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Bridgend County Borough Council



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Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate

Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 / 643147 / 643694

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Democratic Services

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: Friday, 1 October 2021

Dear Councillor,

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held remotely - via Microsoft Teams on **Thursday, 7 October 2021 at 09:30**.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
To receive apologies for absence from Members.
2. Declarations of Interest
To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest (if any) from Members/Officers in accordance with the provisions of the Members Code of Conduct adopted by Council from 1 September 2008 (including whipping declarations)
3. Approval of Minutes 3 - 10
To receive for approval the minutes of 05/07/2021
4. Future Service Delivery Model 11 - 22

Invitees

Mark Shephard - Chief Executive
Councillor Hywel Williams - Deputy Leader
Kelly Watson - Chief Officer Legal, HR & Regulatory Services
Debra Beeke - Group Manager - Human Resources and Organisational Development
Lisa Jones - Regeneration Funding and Regional Engagement Team Leader

5. Update on the work of the Shared Regulatory Service 23 - 28

Invitees

Dave Holland - Head of Shared Regulatory Services
Councillor Dhanisha Patel - Cabinet Member for Future Generations and Wellbeing
Kelly Watson - Chief Officer Legal, HR & Regulatory Services

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6. Forward Work Programme Update

29 - 44

7. Urgent Items

To consider any item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Part 4 (paragraph 4) of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should by reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Note: Please note: Due to the current requirement for social distancing this meeting will not be held at its usual location. This will be a virtual meeting and Members and Officers will be attending remotely. The meeting will be recorded for subsequent transmission via the Council's internet site which will be available as soon as practicable after the meeting. If you have any queries regarding this, please contact cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk or tel. 01656 643147 / 643148.

Yours faithfully

K Watson

Chief Officer, Legal, HR & Regulatory Services

Councillors:

JPD Blundell
J Gebbie
DG Howells
M Jones

Councillors

RL Penhale-Thomas
KL Rowlands
RMI Shaw
JC Spanswick

Councillors

T Thomas
MC Voisey
A Williams
AJ Williams

Agenda Item 3

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - MONDAY, 5 JULY 2021

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 5 JULY 2021 AT 09:30

Present

Councillor KL Rowlands – Chairperson

JPD Blundell
T Thomas

J Gebbie
AJ Williams

RL Penhale-Thomas

JC Spanswick

Apologies for Absence

DG Howells, M Jones, RMI Shaw and A Williams

Officers:

Deborah Exton	Interim Deputy Head of Finance
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Meryl Lawrence	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Janine Nightingale	Corporate Director - Communities
Tracy Watson	Scrutiny Officer

Invitees:

Councillor Nicole Burnett	Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help
Councillor Huw David	Leader
Councillor Dhanisha Patel	Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations
Councillor Charles Smith	Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration
Councillor Hywel Williams	Deputy Leader
Councillor Stuart Baldwin	Cabinet Member Communities

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

25. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee dated 1 February and 14 April 2021 be approved as a true and accurate record.

26. REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2020-21

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change explained that, as requested, she would not go through all the details in the report as Councillors had been given the opportunity to hear the report previously, but commented, for the record, that Members would see a summary of the financial position and drew attention to the narrative which demonstrated that it was an incredibly unique position, this year. As explained previously at Cabinet and Council, the money from the Welsh Government (WG) hardship fund in the first instance, the money from the significant grants that were received in the last quarter, at least £9m in terms of one-off grants that were for specific purposes and the subsidy on Council Tax collection, were the reasons why the year end position looked so different from what had been expected and the position reported to COSC in quarter 3 that had been expected.

The second point, which had been made at Cabinet and Council, was that the overall position remained quite difficult going forward. There were incredible pressures, the Country was still not out of the pandemic and the Directorate Budgets in the main still had an underlying deficit position. The schools' position, in particular was masked by nearly £9m of one-off grants, whereas actually what had been forecast was the majority of schools being in deficit.

It was that uncertainty of the pressures of the future and as Members would have seen in the press, a number of Directors of Finance having to issue Section 114 Notices where their local authorities were actually in danger of going bankrupt, in around 35 Councils. A tale of two halves was being seen, of a unique significant surplus but the underlying position could be quite perilous.

Members of the Committee asked the following:

A Member referred to the Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change mention of the grants and hardship funds that had been received in the last few months and the forecast at COSC Q3, which had been a quite different position, and asked if the budgets were foreseeable. The current outturn budget masked the real position, but Bridgend was one of 22 Local Authorities in Wales and how many local authorities in England and Scotland were in the same boat.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change clarified that she felt that the picture was not real, as it stood. It was a true picture in terms of accounting and recording the entries and gave a position, in terms of the earmarked reserves and what those were for, but it did not give the real picture. Just two items could make up £2m in deficit, most of the schools were close to running into deficit positions and some of them were in deficit. It was unique in terms of timing, but it was not unique across Wales. Each of the 22 Welsh local authorities were in a similar position in terms of grants and the hardship fund, but were not all in the same position in terms of their balance sheets and their strengths of reserves. Audit Wales were completing a second piece of work on financial sustainability, which said that despite the underlying deficit position, the Council still had a fairly strong level of reserves, which is where the Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change wanted to be going into a very uncertain future in terms of the pressures being faced. She was heartened by this as she was constantly looking at other councils that were facing very difficult positions, a lot of which had entered into large commercial enterprises and some getting into difficulties.

A Member referred to the two particularly volatile budgets, referenced in the report, namely Adult Social Care and Home to School Transport, and the decision by the WG to review the statutory distances for Learner Transport and the Cabinet decision held pending the review outcome. She sought reassurance that Officers were still working on the policy and asked if Members could be updated on what was happening, so that when the WG Review was completed, action could be taken to ensure this pressure was alleviated.

The Corporate Director - Education and Family Support provided assurance that with the overspend position being dealt with, Home to School Transport was a significant matter within the Directorate and this was being worked on continuously. The outcome of the WG review was awaited, but procurement was being examined to make sure it was being delivered as effectively and efficiently as possible. The Corporate Director - Education and Family Support agreed to provide an update of this ongoing work.

Clarification was sought whether the 35 councils that had declared as close to bankruptcy referred to by the Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change, included any of the 22 Welsh local authorities.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change explained that she could not say if any of the 22 were, although she noted that Merthyr Tydfil County Borough had a very public letter about their financial position prior to Covid-19 and there were a number of councils that were struggling with underlying deficit position that were greater than this Council. The 35 she had referred to, was a Local Government Association (LGA) research piece. The same piece of work had not been done in Wales, although through the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Section 151 Officer Group, a piece of work was being collated on pressures and that position, so there would probably be some further information. From her own contacts, some were facing quite difficult decisions although none of the 22 local authorities had issued a 114-section notice in Wales.

A Member enquired whether the WLGA research would be shared with Members.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change explained that the WLGA survey that was being done, was more for the WLGA to have a position to lobby the WG in terms of the pressures, as a coordinated response. What the Local Authority would receive was a piece of work from Audit Wales on financial sustainability, that was due, late summer, and that would be expected to be delivered to the Audit Committee, who took a very keen interest in this area as well.

A Member asked in respect of 4.1.11 the £882k disallowed, if examples of what that included could be provided. She reiterated that she had raised the issue of Home to School Transport since she had been elected and highlighted the need for a one council approach. The Council was still paying for Home to School Transport, for children that wouldn't be needed if safe routes were provided and asked why this wasn't being done, particularly with an overspend, and should be looked at as a priority. The Member also questioned that the Council was no longer accepting children on buses who would pay, because the Council had deemed them to have a safe walking route.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change confirmed that the majority of disallowed expenditure was for ICT. WG deemed ICT to have a longer shelf life than just the immediate pressure, which was entirely reasonable, so the Council had received 50% of that expenditure back. There were some small amounts disallowed, which had been claimed on administration and things like that. In addition, the Council had chosen to extend the parking offer, which was deemed a local decision, so the loss of income on that was disallowed. There was quite an element of consistency; there was a panel that scrutinised both the costs and the loss of income and the Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change felt comfortable that the disallowed amounts were consistent with others.

