

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - MONDAY, 24 JULY 2023

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET,
BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON MONDAY, 24 JULY 2023 AT 10:00**

Present

Councillor A Williams – Chairperson

H T Bennett	F D Bletsoe	RM Granville	S J Griffiths
M L Hughes	G Walter	AJ Williams	

Apologies for Absence

P Davies, M Jones, RL Penhale-Thomas and T Thomas

Officers:

Lucy Beard	Scrutiny Officer
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Manager
Meryl Lawrence	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Jessica Mclellan	Scrutiny Officer
Janine Nightingale	Corporate Director - Communities
Kate Pask	Corporate Improvement Officer - Performance
Alex Rawlin	Corporate Policy & Public Affairs Manager
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Heidi Bennett declared a personal interest in item 6, Corporate Self-Assessment 2022-23 as the organisation she works for is mentioned in relation to prevention and wellbeing work and a prejudicial interest in item 8, as a member of the Public Services Board.

71. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee dated 31 January 2023 be approved as a true and accurate record.

72. BUDGET MONITORING 2023-24 - QUARTER 1 REVENUE FORECAST

The Chief Officer, Finance, Performance and Change presented the report, the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with an update on the Council's revenue financial position as at 30th June 2023.

The Chair thanked the Chief Officer, Finance, Performance and Change and Members discussed the following:

Council wide

- The anticipated accuracy of financial projections and the challenges of unprecedented levels of inflation.

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- The prospect of scenario modelling for council tax collection and interest rates and alternative and challenging approaches to proposed budget reductions.
- The possibility of a recruitment freeze, management of budgets at a Directorate and Corporate level and evaluation of Services.
- The prospect of benchmarking against the experience of other Welsh local authorities.
- The review and use of earmarked reserves.

Social Services and Wellbeing

- In relation to children's social care, an update regarding independent residential care and the exponential increase in quantum and complexity of demand.
- In relation to adult social care, the impact of greater complexity of cases and the importance of preventative and reablement services.

Communities

- An update regarding the consultation regarding charging Blue Badge holders for parking and the implementation of the 20 mile per hour speed limit.
- Clarification regarding the timescale for the public consultation regarding the proposed closure of each of the Community Recycling Centre sites for one weekday per week.
- The impact of proposed budget reductions on other areas of the Service.

Education and Family Support

- Budget management of schools projecting deficit budgets and those currently projecting a surplus.
- The anticipated impact of the new Heronsbridge School and the capacity review of Ysgol Bryn Castell on the out of county learner support budget.
- The impact of the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 on the ability to provide paid places on school buses.
- Eligibility for the Authority's generous home to school transport offer, the delay in the publishing of the Guidance from Welsh Government and the challenge of increased fuel and provider costs.
- The overspend in catering, the volatility in costs relating to the provision of Universal Primary Free School Meals and which costs are covered by Welsh Government.

Chief Executive

- Whether the current underspend would be ringfenced for housing and homelessness and the anticipated increase in demand.

RESOLVED: Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee made the following Recommendations:

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1. That consideration be given to partnership working with local farmers to source fruit and vegetables for school catering potentially at a lower cost.

and the Committee requested:

2. A graph demonstrating the exponential increase in the demand being experienced in children's social care over a 3-year period.
3. Copies of the case studies demonstrating the complexity being experienced in adult social care.
4. Whilst recognising that it was too early in the year to provide a realistic projection of council tax income for this financial year, the Committee requested whether a best case, worst case and predicted case scenario model could be provided to give an indication of the likely income from the collection of council tax.

The Committee acknowledged that one of the most significant budget reduction proposals unlikely to be achieved in full in the Communities Directorate was charging Blue Badge Holders for parking (COM 2), due to the traffic management team currently being engaged in the introduction of the national speed limit in built up areas. The Committee requested that a message be circulated among Members advising of the timescale for the necessary consultation regarding the Blue Badge Scheme.

73. QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE 2022-23

The Corporate Performance Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with an overview of the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan objectives in Quarter 4 of 2022- 23, the final year-end outturn position.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Performance Manager and Members discussed the following:

- Greater challenge for significantly or consistently missed targets, action plans and ensuring consistency of reporting.
- The possibility of ranking/colour coding within Red, Amber, Green (RAG) status'.

Sickness absence

- Stress related sickness absence, support for staff wellbeing and a holistic approach to people returning to work.
- The trend and mitigating factors regarding sickness absence attributed to musculoskeletal disorders.

