

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON
THURSDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2019 AT 09:30**

Present

Councillor CA Green – Chairperson

JPD Blundell	NA Burnett	N Clarke	J Gebbie
T Giffard	M Jones	RL Penhale- Thomas	KL Rowlands
RMI Shaw	JC Spanswick	T Thomas	

Apologies for Absence

Cllr C Smith

Officers:

Sarah Daniel Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny

Invitees:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive

142. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr John Spanswick declared a prejudicial interest on page 17 of the report in relation to care at home for older people as his wife works in this service area. Cllr Spanswick withdrew from the meeting while this was discussed.

143. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting from 26 June 2019 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting

144. BUDGET MONITORING 2019-20 - QUARTER 2 REVENUE FORECAST

The Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer presented the report to Members with an update on the Councils financial position as at 30 September 2019. She explained that on the 20 February 2019, Council approved a net revenue budget of £270.809million for 2019-20.

The following concerns were raised by Members:

- Why was Home to School Transport not achieving savings?
The Corporate Director Education and Family Support and the Leader confirmed that the situation was complex and costs were rising in this area, however a list of reductions had been secured. They advised that members would receive feedback on a review of Home to School Transport early next year. The Chairperson reiterated that the Committee remained concerned about the overspend in this area

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- Clarification was sought on the further savings of £60,000 that were unlikely to be achieved in the library and cultural facilities.
The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that this was down to management fees and mobile library facilities still under consultation
- Underspend in relation to parking fees was questioned by members. There was potential for a lot of income generation and therefore we should be investing to save. Residents parking permits would increase the use of town centre car parks and keep residents happy so should be a priority. It was also raised that the payment machines in the Rhiw car park are often not working and that staff attending to fix these should be a priority as there is a high potential income lost in this area for every day it is not working.
The Leader confirmed he would consider the above point and explore if the issues with the payment machines can be addressed as a priority.
- Was the income generated from the Salt Lake Car Park being reinvested directly back into the common for Porthcawl as there was an understanding that this should be the case
The Chief Executive stated that this arrangement was not currently formalised but could be explored. He agreed he would confirm arrangements and get back to members.
- What was the delay in approval for the permitting scheme for road works?
The Chief Executive confirmed that the Authority were not allowed to progress with the scheme without WG permission and that there was a possibility of a national scheme being introduced so it would be delayed until the outcome of the national scheme is known.
- How does the staffing vacancies in the CEX Directorate affect performance?
The Chief Executive confirmed that 88% of the CEX budget was made up of staff. He added that at a time when so many cuts were being made there was a fear if a post was recruited to that in a years' time the directorate could be faced with making posts redundant and incurring costs associated with redundancy. He added that this inevitably has an effect on resilience and capacity across the Directorate.
- Concerns were raised on the underspend of the homecare budget which was primarily due to staffing vacancies and asked how this would affect a potential winter crisis
The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing advised that the Authority had just received a grant for winter pressures. She added that the Directorate do not hold vacancies long term and that replacement staff are usually in place within 2-3 months with only one member of staff not replaced during a recent restructure.
- Concern at the rise in homelessness and vacancies in this Directorate also being held. The Chief Executive stated that the Authority were not deliberately under resourcing and that staff that had left in housing over recent months would be replaced. He added that the structure was being reviewed to ensure full support was sustained in this area.
The Cabinet Member for Future Generations and Wellbeing advised that
- Members asked how the authority could support the public in understanding the pressures that the Authority are facing and raise awareness of the cuts that we are facing and understand what their priorities are.

The Chief Executive stated that the Authority does need to improve on getting the message out to the public that they will be faced with unpalatable options as the Authority has to find cuts of £35 million over the next 4 years and that we will have to change the way we work.

The Cabinet Member Social Services and early help stated that the Authority has faced a cut in the budget for the last 9/10 years and austerity has far from ended with future cuts, not savings needing to be realised.

- Poor budget management from WG has been passed on to LA's. Grant funding was not known. Members queried what we as an Authority were doing to tell WG that this was not acceptable
The Leader advised that as we were in the Purdah period WG had sought legal advice on whether they could set their budget during this time. He added that as an Authority we make this point to WG all the time that it is not acceptable and will continue to make the point to them as it has a major impact on all Local Authorities trying to set a budget.
- Members were concerned at possible grant funds that come into the authority which are often not known or guaranteed until the last minute, leaving it impossible for the Authority to properly prepare their budgets. One member stated that there is an online petition regarding grant funding so this would be debated in the Senedd shortly and WLGA will continue to lobby for us to have timely settlements from Westminster.

Following discussions members concluded the following:

- The Authority should invest to save and prioritise the resident's car parking scheme as this would keep residents satisfied and also increase the usage of town centre car parks. The Authority should also ensure that these areas are sufficiently staffed to ensure immediate response when car parking machines are not working sufficiently.
 - The Authority should prioritise areas where there are staff vacancies that are having a knock on effect to the community, especially in areas such as housing and that filling these vacancies should be prioritised.
 - Members appreciate that further cuts are needed but the Authority should prioritise income generation opportunities
 - Members asked that Homelessness Strategy be scheduled to come to Scrutiny
- Members asked for further information on the Porthcawl parking Investment agreement.

145. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - FEEDBACK FROM MEETINGS

The Scrutiny Officer presented the feedback to members from the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the 25 September on the items of Digital Transformation and Budget Monitoring Q1 Revenue Forecast.

Members thanked officers for the feedback and agreed to mark the actions as amber. The actions would then be followed up on in 6 months' time.

146. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report to Members and sought confirmation of the information required for the subsequent meetings on the 13 January 2020 and 13 February 2020

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Following discussion Members agreed to schedule the following:

24 January 2020 – MTFS

13 February 2020 – Budget Monitoring 2019/20 Q3 Forecast
Commissioning plan for Social Care in Bridgend CBC

23 March 2020 - Shared Regulatory Service

147. URGENT ITEMS

None