The Corporate Director - Education and Family Support explained that he couldn't comment on individual cases but what he could say was that there were some safe routes to school identified and they would make use of those where possible. He agreed that the Council did need to make sure that these were looked at and explored across the whole County Borough. One of the challenges of paying cases was as a result of Covid-19, with the need to manage places on school buses very carefully. He suggested that if there were individual cases, these could be sent through to the team to look at.

The Member confirmed that she had put in a Member referral with regard to the one case. She highlighted the issue at Coity and gave an example of children that got on a bus in Coity, that could see the school from their houses, but there was no safe route because of the lack of footpath. The council had been paying for the bus since the school opened in 2015 and yet if a small section of footpath was put in place, there wouldn't be the need to pay for the bus.

The Chair asked as part of ongoing communication with what the Officers were doing on the Home to School policy, whether the Corporate Director could make sure that this could be considered further.

The Corporate Director - Education and Family Support confirmed he was happy to consider.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the update on the Council's revenue financial performance for the year ended 31st March 2021.

27. **PERFORMANCE AGAINST WELLBEING OBJECTIVES FOR 2020-21**

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change introduced the report upon Performance against the Wellbeing Objectives for 2020-21. She noted that some Members as Chairs of Scrutiny, would have attended the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) Q4 and presented a brief overview of the report which was a reflection of the year against the Corporate Plan Objectives, which were revised for 2020-21 because of the pandemic and the affect that had on delivery of services and agreed at Council in September 2020. The revised plan defined the 32 corporate commitments to deliver against the 3 wellbeing objectives and set out 46 outcome focussed indicators to measure the progress for the year. The usual process was followed with Directorate business plans, with all the indicators that fed into that corporate plan. Appendices A to D outlined each of the Directorates end of year dashboard and COSC had a key role in monitoring and scrutinising progress of the delivery of those wellbeing objectives.

The year-end data showed that 12 of the 32 commitments were completed, with the other 20 achieving most of their milestones, noting that this was a unique year, with some services not able to be delivered, some partly delivered, and there was a need to bring in new services to assist with the residents living through difficult times. Of the 440 indicators collected as part of the corporate planning process, there were 89 that had targets where the data had been submitted, which was a reflection of the very difficult year. The Council was not able to collect data for all the indicators. Of the 89 indicators with targets over half were on target, 10 were off target by less than 10% and 32 missed their target by more than 10%. There were 51 indicators with either no target or no data available at the year-end, which was detailed in part A of the annex. There were 79 indicators that had trend data, of which 46 showed an improvement or maximum performance with 10 not being able to be improved any further. One indicator was the same as last year, and 32 worse than the previous year.

Members of the Committee asked the following:

The Chairperson advised she had been asked as Chair to make an opening statement about how the report was set out, that some of the information wasn't clear, there was confusion with the indicators going up and down, and some of the data set out.

A Member raised that Members had been asking for an executive summary because of the amount of data in the reports. She acknowledged the recent response, which advised that the Corporate Report Template would not be reviewed until next year, but Members had been requesting executive summaries for each scrutiny report for over 2 years.

A Member advised that this issue had been picked up by the Chairs at the CPA meeting with data hard to understand in some cases. He was trying to see it from a point of view of a person who was not on the Council and looked at the data and asked whether the

Council were doing well or not from the targets, and it was not very clear for people to understand on certain topics. He noted that there were some that were fine, but some were over complicated, and there was a need to be more succinct.

The Cabinet Member – Communities explained that as a new Cabinet Member at his first CPA he had raised the same issues. He raised that fact that if someone from the public was looking at these documents, would they understand the way they were being presented. It could be confusing unless people were in the industry of understanding performance, which a lot were not. It has been brought to Officers attention at the recent CPA meeting, and hopefully there would be an improvement in these.

The Chairperson suggested a meeting of the three Chairs should take place to open up discussion on how to simplify the reports for scrutiny of performance, including what wasn't understood, what was understood and how the information should be simplified.

A Member asked whether elected members should be having DSE assessments for working from home similarly to Staff.

The Chief Officer Legal, HR & Regulatory Services confirmed that the e-learning DSE was available to all staff and Members. In addition the Council was working with the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) to determine if there were issues that needed to be addressed, whether they fell within the parameters of what could be provided under the IRPW, or whether the Council did it under anything else. If any individual Members had concerns they could contact the Chief Officer Legal, HR & Regulatory Services and in the meantime, Members could access the e-learning to undertake the DSE assessment.

The Member suggested that an email be sent to Members of the Council advising them of the E-learning DSE they could access.

The Chief Officer Legal, HR & Regulatory Services advised that the information had been included in a Bridgend's message that had been circulated to all Members, but confirmed that a specific message would be sent to Members.

A Member asked whether as staff completed the DSE with the view of working at home for a limited period at the beginning of the pandemic, had staff been re-assessed, as whilst it might have been appropriate for them to work at home on their dining room table for 3 months, they may not now have the capacity to do more agile working.

The Chief Officer Legal, HR & Regulatory Services explained that the DSE was an ongoing process, so staff and Members should be updating it as they felt appropriate. There were staff surveys and also Managers were instructed that whenever they were doing 1 to 1's with their members of staff, they reminded them that if there were changes to their circumstances, they should re-complete the DSE. The offer for the equipment was an ongoing offer, so whenever they needed that equipment it could be made available.

The Member advised she was somewhat reassured and appreciated that staff needed to take some responsibility in completing their DSE. She asked what was happening with those staff that didn't meet the tax threshold, so they were able to claim the working from home allowance, and asked what was being done to support those Members of staff.

The Chief Officer Legal, HR & Regulatory Services advised that there was ongoing work with the WLGA around the tax threshold and working from home allowances.

It was suggested in relation to the welfare of elected Members, that it would be helpful to do a sample survey of calendars, to have a look at the frequency and length of meetings, to consider some protocol on how meetings, gaps with meetings and comfort breaks within meetings were looked at.

The Chief Officer Legal, HR & Regulatory Services confirmed that the calendar of meetings was set by Council and this was the starting point for any other meetings to be put in. Unfortunately, there were occasions when there would be more than one meeting on one day. This was sometimes to do with statutory requirements as to when the meeting needed to be held or for licencing issues, for example, these had to be when applications came through the door. Where possible Members having more than one meeting was avoided, but unfortunately in the circumstances sometimes this was unavoidable.

The Chair asked when there would be a move back to the Chamber for face-to-face meetings.

The Chief Officer Legal, HR & Regulatory Services confirmed that this was being worked on at the moment. At the last assessment, it was calculated that the Chamber could only hold 12 individuals, which would be the Officers that were needed and allocation of certain seats to Members. The Democratic Services Team were virtually visiting the Vale of Glamorgan Council, as they had a hybrid system in place. There was a need to make sure that the Teams technology could link in to the technology in the Chamber, because if they didn't work together there could be a lot of echo and feedback, which would make the meeting quite difficult to run. It was hoped that some hybrid meetings could be held in the Autumn.

The Chair referred to the increase in stress related sickness since April and requested that COSC Members receive monthly updates to monitor the levels.

The Chief Officer Legal, HR & Regulatory Services confirmed that the information would be provided from HR to scrutiny to circulate to Member of the Committee to monitor.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the year-end Council Performance and the revised Corporate Plan targets for inclusion as an addendum to the Corporate Plan 2018-23 revised 2021-22.

28. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny advised that Members would recall that following on from consideration of the work programme for the Committee at the last meeting on the 9th June, the FWP for this committee was attached as appendix A and the FWP for Subject Overview & Scrutiny Committees, 1, 2 and 3, were attached as appendices, B, C & D for co-ordination and oversight of the overall FWP. The Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees FWP's would continue to be included in the report to COSC with any updates from each round of SOSC meetings included.

She also advised that attached as Appendix E was the recommendations monitoring action sheet, which tracked the responses to the Committees' recommendations from the previous meeting, and referred to the responses emailed to Members of the Committee on the 29th June and 2nd July 2021.

Recommendations:

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - MONDAY, 5 JULY 2021

Having considered the Forward Work Programme, the Committee made the following recommendations:

1. That Ethical Procurement be added to the Forward Work Programme.

There were no requests to include specific information in the item for the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee considered and approved its Forward Work Programme in Appendix A, subject to the above, noted the Forward Work Programmes for the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees following consideration in their respective June Committee Meetings in Appendix B, C & D, and noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet to track responses to the Committee's recommendations made at the previous meetings in Appendix E.

29. **URGENT ITEMS**

None

The meeting closed at 11:00

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 OCTOBER 2021

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

FUTURE SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the Council's work to date and plans for its future service delivery model as it recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has presented the biggest challenge to local public services in a generation and has led to rapid and significant changes to the way in which the Council and its partners deliver services. Since March 2020, the Council's focus has been to preserve life, minimise the spread of the virus and support all our communities.

- 3.2 The Council's staff have demonstrated their willingness, flexibility, commitment and dedication to deliver front line services to the county borough's communities. For some staff it meant adapting to new ways of working from home. To enable this there has been a significant investment and roll out of additional ICT and DSE equipment to staff, with ICT issuing over 700 laptops within the first few weeks of the pandemic, and a shift towards the delivery of many services in a different and more remote way, with an emphasis on enhanced digital availability. A significant investment was also made in core ICT infrastructure to support these changes and provide a reliable home working service. Successful claims of £468,152 were made to the Welsh Government Covid-19 Hardship Fund to initially establish home working arrangements. However the terms and conditions of the fund indicated that as the assets in place should provide longer term benefits to local authorities, then the balance of required investment of £458,497 was directly funded by the Council.

- 3.3 In the main the delivery of services has been maintained very successfully with the Council responding very effectively to both the additional challenges of delivering new Covid related services, such as track and trace and helping to implement the hugely

successful vaccination programme, while also ensuring that, where significantly increased demand for its services has emerged, resourcing has been prioritised to those services. However, the unprecedented nature of the challenges the Council has faced has also raised risks and issues which have been identified in the Council's corporate risk assessment. These include the risks to delivering transformational change and agreed financial savings, the recovery and restoration of services while ensuring a Covid-safe environment for the public and staff, and workforce issues relating to attracting, developing and retaining staff with the necessary skills to meet the demands placed upon the Council and its services.

- 3.4 A mission critical challenge for the Council now as we accelerate through the recovery phase from the pandemic is how we most effectively plan for and embrace what has worked well over the past 18 months, while also continuing to address some of the issues and concerns that have arisen around staff wellbeing, team development and access to some services. It is clear that an opportunity exists to develop and implement a new operating model for the delivery of many of the Council's services which will ensure that the Council is 'fit for purpose' moving forward, with a focus on being as agile and customer focussed as possible.
- 3.5 The Council is a diverse and disparate organisation delivering up to 800 different services and employing over 6,000 staff in total. Many staff have continued throughout the pandemic to work as normally as possible, and for many depot based, school based and some social services staff, for example, the future service delivery model may not change in the same way as for other predominantly office based staff based on the nature of staff roles.
- 3.6 In addition to the work on the Council's operating model and accommodation strategy it should be noted that the Council continues to focus on many other parts of 'recovery' from the Covid-19 pandemic including implementing the recommendations from the elected member Cross Party Recovery Panel. The response to these recommendations and also other ongoing work to promote recovery has been positive, with action plans implemented in areas such as economic recovery and the response to homelessness.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 The pandemic has created an opportunity to transform the way in which the Council operates, building on and implementing the lessons and experiences emerging from the pandemic which has seen far more of the Council's services delivered remotely and virtually, and the public embracing new ways of doing business with us. Clearly we must also be minded to ensure that none of the County Borough's residents are excluded by any new ways of working and that, in particular, our services continue to be targeted effectively at those who are most in need and most vulnerable.

Project Board

- 4.2 A project board has been established, chaired by the Chief Executive, to drive forward this work with a view to creating a new agile blended model of working. The blended model of working will capitalise on the acceleration of digital transformation during the Covid-19 pandemic and seek to increase the efficiency of services.

- 4.3 The Board is working to develop the Council's new service delivery model by spring 2022 and has developed a corporate set of strategic principles that will help guide the effective development and implementation of the future service delivery work programme. These have been shared initially with staff groups and the trade unions with a view to setting the parameters and managing expectations for work moving forward. It is recognised that any new delivery model should be informed by a clear view of what service delivery will look like going forward and so it will be important to recognise the differences within each directorate or service area and what is essential for effective service delivery.

Strategic Principles

- 4.4 The strategic principles include the following:-

- **OPPORTUNITY** - That the Council takes advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity to effect change to the ways in which the organisation works, whilst recognising the challenges this will bring.
- **ALIGNMENT WITH WELSH GOVERNMENT (WG)** - That the model will be developed to achieve, as a minimum, the Welsh Government goal of 30% of our workforce being agile and working from home, at any given point, by 2024.
- **SERVICE DELIVERY LED** - That the Council's proposed model should be directed by its ability to deliver effective services across the County Borough, demonstrating benefit to the Council and its customers.
- **CUSTOMER CENTRIC & IT ENABLED** - That the model should maintain a customer centric approach and explore the potential to further enhance the delivery of digital services. The model must be IT enabled.
- **CIVIC OFFICES AS THE MAIN CIVIC & OPERATIONAL BASE** - The model will work on the assumption that the Civic Office will be retained as the main administrative and democratic base for the Council for the foreseeable future which will also ensure a visible and tangible Council presence in the town centre, but that in due course a rationalisation of other office buildings may be possible.
- **BLENDED MODELS OF WORKING** - The model will recognise the wide range of services delivered by the Council. That some employees may need to work full time from service delivery locations. For others a hybrid agile model of office and remote working would be suitable. This must be service led whilst also taking account of employee wellbeing. In particular new ways of working will encourage where appropriate, less travel, allow more people with caring responsibilities or other circumstances that make it more difficult for them to attend in work all of the time to have greater flexibility in their work practices, and promote better work life balance.
- **COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT** - That clear communication with staff and trade unions will be critical. Engagement should be taken forward on a set of pre-determined principles and within an agreed set of parameters that can then be reviewed following feedback.

- PROJECT TIMESCALES - That a realistic timeline for the project with agreed milestones must be developed. At this stage, and while government advice remains that if you can work effectively from home you should do so, it is envisaged that an interim phase of a managed, gradual and cautious return to the office will be in place between now and next spring with a long term sustainable plan agreed and in place in readiness to be implemented after that.

Potential Benefits

4.5 There are a number of potential benefits that could be derived from a revised future service delivery model, including close alignment with agreed national and corporate objectives. It is recognised that these will have to be managed and monitored carefully moving forward.