Social Services and Wellbeing

- The trend and management of the number of children on the Child Protection Register.
- The cost of agency staff compared to equivalent full-time employees.
- An update on the Basic Income Pilot and the number of care leavers in education or employment.
- Placement sufficiency and use of unregistered placements.

Chief Executive

- The Homelessness Strategy and the sufficiency of planning for anticipated increased demand.
- Empty properties, enforcement actions and support available for bringing properties back into use.
- The prospect of reopening the reuse shop at Maesteg Community Recycling Centre.
- The Council's recent ICT outage, the robustness of the Council's infrastructure and business continuity plans, cyber security and the significant risk posed by a possible cyber attack.

Communities

- The process for Community Asset Transfers and roles of Community Councils.
- The number of business start-ups that have benefitted from support.

Education and Family Support

- Accuracy of data and the proportionality and fairness of claw backs for sickness absence based on pupil numbers rather than staff numbers.

RESOLVED: Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee requested:

5. A breakdown, by Directorate, of:
 - a. the cost of agency staff; and
 - b. the cost differential between an agency worker and an equivalent full-time Member of staff.
6. With regard to the support provided to start-up business', a breakdown of the number which have benefitted from advice, start-up grants or other support.
7. Concerns were expressed regarding the clawbacks for sickness absence in schools being based on pupil numbers rather than staff numbers and heard that the Schools Budget Forum (SBF) had asked that consideration be given to it being weighted differently. The Committee therefore requested an update when Education and Family Support Officers and Finance Officers had discussed the matter and prior to the next SBF.

Details of the options being considered to enable the reuse shop at Maesteg Community Recycling Centre to reopen.

74. CORPORATE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2022-23

The Corporate Policy and Public Affairs Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with an update on the Council's second corporate self-assessment report and judgements, and to seek comments on the draft report.

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The Chair thanked the Corporate Policy and Public Affairs Manager and Members discussed the following:

- The factors contributing to the overall Self-Assessment judgement of 'Adequate'.
- Having an honest, open and challenging culture with Indicators that drive towards better performance.
- An expectation of greater detail and emphasis on sustainability and target of Net Zero Carbon.
- An update regarding the Council's contribution towards bringing empty properties back into use, the number of voids and expectation that they be brought back into use as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee requested:

An update report detailing the outcome of the Council's partnership with Valleys to Coast and £500,000 contribution towards bringing 35 long term empty properties back into use.

75. PROPOSALS FOR THE JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS FOLLOWING TRANSITION TO A SINGLE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD (PSB) FOR CWM TAF MORGANNWG

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report, the purpose of which was to update the Committee on the proposed joint scrutiny arrangements and Terms of Reference for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board (PSB), following the transition to a single PSB for Cwm Taf Morgannwg and to request nominations of five Members and one substitute Member from the Committee, based on the political balance of the Committee, as far as practical, to the Cwm Taf Morgannwg PSB Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC).

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED: That the Committee nominated the following Members to the Cwm Taf Morgannwg PSB JOSC:

- Councillor Amanda Williams (nomination from the Bridgend County Independents Group);
- Councillor Alex Williams (nomination from the Democratic Alliance Group); and
- Councillor Freya Bletsoe (Substitute Member nominated from the Bridgend County Independents Group to attend the PSB JOSC when one of the five Members are not available);

and

The Committee agreed to defer the nominations of the three remaining Labour Group Members to its meeting on 4 September 2023.

76. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Committee with the Forward Work Programme (FWP) in Appendix A for discussion and consideration, requested any specific information the Committee identified to be included in the items for the next two

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meetings, including invitees they wished to attend, requested the Committee to identify any further items for consideration on the FWP having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 3.6, asked the Committee to note the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheets to track responses to the Committee's recommendations made at previous meetings in 2022-23 in Appendix B, and those made at the previous meeting in 2023-24 in Appendix C, and asked the Committee to note that the Forward Work Programme for the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee, following consideration in the recent cycle of SOSC meetings.

Members discussed the recent ICT outage and requested that the report regarding Cyber Security be scheduled to the next meeting of the Committee on 4 September 2023 and that ICT Business Continuity Plans be included in the scope of the report.

The Committee recommended that the item on Lessons Learned from the Re-Development of Maesteg Town Hall be delegated to the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 to consider.

There were no further items identified for consideration on the FWP having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 3.6, and this could be revisited at the next meeting.

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

RESOLVED: That the Committee approved the FWP in Appendix A, subject to the inclusion of the above items, noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheets in Appendix B and C and noted that the Forward Work Programme for the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

77. URGENT ITEMS

None.

The meeting closed at 13:51