

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 - MONDAY, 22 JANUARY 2024

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON MONDAY, 22 JANUARY 2024 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor P Davies – Chairperson

S J Bletsoe

J E Pratt

I Williams

Present Virtually

N Clarke
MJ Kearn

C Davies
W J Kendall

M J Evans
G Walter

P W Jenkins
MJ Williams

Apologies for Absence

None

Officers:

Mark Shephard
Carys Lord
Janine Nightingale
Zak Shell

Chief Executive
Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change
Corporate Director – Communities
Head of Operations – Community Services

Rachel Keepins
Lucy Beard
Stephen Griffiths

Democratic Services Manager
Scrutiny Officer
Democratic Services Officer – Committees

Cabinet Members:

Councillor Huw David
Councillor Jane Gebbie

Leader of Council
Deputy Leader of Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Health

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 - MONDAY, 22 JANUARY 2024

Councillor Hywel Williams
Councillor John Spanswick
Councillor Rhys Goode
Councillor Neelo Farr

Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Legal
Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment
Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Regeneration
Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Wellbeing

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Steven Bletsoe – Personal – Member of Bridgend Town Council
Councillor Melanie Evans – Personal – Member of Pencoed Town Council
Councillor Ian Williams – Personal – Member of Bridgend Town Council
Councillor Jonathan Pratt – Personal – Member of Porthcawl Town Council
Councillor Paul Davies – Personal – Member of Maesteg Town Council
Councillor Phillip Jenkins – Personal – Member of Maesteg Town Council
Councillor Mike Kearn – Personal – Member of Pyle Community Council
Councillor Martin Williams – Personal – Member of Coity Higher and St Brides Minor Community Council

60. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	<u>Resolved:</u> That the minutes of a meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 dated 27 November 2023, be approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	22 January 2024

61. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28

Decision Made	<u>Resolved:</u> Following consideration of the report and detailed discussion with Cabinet Members and Senior Officers the Committee made the following comments and recommendations: Welsh Government Funding
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The Committee expressed concern over the lack of funding provided by Welsh Government for new legislation introduced and the resulting impact this had on Local Authority budgets in meeting new requirements. The example used was Universal Free School Meals, and whilst not part of the Communities remit, Members highlighted that the requirement for funding for UPFSM puts pressure on the Local Authority budget and has resulting implications on all services when having to fund budget gaps in the overall Council budget. The Committee therefore supported any proposal for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to write to WG to express these concerns and request that new legislation be accompanied by suitable, sufficient funding.

1. Budget Consultation Process

The Committee discussed the overall budget consultation process, highlighting that whilst having the opportunity to present an alternative budget and proposal, as many Members who do not sit on the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny and are therefore not involved in the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel, it was very difficult for other Members to know any detail for any alternative proposals. The example of Porthcawl Marina was used, in that if the Committee had known last year that the Authority subsidised this, they might have potentially proposed this as an alternative saving to be made last year in place of something else. The Committee therefore recommended that the whole budget process needed revising and improving with the aim to work together, as 'One Council'. The Committee agreed to work with the Welsh Local Government Association on a review of Scrutiny, with particular focus on the budget consultation process.

2. Street Works

Whilst noting the comments provided in relation to the Authority's Street Works team and that costs could only be sought on permits to cover the Council's own costs, the Committee recommended that the Directorate explore what other Local Authorities were doing in this area, including Carmarthen County Council, to determine if there was any possibility at all of income generation.

3. COM 6

In relation to Bereavement Services and potential future efficiency savings, Members recommended that the Local Authority engage with Town and Community Councils to consider where they might be able to assist and take on some future responsibilities for the maintenance of cemeteries within the County Borough.