- Contribution to the discharge of the Council's duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and in particular an involvement for staff and their representatives in designing a new operating model and an enhanced work life balance for many staff.
- Alignment with Welsh Government's target for 30% of workers to be working from home by 2024. To be clear, Welsh Government advice remains at this time that if you can work effectively at home you should do so.
- Positive contribution to the net carbon 2030 agenda by reducing the need to travel to work.
- Contribution to the well-being of staff and a positive work life balance. It is noteworthy that in the recently completed staff survey the vast majority of staff welcomed and supported a more flexible and agile working model, based on blended working that included some home /remote working but with access to the offices and/or meeting rooms as necessary.
- Contribution to the Council's digitalisation strategy with goal of enabling a Digital Council by 2024. The Council's budget consultation exercise last year showed significant support from the public to move in this direction.
- Add value to, and enhance, the existing remote working model by enabling face to face, office based working.
- Contribution to attendance - build on the positive reduction in sickness absence during 2020/2021, although long term trend analysis is not yet available.
- Positive impact on retention and recruitment within some key service areas. This is particularly pertinent at a time when the Council is having difficulty recruiting and retaining staff in some key service areas, for example social care. It is clear that the labour market has changed post Brexit and post Covid-19 pandemic, with greater competition and staff shortages at some grades of work, and a change from many major employers, including most local authorities, to more flexible ways of working for certain roles, which means that if this Council does not similarly adopt more flexible practices it would potentially be disadvantaged compared to its neighbours. It is also anticipated that a blended model of working will be advantageous with regard to the Council meeting it's equality duty, and in

particular beneficial to people with some disabilities and those with caring responsibilities.

- Possible financial savings from the smarter use of resources including a medium term aim of further rationalising the Council's office portfolio and /or sharing space with other public sector organisations. It is also possible that in due course surplus office space could be made available for alternative use by the private sector, providing financial benefits to the Council and helping to sustain long term footfall in Bridgend town centre.

Challenges

4.6 This innovative work programme will also bring with it a series of significant challenges. It will be important to understand these fully and ensure that the arrangements fit a corporate purpose, in addition to ensuring that each Directorate can deliver services effectively. Those identified include the following:

- There will be a need to manage expectations throughout the organisation and identify adequate resources and training requirements to deliver the cultural change and management required. Crucially it is not possible for all staff, depending on their roles, to work in exactly the same way moving forward.
- Work will need to be undertaken in two phases. An interim phase likely to be from now at least until the spring of 2022, prior to a co-ordinated and managed move to the new model of working. This timeframe is necessary to allow all legal, employment and HR matters to be resolved.
- Work will be dynamic and evolve with the organisation. So reviews of the efficacy of the working arrangements will be necessary. This will include how the Directorates will manage the flexibility offered by a hybrid model.
- There is potential for extremes of staff opinion – focus has to be on the effective delivery of each service area.
- There will be a need for corporate agreement on interim working arrangements.
- The work must recognise the potential impact on the town centre economy from the reduction in staff working on a full time basis in the town centre offices and continue to work closely with traders to maximise footfall and spend.
- Recognition that there could be difficulty in re-locating some services if there were issues with the long term viability of their current accommodation as space in the remaining facilities may be at a premium.

Board Working Arrangements

4.7 A schedule of monthly meetings is in place to enable the Board to review progress, consider ongoing resource requirements and to ensure appropriate communication and engagement with all relevant stakeholders is undertaken. On 14th September 2021 Cabinet received and endorsed a report setting out work to date, the forward direction of travel and delegated authority to the Chief Executive to develop options

for the longer term operating model of the Council. A further report will be presented to Cabinet for approval in due course.

To support and inform its work, the Board has established a number of workstreams.

4.8 Interim workstream

At present, the Council is operating within the interim phase of these plans. An accommodation group, has been established to consider business case applications from service areas to return to the office. The business case must clearly set out how a return will benefit service delivery and a risk assessment of the health and safety considerations of that return. A pilot scheme, that enables the Council to support the well-being of individual officers who, because of their circumstances, may prefer to return to work in an office base, has also been implemented within Ravens Court. Managers are able to book one of six desks for their staff in advance for up to 12 weeks at a time. This can be for as little as a single day to a few days each week. So far there have been 6 staff that have benefited from this arrangement with a total of 90 days booked between them so far.

Within this interim phase, a Remote Working Questionnaire was issued to all Group Managers (in addition to Heads of Service and managers where requested) across the Authority by Internal Audit. The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify any changes made to control or governance arrangements as a result of the increase in remote working due to Covid-19. The responses were analysed to gain assurances that key controls are operating effectively and to detect any areas of weakness or risk. The report to the Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change in July 2021 concluded that the effectiveness of the internal control environment was reasonable and no specific recommendations were made.

4.9 Communication and Engagement workstream

Communication with all stakeholders is critical to the Board's work and a forward communication and engagement plan is under development. A series of actions to update employees, Cabinet and wider stakeholders of the corporate strategic principles underlying this work have already been carried out, including the use of staff briefings with the Leader and Chief Executive Officer back in May. Engagement with the trade unions will continue throughout the interim phase and build on an initial discussion with the Chief Executive and HR officers. The Chief Executive also updated all elected members on progress in his announcement to full Council in the September meeting. Further updates will be provided in due course, particularly with regard to the potential for hybrid member meetings which it is anticipated will be piloted over the next few months in smaller meetings.

Regular reminders, via Bridgenders, are also sent to all employees and members on how to access support during the interim phase.

4.10 Staff Engagement

As part of the interim phase, a survey was developed with the Heads of Service and sent to Group Managers and some Principal Officers, to help inform our understanding of how the remote delivery model has impacted service delivery and what, if any, changes could be made to further enhance future service delivery. Unsurprisingly, given the diverse nature of the Council, responses reflected the particular requirements of each service area. A hybrid model or remote model was welcomed by those service areas with office based staff whilst for other more front

facing services, many have already moved back to their service delivery locations or are in the process of working through the relevant health and safety protocols to support that move. The need to ensure effective service delivery that meets the needs of the Council's customers was highlighted by all.

- 4.11 Some of the benefits have already been referenced above but managers highlighted increased efficiencies through having a more flexible and agile service and the move away from an over reliance on face-to-face meetings and paper processes. Having an adequately resourced ICT enabled service was seen as critical and managers were keen to explore further digital solutions for delivery, providing further momentum to drive forward the Council's aim of becoming a Digital Council by 2024, including options for the future management of member meetings. The long term goal, provided that suitable IT solutions can be found to allow it, (voting processes etc) would be for elected members to have the choice of whether they attend Council meetings in person or remotely. The well-being of staff was consistently raised as a concern within responses, along with the need to ensure that ICT enabled meeting spaces are made available to support team cohesion, future planning, training and induction. Managers put forward various options to support a new office model, including a dynamic booking system and the identification of designated service areas with Civic; these will be worked through by the Board. Multi-agency working was also flagged as an area that will need consideration within the development of any new hybrid model along with the continued engagement of delivery partners and stakeholders.
- 4.12 There is a need to continue to engage and consult appropriately with staff and trade unions, as proposals are developed. Opportunities were taken during the recent staff survey, launched in June 2021, alongside a range of questions (on: culture; line management; corporate communications; knowledge and skills; health and safety and employee wellbeing) to seek views on homeworking.
- 4.13 The survey was made available to 3,166 staff (non-schools) and overall 33% (1,046) of staff responded, with 52% of staff stating that they were working from home for all of their work and a further 18% said they were working from home but only for part of their work. Some of the headline figures are as follows:

84% of staff agree or strongly agree that they can work productively in their remote environment
80% of staff agree or strongly agree that they have what they need to effectively work remotely
90% of staff agree or strongly agree that feel it is important to keep social contact with colleagues
77% of staff agree or strongly agree that they are able to take a break from their screen
85% of staff stated that communication/contact with the line manager while working from home had been about right
81% of staff felt that they did have an appropriate level of support from their manager while working from home
50% of staff said they occasionally encountered any internet/network connection problems whilst working at home that have affected their ability to work effectively

- 4.14 Within this section of the survey there was an open ended question enabling staff to comment on anything further about working from home. Over 200 comments were made, with the most common themes being 'I find working from home more effective' (76), 'I have had lots of WCCIS issues (Social Services software system) working from home' (36) and 'I would prefer a blended option working from home / office in the future '(24). It should be noted that the WCCIS issues are linked to national system performance issues that have affected all users, not just those working from home.
- 4.15 Whilst this demonstrates a desire by staff in the main to continue some homeworking, there were also a variety of issues and concerns made throughout the survey where respondents took the opportunity to comment on issues linked to home working and these will be fully analysed and contribute to the developments and proposals for consideration.

