide training to strengthen governors' understanding of the links between teacher assessment, pupil performance and transfer of accurate information to safeguard continuity and progression", and this was agreed.

Members were advised that the details contained in the "progress" column relating to sub-reference IS50 were unachievable and it was requested that this sub-reference be deleted. Members agreed to the request.

Members were asked if they wished to receive a presentation from Mr. Loxton on the requirements of PI Refs NSPI 101 and NSPI 11, and this was accepted.

Mr. Martyn Donovan introduced the performance monitoring data in respect of Strategic Planning and Performance, the contents of which were noted.

653 INITIAL REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2006/07 (DFICTP) -

Committee considered a report submitted for consultation on the initial budget proposals for 2006/07 for those services which formed the Committee's remit.

The Council was required under statute to fix the level of council tax for 2006/2007 by 11th March 2006 and, in order to do so, would have to agree a balanced revenue budget by the same date. To be in a position to meet the statutory deadlines and the requirements for consultation set out in the Council's Constitution, much of the work on quantifying the resource requirements of individual services needed to be carried out before the final RSG settlement was notified to the Council.

The Council had been provisionally advised that, for 2006/07, it would receive from WAG, RSG of £100,384,000 and Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) of £26,755,000. Together, these sums constituted the Council's Aggregate External Finance (AEF) and represented an increase of £7,045,000 over that received for 2005/06. However, this amount also includes funding for a number of initiatives that were previously provided via specific grants (e.g. Capacity Grant) and did not, therefore, entirely constitute 'new money'. WAG had announced that the Council would provisionally continue to receive a Deprivation grant of £164,000 and a Performance Grant of £1,208,000. These were both unhypothecated grants (i.e. they are not earmarked for particular services). Confirmation of the continuation and/or amounts receivable in the form of other specific and special grants e.g. the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI) Grant had yet to be received (in 2005/06, the Council received LABGI Grant of £1,161,000).

The report set out the necessary amendments to the original estimate, which were required to be made.

Also set out in the report was a table comparing the amended original budget with the proposed revised estimate.

With regard to the Base Budget for 2006/07, Cabinet had approved the budget strategy for 2006/07 on 20th July 2005 as part of the 2005/06–2008/09 Medium Term Financial Plan (Minute No.C1993). On 21st September 2005, Cabinet also approved a further report on the budget process methodology and timetable for 2006/07 (Minute No. C 2079).

The Budget Strategy for 2006/07 outlined that:

- In order to establish a baseline, services should prepare initial revenue budgets for next year based on the cost of providing the current level of service and approved policy decisions. This meant the cost of price increases and pay awards should be included.
- Increases to budgets approved during the course of a financial year could restrict the freedom the Council had to allocate its resources to priorities during the following budget cycle when it would be aware of all the competing demands. Consequently as last year:
 - Supplementary estimates would only increase the base budget if Council had given specific approval to this effect. Increases met by virement within a year would not be treated as committed growth.
 - Directors should find the cost of increments and staff changes from their base budget unless the relevant specific approval had been given for additional funding.
 - The effect of replacing grant from outside bodies that had discontinued would not be treated as committed growth. In addition, before any project or initiative that was to be met either wholly or partly by way of grant may proceed, the exit strategy must be approved.
 - Certain items of unavoidable committed growth would continue and these included the effect of interest changes and the financing cost of the Capital Programme, increases in taxes, increases in levies and precepts charged by outside bodies and changes to housing benefits net expenditure.
- The eventual level of Revenue Support Grant settlement that makes up the bulk of the Council's funding would be influenced by WAG expectations for efficiency savings in local government as set out in their "Making the Connections" document. In addition, the Budget Review, finalised as part of the 2005/06 Budget Process, had affirmed the revenue-funding basis for individual services in accordance with Council priorities. In light of the above, it was envisaged that the revenue costs of service development would need to be met from within the respective services and, as such, no revenue bids were initially to be made. However, services had been asked to identify any burgeoning revenue cost pressures.

A summary of the overall base budget for 2006/07 was attached at Appendix '1' to the report. This has been arrived at by adjusting the 2005/06 budget for items such as inflation, unavoidable growth and previously agreed Budget Review savings.

