

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 - THURSDAY, 23 JANUARY 2020

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON
THURSDAY, 23 JANUARY 2020 AT 09:30**

Present

Councillor JC Spanswick – Chairperson

| | | | |
|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| N Clarke | P Davies | DK Edwards | DG Howells |
| DRW Lewis | JR McCarthy | RMI Shaw | RME Stirman |
| G Thomas | E Venables | DBF White | |

Apologies for Absence

LM Walters and JE Williams

Officers:

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Victoria Adams | Interim Finance Manager – Budget Management: Communities, Education and Family Support |
| Joanne Norman | Interim Group Manager - Financial Planning & Budget Management |
| Zak Shell | Head of Neighbourhood Services |
| Mark Shephard | Chief Executive |
| Tracy Watson | Scrutiny Officer |

101. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

102. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

That the Minutes of the meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3, dated 14 November 2019, be approved as a true and accurate record.

103. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020-21 TO 2023-24

The Interim Head of Finance and S151 officer submitted a report, the purpose of which was to present the Committee with the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020-21 to 2023-24, which sets out the spending priorities of the Council, key investment objectives and budget areas targeted for necessary savings. The strategy includes a financial forecast for 2020-2024 and a detailed draft revenue budget for 2020-21.

The Chief Executive explained that he would not go through the report, but that the focus today was on the MTFs, following which the Chairperson invited questions from Members in respect of the Communities Directorate.

In respect of COM26, a member asked what the impact to service users would be and whether we have any user figures over the years. The Head of Operations – Community Services informed members that there were on average, 4000 users per annum and this has been consistent over the last few years however, the popularity of the service looks to be generally declining with a greater increase in private ownership of affordable, lightweight scooters, reducing demand. The report to Cabinet on the 21 January, highlighted several recommendations but noted that officers will continue to explore the opportunity for external grant funding to support the service.

In respect of COM51, a member noted the important area of income generation used by some councils in England and asked what opportunities there were for BCBC. The Chief Executive informed Members that BCBC did this on a limited scale e.g. The

Innovation Centre, which we rent out, however this was about being prudent and identifying the right investment. He noted that if they exist we can make those investments, but we are not an authority on a huge scale. The Interim Group Manager – Financial Planning and Budget Management acknowledged the recent consultation ‘Shaping Bridgend’s Future’ pointed to the 61% of respondents that agreed that the council should consider commercial ventures to fund and protect front line services. A Member noted that some councils had implemented a landlord licencing fee at a cost of £500, and asked whether BCBC had considered this. The Chief Executive acknowledged that we do not currently do that, but happy to look into this.

A member noted that full cost recovery has been pushed back a year (COM42) but enquired how this will affect our ability to maintain these fields, etc. The Head of Operations – Community Services acknowledged that it certainly does not get any easier but despite many years of budgetary reductions, we have maintained a reasonable level of maintenance. This has been more challenging in respect of pavilions, and have deteriorated and has been discussed as part of Community Asset Transfers (CAT). There is an overspend on the parks budget because of maintenance. In terms of pitches, with current levels, we can maintain them at a satisfactory level. The Cabinet Member for Communities recognised that full cost recovery should be deferred as CATs were going ahead this year with clubs or town and community councils having expressed an interest in each of the sports facilities potentially impacted. There will be a reduction on the authority to maintain those in future.

A member asked if clubs are put in the CAT process, who is going to maintain the field if you haven’t handed it over. The Chief Executive explained that the commitment Cabinet had made was that if the delay were not through any fault of their own, then the increased charges would not apply. We will continue to maintain those fields until the CAT is completed, through the better settlement.

A member noted that the CAT process was still slow and asked if additional resources were in place to support the CAT Officer. The Chief Executive confirmed that the CAT Officer had put in a business case to increase resources. A member noted the resources being put into the CAT but enquired what was being done at the back end. The Cabinet Member for Communities explained that Cabinet had made a commitment that we will resource this. We will look at where the resource needs to be targeted in a more confident way. The Head of Operations – Community Services noted the recruitment of a paralegal to deal with leases, but noted the pinch point in property.

A member asked if Legal send out model leases. The Chief Executive acknowledged the need to simplify the process and explained that there was a move to a standard process with leases largely going down a standard route, although there would be exceptions.

A member asked for an update in respect of Newbridge Fields. The Cabinet Member for Communities explained that discussions are at an advanced stage with Clubs and Bridgend Town Council, but that Newbridge Fields was complicated due to the number of clubs, straddling a range of sports, that use the ground. A member raised concern about pitch maintenance during the Summer if clubs close down in May and then open in August for training. The Cabinet Member for Communities acknowledged that this was not just an issue for Newbridge Fields, but also Maesteg. He noted that not all clubs close down, but recognised that this issue was part of the ongoing discussions.

A member asked whether condition surveys had been completed on sports surfaces and noted the importance of having a full picture for future monitoring of assets. The Head of Operations – Community Services explained that compliance monitoring e.g. asbestos, fixed wiring testing had been ongoing for some time. In terms of condition surveys, we

have done as needed to as nearing the CAT process, but now doing general commission surveys. The most recent aspect is putting funds aside to look at pitch conditions e.g. drainage issues. Those signed over can be inspected periodically and serve notice if deteriorating. If something slipping, under the lease we can do the work ourselves and charge them.