4.16 HR Workstream

Staff are able to access a wide range of guidance and information to support them through the interim period and this has now all been brought together in the Portal for Covid-19 and Recovery. The portal contains updated FAQs on coronavirus and any changes introduced as restrictions continue to ease. It also includes updates on HR matters, practical homeworking advice and the wide range of resources to support employee wellbeing.

HR officers have supported the development of the interim office working arrangements, which have been subject to discussion with trade union colleagues. These discussions will continue and the outcomes of the staff survey are planned for discussion ahead of this committee meeting. These will be an important part of the development of proposals to implement new working arrangements for the Council.

Over the next month the Board will discuss a forward action plan that will include the consideration of hybrid working models. Engagement and consultation of such proposals will need to feature in the action plan.

4.17 Digitalisation Workstream

To date the Council has made significant ICT investment in its core infrastructure, ensuring the delivery of a reliable home working service and in providing staff with over 700 additional laptops and DSE equipment. The workstream's focus will include the on-going review of the current interim arrangements and the development of an ICT enabled new service model. It will also consider any other further investment required to make both permanent home working and less frequent office working, for example better video link equipment in meeting rooms, more effective. Any investment will be subject to business case approval in the first instance.

4.18 Property Workstream

This workstream will be informed by the detail of the hybrid models being considered by the Board. The workstream will explore a number of options including the potential for dynamic desk booking, individual desk and larger team spaces, alongside office areas that could potentially offer up designated service space. Consideration will need to be given to how the property and digitalisation workstreams enable the effective integration of office and remote working. Furthermore, in due course this workstream will also need to consider the potential for shared spaces, particularly

with other public sector organisations, and also for local service access, perhaps in local libraries for example.

- 4.19 In conclusion, an opportunity exists to develop a long-term operating model for the Council which embraces many of the benefits that have emerged from the way the Council has had to operate over the last 18 months during the pandemic, while also addressing some of the concerns that staff and the public have expressed regarding well-being issues, opportunities to meet in person where appropriate, and further enhancement of digital services to modernise services while also ensuring that no-one is excluded. This programme of work represents one of the most significant operational challenges this Council has faced since its formation in 1996 as such it will need to be resourced properly, communicated effectively and implemented skilfully to ensure its success.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 There is no immediate effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules. This will be kept under review as policies are developed and any policy change will be approved through the appropriate governance arrangements.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report. Any policy changes, including any new HR policies, will be subject to EIAs in the normal manner.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report and some of the proposals will support some of the well-being goals. As proposals are developed and introduced the implications will be considered in detail.

- **Long Term:** the report identifies that a clear opportunity exists to develop and implement a new operating model for the delivery of many of the Council's services which will ensure that the Council is 'fit for purpose' moving forward, with a focus on being as agile and customer focussed as possible. The new model will also seek to make a positive contribution to the net carbon 2030 agenda, for example by reducing travel to work.
- **Prevention:** well-being has been, and will continue to be, a priority focus for this work programme. Some examples of this focus are the development of the Staff Portal for Covid-19 and Recovery outlined above in 4.16 and the introduction of the desk booking system in Ravenscourt detailed in 4.8.

- **Integration:** any policy changes resulting from this work programme, including any new HR policies, will be subject to EIAs in the normal manner. Engagement to date has sought to understand the impact of changes on staff and service users and the report confirms that the future model will be directed by the Council's ability to deliver effective services across the County Borough, demonstrating benefit to the Council and its customers.
- **Collaboration:** communication and engagement have been identified as critical workstreams. The Council will continue to engage with staff, members, residents and delivery partners as proposals are developed.
- **Involvement:** priority will continue to be given to the needs of the Council's services users in the development of a new operating model and opportunities to effectively consult will be included in the forward communication and engagement plans.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1. There are no immediate financial implications of this report but inevitably these could emerge as the detail becomes clearer.
- 8.2. As the future service delivery model is developed, all options will be subject to the development of business cases that will set out potential costs, savings, timescales and risk. A new hybrid model will likely offer up savings on mileage, office resources (printing/stationery etc.) and building costs, contributing to the Council's decarbonisation agenda. These will need to be fully explored and considered against potential increases in ICT and office re-configuration costs, required to enable an effective and sustainable hybrid model.
- 8.3. Any costs associated with the on-going delivery of the interim phase will also need to be considered. To date the Council has made significant ICT investment in its core infrastructure, ensuring the delivery of a reliable home working service and in providing staff with over 700 additional laptops and DSE equipment. If the model is to continue, significant further investment will be required to maintain and enhance these arrangements.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 The Committee is requested to:
 - i. Note the information contained within this report and the progress that has been made with regard to a new operating model for the Council.

Mark Shephard
Chief Executive
 7th October 2021

Contact officer: Lisa Jones
Team Leader Regeneration Funding and Regional
Engagement

Telephone: (01656) 815081

Email: lisa.jones@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address: Civic Office
Angel Street
Bridgend
CF31 4WB

Background documents:

Cross party recovery panel recommendations and report to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 June 2021.

Chief Executive's report to Cabinet 14 September 2021 on Future Service Delivery Model

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 OCTOBER 2021

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF SHARED REGULATORY SERVICES

UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE SHARED REGULATORY SERVICE

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the work undertaken by the Shared Regulatory Service (SRS) during the coronavirus outbreak and the continued service pressures faced as we recover from Covid 19.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.

3. Background

- 3.1 In April 2015, Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC), Cardiff Council and the Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council signed a Joint Working Agreement (JWA) for the provision of regulatory services across the three Council areas. The document created the Shared Regulatory Service (SRS) and the SRS Joint Committee.
- 3.2 The Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations and the Chair of the Licensing Committees are the two Bridgend County Borough Council representatives on the SRS Joint Committee following appointment by the Council. Management of key operational performance for Shared Regulatory Services in BCBC is the Chief Officer - Legal, HR and Regulatory Services. The Client lead works closely with Finance, Legal and other Service Areas to ensure that the delivery of services is to the required level and, where required, improvements are implemented.
- 3.3 Members will be aware of the significant role played by the SRS during the pandemic delivering an array of essential Covid related actions on the ground. This paper summarises this work, and points to a number of risks in the regulatory landscape going forward.

4. Current situation/proposal

SRS operational delivery March 2020 – September 2021

- 4.1 When the UK was put into lockdown on 23rd March 2020, the government put into place an unprecedented set of controls to limit the spread of the virus; we were advised that we faced a pandemic, a word that has become familiar to many people. For clarity, the World Health Organization defines a pandemic as ‘the worldwide spread of a new disease.’
- 4.2 Coronaviruses are not new, but this strain had a devastating impact on society, spreading quickly around the world and infected large numbers of people. All pandemics will be slightly different in how they spread across the world, but all have the potential to have a significant impact on all parts of society. The following paragraphs provide a SRS perspective on the impact of the virus in the region.
- 4.3 As a consequence of the new public health controls, many businesses had to close; people were required to work from home where possible, and social interaction was curtailed. It became the responsibility of SRS to enforce the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations. One of the immediate demands of this legislation was ensuring that a wide range of businesses falling into the non-essential category across the SRS region closed, and remained closed. Since March 2020, those Regulations have changed many times and applying those controls has been a challenge both for the SRS and the businesses affected by them. Narrating our activities across 2020/21 would take many hours and many pages of text. At the Committee members will receive a short presentation on those activities. For the purpose of this report, some of the notable events that members might recall include:
- In April 2020, only “essential” businesses such as food stores were able to remain open. There was an onus upon maintaining social distancing between customers and staff both within the premises and while queueing outside prior to entry. Long queues became a familiar sight. During this time, SRS became aware of incidents of ‘price gouging’ or profiteering whereby the price of essential commodities fluctuated depending on demand, this being at a time when supply chain issues coupled with panic buying left some shelves bare in retail outlets.
 - The suspension of economic activity saw people experiencing difficulty in obtaining refunds for bookings cancelled as a result of the pandemic and lockdown restrictions. Scammers and rogue traders began to exploit the “opportunities” presented by the pandemic. Complaints included, driveway cleaning services marketed as preventing the spread of the virus, the door to door sale of ‘COVID testing kits’, texts sent to residents notifying them that they had been seen outdoors and as a result they must pay a fixed penalty notice charge. These complaints became too common.
 - The early days of lockdown saw huge demands being placed on supply chains for items essential to the pandemic response such as hand sanitisers, masks and gloves. This saw many alcohol producers switch to the manufacture of hand sanitiser, while at the same time, suppliers sourced