Inflation amounted to £568,000 of which £291,000 related to pay awards and £277,000 for general price increases. It was noted that these figures excluded inflation for schools, which were dealt with elsewhere in the report.

Unavoidable Growth totalled £312,000 and related to the following items:

- *Libraries* – Increases of £120,000 to meet the Public Libraries Standards and £192,000 for running costs associated with the new Central Library.

Cost Pressures for 2006/07 had been identified as:

Education & Schools – Schools were dealt with separately from the normal service budgets and factors such as pay and price inflation had been identified as distinct cost pressures. As such, Teaching and Non-Teaching pay awards for 2006/07 had been estimated to total £1,716,000 with Teaching and Non-Teaching increments standing at £792,000. General inflation was projected to be £504,000 with a further £625,000 needed to meet Teachers Threshold payments and £507,000 for Teacher's Workload Agreement. In addition, £150,000 had been identified in relation to demographic changes (increase in pupil numbers at secondary and special schools) with £200,000 to meet the requirements of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Care Standards Inspectorate. Central Education cost pressures of £308,000 had been identified covering £81,000 for non-delegated schools and central office budgets (future school redundancies and Schools Information Management System annual maintenance costs), £107,000 for school improvement (as a direct result of the fallout of Better Schools Grant funding) and £120,000 for SEN access and inclusion (staffing costs and additional placements). In total, the cost pressures identified for this service totalled £4.802 million.

Libraries – Cost pressures of £5,000 relating to the regrading of staff had been identified for this service.

Lifelong Learning - Total cost pressures of £280,000 had been documented by the service of which £45,000 related to the recent staff restructuring costs and increments, £26,000 was to cover cuts in ELWa Schedule 2 funding for Adult Education and £30,000 was to meet cuts in Family Learning funding arising from reduced GEST and Schedule 2 contributions. £60,000 of the balance related to anticipated shortfalls in income for New Deal and Vale Training, £20,000 was to meet staffing and premises costs (should an Article 33 capital bid in relation to Rhoose Youth Club be successful) and £10,000 was to cover Heritage Skills running costs. The remaining £89,000 was attributed to agreed Budget Review savings for the closure of Job Shop Extra, which the service anticipates would not be met.

Scrutiny Committee (Lifelong Learning) was requested to consider the initial budget proposals and forward any comments that it wished to make to Scrutiny Committee (Corporate Resources) and Cabinet.

RECOMMENDED -

- (1) T H A T the initial budget proposals be noted.
- (2) T H A T representatives of the Schools Budget Forum be invited to the next meeting of this Committee in order that their views on the initial budget proposals may be sought.

654 INITIAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2006/07 (DFICTP) -

The Committee were presented with a report for consultation on the initial capital proposals for 2006/2007.

Appendix A to the report detailed progress on the capital programme as at 31st October 2005.

It was anticipated that there would be underspends on the following 2005/06 capital schemes. It had been proposed that projected underspends be carried forward into future years and are referred to Council for approval. These changes were reflected in Appendix A and B to the report.

Schools Asset Renewal – It was anticipated that £30,000 would be required in 2006/07 to pay retentions on both the 2005/06 Asset Renewal schemes and School Building Improvement Grant (SBIG) schemes. SBIG, which was grant provided by the Welsh Assembly Government, could not be carried forward into 2006/07. The Welsh Assembly Government had advised that the grant allocation for 2006/07 would be less than the current year. There were also a few large schemes planned for 2006/07 therefore, uncommitted funds would be restricted. As part of this year's budget was currently uncommitted, it had been requested that £30,000 be carried forward into 2006/07 to cover the cost of retention payments.

Nursery Units – A total budget of £642,000 had been allocated for a 3 year period, commencing in 2005/06, for a review of nursery units. Progress had not yet been made due to the need to consider the Early Years Review in more detail. It had therefore been proposed that the 3 year programme be moved back by 1 year.