The Head of Operations – Community Services confirmed that in respect of COM55, 56 & 59 this was last year's saving approved over 2 years and all three were already implemented and in place. A member noted the potential knock on effect on fly tipping in respect of COM55 – 59. In respect of COM64 this had been moved back a year and depended on future settlements. The Head of Operations – Community Services confirmed that the Authority was starting to look ahead to the current waste contract, with a report to Scrutiny in the future.

In respect of COM70, members discussed at length the issue surrounding the organisation of the Elvis Festival. The Head of Operations – Community Services confirmed that he attends the Bridgend Events Safety Advisory Group (ESAG), along with licencing and the police. There is a frustration with the Elvis Festival. Most other events pay towards the event e.g. 10k event well controlled and invested in. In terms of the Elvis Festival, you have many activities that are taking place in licenced premises, so legally there is not necessarily a licence to grant. The police have confirmed they will police this year's event, but at a significant cost to them. The Cabinet Member for Communities acknowledged that there was a certain amount of frustration with this event. If we had a different organising body or attitude from organiser we would not be having this conversation.

In terms of COM71 the Head of Operations – Community Services confirmed that both the footfall cameras in Bridgend and Porthcawl, were only for this purpose and contributed towards the performance indicator in respect of visitors to town centres.

A member noted the small cut in respect of COM77, but asked what impact this could have on incidences of flooding, if gully and culvert maintenance not carried out. The member asked for clarification that there is only one gully sucker. The Head of Operations - Community Services confirmed that there is only one gully sucker. He acknowledged that the service areas had been cut over the years, from winter gritting rounds to gully suckers, in every area, less than we have previous. In the grand scheme of things, we will take on that cost reduction with as little impact as possible whilst recognising that every single cut reduces our responsiveness. It is a minor squeeze in terms of the overall budget. The Chief Executive acknowledged the growth element of £2m of the realm fund and explained the trick was to understand the priorities and the best way to spend this. The Interim Group Manager – Financial Planning and Budget Management confirmed that this was being put in the base budget for Communities.

A member raised concern about the chip and spray process, in respect of COM89. The Head of Operations - Community Services explained that chip and spray ensured the longevity of the highway. The process starts with patching and pothole filling, but then gets to a state where it will need chip and spray. He acknowledged, however if this has already been done, this would need to be resurfaced. He explained that through scanned surveys of roads a profile of what roads need to be repaired would be put together.

Members discussed the 2020-21 budget pressures, on pages 43 and 44 on the report.

The Head of Operations – Community Services noted that in respect of COM1 there is a certain liability associated with Japanese knot weed, particularly where it could affect another property. There may be a need for a further request for funding.

The Head of Operations – Community Services confirmed that in respect of COM2, this was purely to do with the licensing software.

In respect of COM6, the Chief Executive recognised that this needed greater explanation. With ongoing regeneration projects with regard to the new LDP, we need to take with some pace or lose funding but need greater resource to take these projects forward. This will benefit the whole County Borough, but only made possible by the better settlement.

The Head of Operations – Community Services confirmed that in respect of COM7, this had been the choice of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and will take affect from April 2020. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) was unrelated.

In respect of COM10, the Chief Executive acknowledged that the Communities Directorate had been disproportionately cut and that the backlog of work in highways was approximately £59m. He acknowledged the need to come up with a programme of work as quickly as possible but recognised that resources had been reduced. The Cabinet Member for Communities acknowledged that this programme was not going to reduce all these ills and that Cabinet Members will have ideas on the priorities, but looking for ideas from members, the ones that will be priorities and would align with cabinet expectations.

Recommendations

Members welcomed the investment in Communities as part of the improved settlement. In relation to the budget pressures COM10, Members asked that the £2m realm fund, prioritise gully and culvert maintenance in particular.

In relation to COM42a Members, recommend that condition surveys should be completed on all assets to ensure the condition of the asset is known before being handed over. Members also asked for confirmation on how these assets will be monitored and what strategy is in place if an asset is seen to be deteriorating.

104. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Chief Officer – Legal, HR & Regulatory Services submitted a report, that:

- a) Presented the items prioritised by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, including the next item delegated to Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3;
- b) Asked the Committee to identify (if any) further items for consideration using the pre-determined criteria form.

Attached at Appendix A to the report was the overall FWP for the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees, which included topics prioritised by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the next set of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees in Table A, as well as topics that were deemed important for future prioritisation at Table B.

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Forward Work Programme and informed the Committee that the meeting scheduled for the 27 January 2020, was cancelled due to the budget meeting today. In respect of the next round of committee

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meetings, the committee will consider the item on Working Towards Plastic Free Bridgend, at its meeting in March.

Members agreed that the meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 scheduled for the 27 April 2020, will consider the item on the Ford Engine Plant/Ineos.

Lastly, members were reminded that if they have any items they wish to put forward to scrutiny for consideration, to complete the criteria form and send to scrutiny officers for further scoping out.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

105. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 11.49.