hand sanitiser from across the UK and beyond, often outside of their normal areas of expertise. In this maelstrom, it was inevitable that substandard product would reach the marketplace. SRS impounded over 15,000 litres of hand gel and many thousands of face masks.

- At the start of the lockdown, hotels were not allowed to open their doors to guests in the traditional sense. However, at the request of, or with the permission of the local authority, they could accommodate key workers, so that they could be located closer to their place of work. SRS facilitated this process to ensure that this exemption was not abused and was only used for bona fide circumstances.

4.4 Just as SRS was at the forefront of the initial business closure work, it played a crucial role in supporting businesses as they reopened to the public. SRS provided tailored guidance to a number of shopping centres and sporting venues to assist the management with the necessary risk assessments.

4.5 In the Summer of 2020, society began to relax, people went on holiday and began to see loved ones again. However, the virus hadn't gone away and new variants began to emerge. A firebreak was introduced in October 2020 and the wider economy went on hold again. In December 2020, the supply of alcohol in hospitality premises was prohibited and early closure times imposed. Later that month, the Welsh Government indicated that a second lockdown would be introduced after Christmas 2020. This meant a return to the closure of non-essential retail premises, tighter restrictions on household mixing, and restrictions on travel. However, the rapid growth in the number of infections and hospital admissions saw the Welsh Government implement lockdown earlier and introduce a status of Alert Level 4 from December 20th 2020.

4.6 This period saw the creation of the SRS Joint Enforcement Teams (JET) with South Wales Police. The teams played a huge role in ensuring the goals set out in the national plan were achieved through:

- Investigating quarantine and self-isolation referrals from contact tracers; this work has gained greater import with the arrival in the UK of the different variants of coronavirus.
- Monitoring gatherings at different visitor locations, beaches, country parks, etc.
- Disrupting illegal house parties and the issuing of fixed penalty notices to those in attendance.
- Restricting the opening of non-essential businesses and issuing compliance notices where rules are ignored.

4.7 Perhaps the biggest commitment made by SRS during lockdown was its participation in the Test, Trace and Protect scheme (TTP). Senior officers have been at the heart of the TTP initiative from the outset. SRS officers have been involved in the tracing of people who have tested positive for coronavirus. Linking with health professionals to identify trends and incidents and restrict the spread of the disease allowed SRS to monitor and address upsurges in case numbers effectively and promptly. Notable areas of work relate to care homes, schools and colleges, where SRS officers have been integral in reducing infection rates and saving lives.

- 4.8 Through the first part of 2021, the Welsh Government reviewed the Health Protection controls at regular intervals cautiously making small changes to try once again to relax the health protection measures and allow a return to a more “normal” way of life. That return is now backed by the vaccination programme.
- 4.9 In May 2021, the Welsh Government began to relax some of the Coronavirus restrictions that had been in place since Christmas 2020. Wales moved from Alert level 4 to Alert level 2 in a phased approach to reopening the economy and allowing more social interaction between households. This gradual lifting of restrictions reflected the fact that the virus was still in general circulation, but the vaccine programme was beginning to have an impact. There was a clear reduction in the number of people becoming severely unwell and the infection rate generally was beginning to fall. However, all this was being done at a time when the impact of the new Delta strain of the virus was uncertain.
- 4.10 In May 2021, international travel resumed for *essential purposes* under a traffic light system. People returning from countries classified as red or amber needed to follow isolation and testing rules. Unfortunately the guidance outlining what constituted an *essential purpose* was not particularly robust and many people travelled to amber and red list countries, particularly India. This brought additional work for the Test, Trace and Protect service (TTP) and the SRS/Police JET teams who were tasked with ensuring that returning travellers followed the isolation requirements. Many did, but a small number did not and South Wales saw an early introduction of the Delta variant.
- 4.11 In June 2021, the Welsh Government announced a phased move to Alert level 1. The phased approach was a recognition that despite increased transmission due to the rapid spread of the Delta variant, this strain did not generate the more severe symptoms associated with the earlier variants. Consequently, Alert level 1 allowed more people to meet outdoors, more events took place, more retail outlets opened and due to the vaccine rollout a relaxation of the controls on socialising indoors.
- 4.12 The Welsh Government has now, at the time of writing this report, moved to Alert level 0. This now allows any number of people to meet indoors, including in private homes, public places or at events. All businesses and premises can open, with face coverings remaining a legal requirement indoors in commercial premises, with the exception of hospitality premises. Welsh Government continue to advise that people should still work from home wherever possible. Fully vaccinated adults, under 18s and vaccine trial participants will not need to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone with coronavirus. The isolation of school bubbles is no longer required and SRS officers are working closely with Head Teachers and other Council colleagues to allow schools to function effectively and avoid the disruption faced in 2020/21.
- 4.13 The preceding paragraphs are a snapshot of the coronavirus related work undertaken by the service in the last 18 months. The commitment of officers has been immense and continues to be an important aspect of curbing the spread of the virus. The Head of shared regulatory services will make a short presentation to members at Committee and respond to questions as needed.

Longer term challenges

- 4.14 In order to prioritise Covid work, SRS has diverted a significant resource away from their business as usual activity. Urgent and immediate risks have been attended to, such as E-coli outbreaks, however, more routine statutory work, and lower risk activities have needed to be put on hold. Consequently, there is a backlog of public health protection work which has built up, and remains uncompleted. SRS is already seeing examples of noncompliance and slipping standards, for example increased breaches of food allergen labelling, and a drop in “performance” in trading practices.
- 4.15 The increased ask of Regulatory Services across Wales has been relentless and continuous for the duration of the pandemic. Whilst the additional finance for temporary Covid enforcement staff, provided by WG is welcome, once the additional funding ends, so the volume of additional activities will also end. The skill and knowledge of the recruited temporary staff will also leave the services.
- 4.16 As we move from response to recovery, there is more opportunity to assess the risks associated with the displacement of Public Protection work over the last eighteen months. It is anticipated that the call for some sort of continued covid response by public protection will remain for the foreseeable future. At present we do not know the direction of the Test Trace and Protect service (TTP), what business advice and enforcement will be required, the resource commitment to protect vulnerable settings and how returning travellers will be contacted. A return to “business as usual” is unlikely for some months yet and the wider service pressures and backlogs of work will continue to mount up.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 There is no impact upon the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The SRS delivers the Council's regulatory function as regards environmental health, trading standards and licensing which contribute to the national Well-being Goals through the delivery of the well-being objectives contained in the SRS Business Plan. The SRS operates in accordance with the five ways of working which are also reflected in the content of the plan. There is a strong emphasis on collaboration as the SRS recognises the need to work with partners to deliver services and improve local well-being.

8. Financial implications

8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that Committee note the activities of Shared Regulatory Services in protecting the local community.