Council on 12th October 2005 gave Cabinet the authority to withdraw a budget from the capital programme if the scheme was not contractually committed within 18 months of being included in the capital programme. If this happened, a new bid would have to be submitted as part of the coming year's budget setting process to reintroduce the scheme into the capital programme. This was to commence for schemes slipped from the 2004/05 Capital Programme into 2005/06. The following schemes remained contractually

uncommitted 18 months after approval and a proposal for the way forward had been made against each scheme. The proposals had not been actioned in Appendix A and B of the report.

Nursery Facilities Vol Aided/Controlled Schools (£20k), St Brides Primary New Classroom Contribution (£10k) and Llansannor Nursery Contribution (£7k) – As previously reported via the monthly monitoring statements, the above schemes had no commitment identified against the budgets. The Dioceses had confirmed that they do not require any further contributions towards the schemes at St Brides and Llansannor. Included in the capital programme was a budget for the construction of a new wall at Llansannor School. The current budget of £15,000 would not be sufficient as there was a planning requirement for the wall to be dry-stone. It had been requested that the £37,000 from the 3 uncommitted budgets be vired to the Llansannor scheme to allow works to proceed.

Cadoxton Amalgamation – £120,000 of the Asset Renewal slippage budget had been allocated for works following amalgamation at the school. This work had not yet commenced as the cost of the proposed scheme was in excess of the available budget. The amalgamation work was a key part of the Schools Investment Strategy and it had been proposed that this year's budget be carried forward into 2006/07 and the deficit be funded from next year's Schools Asset Renewal budget.

On 2nd November 2005, the Welsh Assembly Government announced the provisional 2006/07 General Capital Funding. The provisional allocation for 2006/07 was £7,905,000, which is a £27,000 (0.3%) increase over the current year. The final settlement was expected to be announced during December 2005.

In addition to funding from the Welsh Assembly Government, the Council would finance part of the capital programme from its own resources e.g. capital receipts and reserves.

Appendix B to the report detailed the indicative 2006/07 Lifelong Learning Capital Programme.

An asset renewal budget of £800,000 had been included in Appendix B for schools. This constituted an unearmarked general provision. In addition, a specific bid had been received from the Youth Service, which had been classed as asset renewal. Due to the inclusion of a Miscellaneous Buildings asset renewal budget in Policy, this bid had been shown in Appendix C to the report as an unsuccessful bid.

In addition to the capital bids shown in Appendix B, Appendix C to the report included a capital bid received that had not been put forward for inclusion in the 2006/07 programme, as it has been classed as Asset Renewal. The Corporate Asset Management Group had prioritised schemes that fall within their remit. The method of prioritisation used was detailed in the Authority's Capital Investment Strategy and was shown in the following table.

Priority Level	Criteria
1	Health and Safety Legislation
2	Other Legislation / Statutory requirement
3	Sufficiency; Corporate Plan; Economic Sense
4	Condition; Suitability
5	Welsh Assembly Government objectives
6	Low Priority

Due to the shortage of capital funding, only priority 1 and 2 schemes had been included in the indicative capital programme for 2006/07.

A report to Cabinet dated 21st April 2004, minute number C1305 obtained approval for the purchase of land adjacent to Cowbridge Middle School. The estimated cost and timing of the purchase was not yet known and therefore had not been included in Appendix B to the report. Costs would be met from the Schools Investment Strategy Fund.

Council on 12th October 2005 approved the School Investment Strategy. It approved that the school development budget be increased by £500,000 in 2007/08 and £1,000,000 from 2008/09 onwards. These budget changes had been included in Appendix B to the report. It also approved that the £9m one off School Building Improvement Grant and £1.4m of existing useable capital receipts, be utilised for the School Investment Strategy. These budgets had not yet been included in Appendix B. Approval was also given for capital receipts generated by schools to be ringfenced for the Investment Strategy up to £6.5m and that unsupported borrowing of up to £7.3m could be undertaken. The tendering and selection process for the appointment of consultants were in hand and design for the Cowbridge redevelopment was anticipated by the Summer 2006. The programme would be amended to include the estimated cost of £14.4m for the Cowbridge scheme when further work had been carried out.

Scrutiny Committee (Lifelong Learning) were requested to consider the initial budget proposals and forward any comments to the Scrutiny Committee (Corporate Resources) and Cabinet.

RECOMMENDED - T H A T the initial budget proposals be noted.