4. COM8

a Whilst acknowledging that the proposed closure of Bridgend Bus station relates to 2025-2026 budget savings, the Committee expressed strong concerns over the impact of this proposal including how it will affect the community, Bridgend town and its transport links. The Committee referred to other large bus stations in other Local Authorities where they have utilised wall space with advertising, thereby creating an income for the Authority. Given the amount of potential advertising space that is available at Bridgend Bus Station, the Committee recommended that the Authority remove COM8 as a potential efficiency saving and instead replace it with a proposal for potential commercial income generation in order to protect the bus station for the future.

b In addition to this, supporting what the Corporate Director, Communities stated about looking at the Council's assets and how they could be more energy efficient, the Committee recommend that the Directorate explore potential energy efficient initiatives that could be made on Bridgend bus station. Members suggested that solar panels, for example, could be installed on this facility which could assist in mitigating the station's associated costs.

5. COM9

In relation to the cessation of the Shopmobility scheme, the Committee recommended that the Authority consider approaching Bridgend Town Council to explore if they had any interest in taking on and maintaining the service.

6. COM10

The Committee supported the proposal to review berthing fees for Porthcawl Marina, with agreement that the Council should not be subsidising this. The Committee were of the view, and therefore recommended, that this could be considered further, if not this year, for future

years, to explore if there was any potential to increase the berthing fees for the marina as a method of income generation for the Authority.

7. COM20

- a** The Committee had numerous concerns regarding COM 20 and the proposal to remove additional street cleansing resource given the potential visual and environmental impact this could have on communities across the Borough. Members recommended that if funding is provided via Central Government for teacher pensions, £125,000 of this be utilised to continue to fund street cleansing, thereby removing COM20 from the budget reductions.
- b** In addition to this, as part of the need for transformational change within the Authority, the Committee recommend that the Council consider the potential for multi-skilled teams of staff who could cover a wider remit, such as grass-cutting and street cleaning as one example. The Committee propose that the Directorate look at what neighbouring Local Authorities are doing in this area, with the aim to provide a more effective, joined up service within Bridgend.

8. COM25

- a** In relation to the proposal to close all Community Recycling Centres by an additional day per week on the weekend, the Committee felt this was not acceptable, particularly given the fact that it had not seen the impact of the first day of closure as this has yet to come into effect. In light of the impact this could have for the public and the Authority, including the visual impact and associated costs from a potential increase in fly-tipping, the Committee recommend that this proposal be removed. Members instead propose that some of this £60,000 be found by moving forward with the proposal to commercially let the Pandy Depot, identified at COM24, bringing this into 2024-25 savings.
- b** Members also recommend that if further savings are still required, the Authority look instead to potentially reduce the opening hours for the Centres, rather than closing for an additional full day. Finally, in a worst-case scenario, should the Centres have to close for a second additional day, the Committee recommend this be another weekday, not a weekend, when the majority of the public would be looking to utilise the Centres.

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 - MONDAY, 22 JANUARY 2024

	<p>c Linked to COM25, the Committee further recommend that the Authority consider potential ways the Community Recycling Centres could work smarter, such as the introduction of appointments to reduce queues. Members commented that some Local Authorities had introduced appointments during the pandemic and had continued with this method as it had proved to be effective.</p> <p>9. COM30</p> <p>Members commented on the decision to revert back to diesel waste vehicles and agreed that this was a suitable saving given the view of Members that there was not enough evidence that Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel offered any greater fuel efficiency or air quality benefits as well as any benefits to local business. In light of the current and predicted future financial situation the Authority finds itself in, the Committee recommended that going forward no such 'green innovation' should be pursued unless it either contributes to revenue savings, offers a direct and tangible benefit to residents or enables a consequential efficiency elsewhere in the Council budget.</p> <p><u>Additional Information Requests</u></p> <p>Linked to COM3 and COM4, the Committee requested that they be provided with the statistics for fly-tipping in the County Borough for the last 3 years.</p> <p>Linked to COM13 and the considerable cut to the Climate Emergency Programme, the Committee requested detail on what external grants and funding the Authority currently received for this and where it could look for further in order to achieve its targets.</p>
Date Decision Made	22 January 2024

62. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	22 January 2024

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 - MONDAY, 22 JANUARY 2024

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To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this [link](#) for Part One, this [link](#) for Part Two, and this [link](#) for Part Three.

The meeting closed at 20:08.