Dave Holland
Head of Shared Regulatory Services
23 September 2021

Contact officer: Dave Holland
Head of Shared Regulatory Services

Telephone: 07973 436863

Email: dholland@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Postal Address: Civic Offices, Angel St, Bridgend CF31 4WB

Background documents:

SRS Business Plan 2021/22

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 OCTOBER 2021

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER - LEGAL, HR & REGULATORY SERVICES

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Present the Committee with the Forward Work Programme (**Appendix A**) for this Committee for consideration and approval;
- b) Request any specific information the Committee identifies to be included in the items for the next two meetings, including invitees they wish to attend;
- c) Request the Committee to identify any further items for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 4.3;
- d) Present the Forward Work Programmes for the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees attached as **Appendices B, C and D** following consideration in their respective June Committee meetings;
- e) Present the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet (**Appendix E**) to track responses to the Committee's recommendations made at the previous meetings.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.

- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council’s well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council’s Constitution requires the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to develop and implement a Forward Work Programme for the Committee.
- 3.2 The Council’s Constitution also provides for each Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee to propose items for the Forward Work Programme having regard for the Council’s Corporate Priorities and Risk Management framework, for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to then prioritise and schedule.

Best Practice / Guidance

- 3.3 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny’s Good Scrutiny Guide recognises the importance of the forward work programme. In order to ‘lead and own the process’, it states that Councillors should have ownership of their Committee’s work programme, and be involved in developing, monitoring and evaluating it. The Good Scrutiny Guide also states that, in order to make an impact, the scrutiny workload should be coordinated and integrated into corporate processes, to ensure that it contributes to the delivery of corporate objectives, and that work can be undertaken in a timely and well-planned manner.
- 3.4 Forward Work Programmes need to be manageable to maximize the effective use of the limited time and resources of Scrutiny Committees. It is not possible to include every topic proposed. Successful Scrutiny is about looking at the right topic in the right way and Members need to be selective, while also being able to demonstrate clear arguments for including or excluding topics.
- 3.5 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) guide to work effective work programming ‘A Cunning Plan?’ makes the following reference to the importance of good work programming:

‘Effective work programming is the bedrock of an effective scrutiny function. Done well it can help lay the foundations for targeted, incisive and timely work on issues of local importance, where scrutiny can add value. Done badly, scrutiny can end up wasting time and resources on issues where the impact of any work done is likely to be minimal.’

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Draft Forward Work Programme

- 3.6 Following the approval of the schedule of Scrutiny Committee meeting dates at the Annual Meeting of Council on 19th May 2021, the scheduling of standing statutory reports to Scrutiny Committees upon: the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Performance, the Corporate Plan, Budget Monitoring, etc. were mapped to the appropriate meeting dates into a draft Forward Work Programme.

- 3.7 The draft Forward work programme for this Committee was prepared using a number of difference sources, including:
- Corporate Risk Assessment;
 - Directorate Business Plans;
 - Previous Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme report topics / Minutes;
 - Committee / Member proposed topics;
 - Policy Framework;
 - Cabinet Work Programme;
 - Discussions with Corporate Directors;
 - Performance Team regarding the timing of performance information.
- 3.8 There are items where there is a statutory duty for Policy Framework documents to be considered by Scrutiny, e.g. the MTFs including draft budget proposals scheduled for consideration in December 2021, following which the Committee will coordinate the conclusions and recommendations from each of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees in a report on the overall strategic overview of Cabinet's draft Budget proposals to the meeting of Cabinet in February 2022.
- 3.9 An effective FWP identifies the issues that the Committee wishes to focus on during the year and provide a clear plan. However, at each meeting the Committee will have an opportunity to review this as the Forward Work Programme Update will be a standing item on the Agenda, detailing which items are scheduled for future meetings and be requested to clarify any information to be included in reports and the list of invitees. The FWP will remain flexible and will be revisited at each COSC meeting with updates from each SOSC FWP and any updated information gathered from FWP meetings with Corporate Directors.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 The Committee approved its Forward Work Programme at its meeting on 9th June 2021.
- 4.2 The Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programmes are also being reported to the Committee for coordination and oversight of the overall FWP, following consideration by their respective Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The SOSC FWP's will be included in the standing FWP Update report as updated by each SOSC meeting..

Identification of Further Items

- 4.3 The Committee are reminded of the Criteria Form which Members can use to propose further items for the FWP which the Committee can then consider for prioritisation at a future meeting. The Criteria Form emphasises the need to consider issues such as impact, risk, performance, budget and community perception when identifying topics for investigation and to ensure a strategic responsibility for Scrutiny and that its work benefits the Authority. There are a number of questions and processes that can help the Committee come to a decision on whether to include a referred topic, some of which are set out below:

Recommended Criteria for Selecting Scrutiny Topics:

PUBLIC INTEREST:	The concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen for scrutiny;
ABILITY TO CHANGE:	Priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence, and which will result in a Cabinet decision being taken;
PERFORMANCE:	Priority should be given to the areas in which the Council, and other agencies, are not performing well;
EXTENT:	Priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or large parts of the County Borough;
REPLICATION:	Work programmes must take account of what else is happening in the areas being considered to avoid duplication or wasted effort.

Reasons to Reject Scrutiny Topics:

- The issue is already being addressed / being examined elsewhere and change is imminent.
- The topic would be better addressed elsewhere (and can be referred there).
- Scrutiny involvement would have limited / no impact upon outcomes.
- The topic may be sub-judice or prejudicial to the Council's interest.
- The topic is too broad to make a review realistic.
- New legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected within the next year.
- The topic area is currently subject to inspection or has recently undergone substantial change.

Corporate Parenting

- 4.4 Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the responsibility of a Local Authority towards looked after children and young people. This is a legal responsibility given to local authorities by the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. The role of the Corporate Parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. The Council as a whole is the 'corporate parent', therefore all Members have a level of responsibility for the children and young people looked after by Bridgend.
- 4.5 In this role, it is suggested that Members consider how each item they consider affects children in care and care leavers, and in what way can the Committee assist in these areas.
- 4.6 Scrutiny Champions can greatly support the Committee in this by advising them of the ongoing work of the Cabinet-Committee and particularly any decisions or changes which they should be aware of as Corporate Parents.
- 4.7 The Forward Work Programme for COSC is attached as **Appendix A** for the Committee's consideration.

- 4.8 The Forward Work Programme for the SOSC 1, 2 and 3 are attached as **Appendices B, C and D**, for coordination and oversight of the overall Forward Work Programme.
- 4.9 The Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet for the previous meetings is attached as **Appendix E**, to track responses to the Committee's recommendations at the previous meetings.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 The work of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees relates to the review and development of plans, policy or strategy that form part of the Council's Policy Framework and consideration of plans, policy or strategy relating to the power to promote or improve economic, social or environmental wellbeing in the County Borough of Bridgend.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The Act provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with 5 ways of working to guide how public services should work to deliver for people. The following is a summary to show how the 5 ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been used to formulate the recommendations within this report:

- Long-term - The approval of this report will assist in the planning of Scrutiny business in both the short-term and in the long-term on its policies, budget and service delivery.
- Prevention - The early preparation of the Forward Work Programme allows for the advance planning of Scrutiny business where Members are provided an opportunity to influence and improve decisions before they are made by Cabinet.
- Integration - The report supports all the wellbeing objectives.
- Collaboration - Consultation on the content of the Forward Work Programme has taken place with the Corporate Management Board, Heads of Service, Elected Members and members of the public.
- Involvement - Advanced publication of the Forward Work Programme ensures that the public and stakeholders can view topics that will be discussed in Committee meetings and are provided with the opportunity to engage.

8. Financial implications

8.1 There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.

9. Recommendations

9.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Consider and approve the Forward Work Programme for the Committee attached as **Appendix A**;
- b) Identify any specific information the Committee wishes to be included in the report for the next two Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings, including invitees they wish to attend.
- c) Identify any further items for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 4.3;
- d) Note the Forward Work Programmes for the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees attached as **Appendices B, C and D**, following consideration in their respective June Committee meetings;
- e) Note the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet to track responses to the Committee's recommendations made at the previous meetings as **Appendix E**.

Kelly Watson

CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL, HR & REGULATORY SERVICES

1 October 2021

Contact officer: Meryl Lawrence
Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny

Telephone: (01656) 643515

Email: scrutiny@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal address: Bridgend County Borough Council,
Civic Offices,
Angel Street,
Bridgend
CF31 4WB

Background documents: None.

**Forward Work Programme 2021-22
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

APPENDIX A

Date of Meeting:	Report Topics:
Mon 5 th July 9.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revenue Budget Outturn 2020-21 - Council's Performance against its Wellbeing Objectives for 2020 -21 (Year End Performance)
Wed 1 st September 9.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budget Monitoring 2021-22 – Quarter 1 Revenue Forecast - Director of Social Services Annual report - Scrutiny Annual Report - BREP Review Report
Thurs 7 th October 9.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Future Service Delivery Model - Update on the work of the Shared Regulatory Service
Wed 1 st December 9.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budget Monitoring 2021-22 – Quarter 2 Revenue Forecast - Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-23 to 2025-26 and Budget Proposals - Q2 Performance Report 2021-22 (or Jan 22) - Annual Safeguarding Report (or Jan 22) - Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) (or Jan 22)
Wed 12 th January 9.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate Plan 2018-2023 reviewed for 2022-23 - Capital Strategy 2022-23 onwards - Replacement Local Development Plan - Scrutiny Recommendations on Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-23 to 2025-26 and Draft Budget Consultation Process
Wed 2 nd March 9.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budget Monitoring 2021-22 – Quarter 3 Revenue Forecast - Employee Wellbeing
Date TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethical Procurement

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**Forward Work Programme
Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1:**

APPENDIX B

<u>Date of Meeting:</u>	<u>Report Topics:</u>
Mon 14 th June 9.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate Parenting Champion Nomination report; - Nomination to the Public Service Board Scrutiny Panel report; - Draft Outline Forward Work Programme
Mon 12 th July 2.30pm	Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (ALNET) Act 2018
Thurs 16 th Sep 9.30am	How Central South Consortium supports Bridgend Schools.
Mon 18 th Oct 2.30pm	New Curriculum for Wales
	School Governing Bodies
Wed 8 th Dec 9.30am	Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals
Mon 17 th Jan 2:30pm	How Schools coped with the Pandemic
	Youth Justice Service
Mon 14 th Mar 9.30am	Post Inspection Action Plan

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<u>Date of Meeting:</u>	<u>Report Topics:</u>
Thurs 17 th June 9.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Domiciliary Care Inspection Report; - Corporate Parenting Champion Nomination report; - Nomination to the Public Service Board Scrutiny Panel report; - Draft Outline Forward Work Programme.
Thurs 15 th July 9.30am	Social Services and Wellbeing Strategic Programme <i>(followed by Thematic reports one to each meeting via a rolling programme as below)</i>
Thurs 23 rd Sep 9.30am	First Theme – Wellbeing * (including Partnerships****) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early help and Permanence Strategy - Re-commissioning Regulated Care and Support at Home
Wed 10 th Nov 9.30am	Second Theme – People - voice and control** (including Partnerships****) Workforce including Stress related sickness – would like to include in this the SSWB workforce programme priorities of retention and recruitment, workforce planning (including reviews of skill mix) and career pathways and training and development Embedding strength based practice in adult and children’s services
Mon 13 th Dec 9.30am	Medium Term Financial Strategy & Budget Proposals
Wed 2 nd Feb 9.30am	Third theme – Prevention *** (including Partnerships****) Progress in delivering priorities for wellbeing, leisure and cultural services in Bridgend.
	Mental Health Strategy

An explanation of the themes in the Forward Work Programme is provided overleaf.

The following Briefing Session is requested:

Financial Assessments for all social care packages be arranged for Members of the Committee, to include what happens when the person does not have capacity and Health Board funded care and nursing care funding.

NB. The Annual Safeguarding Report and Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (WAWDASV) report has been included in the Forward Work Programme for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Dec/Jan.

Explanation of the Four Themes:

The four themes included in the draft Forward Work Programme above are the key principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, which also form the foundation of Care Inspectorate Wales' inspection and performance review activity, and are set out below for Members' information:

* **Well-being** - To what extent are local authorities promoting well-being, ensuring people maintain their safety and achieve positive outcomes that matter to them? Including timely step down of children from local authority care, supporting older people to return home from hospital.

****People - voice and control** - How well are local authorities ensuring people, carers and practitioners are having their voices heard, making informed choices, and maintaining control over their lives? How is this balanced with the recommendations and requirements made by Public Health Wales and Welsh Government? Can the local authority demonstrate learning is used to inform new ways of working?

*****Prevention** - To what extent are local authorities successful in promoting prevention and reducing need for increased or formal support from statutory agencies? Including taking all necessary steps to support the upbringing of the child by the child's family and supporting people with mental health issues before they reach crisis.

******Partnerships** - To what extent are local authorities able to assure themselves the step change in opportunities for partnership working are positively exploited to maximise person-centred planning, ensure integrated service delivery and service sustainability. Opportunities include recent learning from digital advances, partnership working and ability of the health and social care system to advance at scale and pace and work towards a Healthier Wales.

<u>Date of Meeting:</u>	<u>Report Topics:</u>
Mon 28 th June 9.30am	Corporate Parenting Champion Nomination Nomination to the Public Service Board Scrutiny Panel Draft Outline Forward Work Programme
Mon 19 th July 9.30am	Progress of the Bridgend 2030 Decarbonisation Strategy (Ultra Low Emission Vehicles) Update on the Waste Service Contract 2024
Wed 4 th Oct 9.30am	The Bridgend County Economic Futures Framework
Wed 24 th Nov 9.30am	Infrastructure Delivery (including roads, street lights, building and technology)
Thursday 16 th Dec 9.30am	Medium Term Financial Strategy & Budget Proposals
Wed 16 th Feb 9.30am	Transport Projects in the County Borough
Date TBC	Changes in External Economic Funding - Economic Development
Date TBC	The introduction of the WG Pavement Parking Enforcement (following the surveying of streets and collation of information for potential Traffic Parking Orders, but before implementation)

The following reports have been included in the COSC Forward Work Programme:

12th Jan 22 – Replacement Local Development Plan

The following Member Development Sessions are proposed:

Process for prioritising maintenance of highways, footpaths, street lights, buildings, technology, plus Active Travel) **(October)**

Corporate Joint Committees Transport, Planning and Economic Development
(Autumn)

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Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDATIONS MONITORING ACTION SHEET

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome
21 April 2021	Sickness Absence related to Stress, Anxiety, Depression and Mental Health	The Committee concluded by making a number of recommendations and requests for Information.	Scrutiny	ACTIONED – response and information circulated to Committee Members 29 June 2021
9 June 2021	Forward Work Programme	The Committee concluded by making a number of recommendations.	Scrutiny	ACTIONED – response and information circulated to Committee Members 2 July 2021
5 July 2021	Forward Work Programme	The Committee requested Ethical Procurement to be added to the Forward Work Programme.	Scrutiny	ACTIONED – added to the FWP with date to be confirmed.

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome
1 September 2021	Budget Monitoring 2021-22- Quarter 1 Revenue Forecast	The Committee requested: 1. A breakdown of the Covid recovery fund be circulated to members. 2. A full list and breakdown of CAT transfers including those that it was hoped would be achieved.	Scrutiny / Interim Chief Officer Finance Performance and Change Scrutiny /Corporate Director - Communities	To be provided. To be provided.