

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 25 JULY 2024

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 THURSDAY, 25 JULY 2024 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor F D Bletsoe – Chairperson

RM Granville

Present Virtually

JPD Blundell
T Thomas

HJ David
A Williams

S J Griffiths
AJ Williams

RL Penhale-Thomas
E D Winstanley

Apologies for Absence

GH Haines and M L Hughes

Claire Marchant - Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing

Invitees

Councillor John Spanswick
Councillor Jane Gebbie
Councillor Eugene Caparros
Councillor Paul Davies
Councillor Melanie Jayne Evans
Councillor Neelo Farr

Leader
Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member Social Services, Health and Wellbeing
Cabinet Member for Resources (Job Share)
Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment
Cabinet Member for Resources (Job Share)
Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Development and Housing

Mark Shephard
Carys Lord
Lindsay Harvey
Janine Nightingale

Chief Executive
Chief Officer - Finance, Housing & Change
Corporate Director - Education, Early Years & Young People
Corporate Director - Communities

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Jackie Davies
Paul Miles
Martin Morgans
Kate Pask

Head of Adult Social Care
Group Manager - Human Resources and Organisational Development
Head of Performance and Partnership Services
Corporate Performance Manager

Officers:

Lucy Beard
Stephen Griffiths
Michael Pitman

Scrutiny Officer
Interim Scrutiny Officer/ Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services

Declarations of Interest

Cllr F D Bletsoe – Agenda Item 5 – Personal – School Governor - Heronsbridge School.
Cllr HJ David – Agenda items 5,6,7,8 and 9 – Prejudicial – previously Leader of the Cabinet taking decisions up to May 2024.
Cllr JPD Blundell – Agenda Items 5,6,7 and 8 – Prejudicial – previously Member of the Cabinet taking decisions up to May 2024.
Cllr AJ Williams – Agenda Items 5, 6 and 7 – Personal – School Governor - Coity Primary School.
Cllr ED Winstanley – Agenda Items – 6, 7 and 8 – Personal – Employment - Awen Cultural Trust.

Cllr J Gebbie – Agenda item 5 – Personal – School Governor - Mynydd Cynffig Primary School.

114. Appointment of Chairperson

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> Cllr F D Bletsoe was appointed Chairperson.
Date Decision Made	25 July 2024

115. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> That the minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee dated 21 March 2024 be approved as a true and accurate record.
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Date Decision Made	25 July 2024
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116. Revenue Budget Outturn 2023-24

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u> Following detailed consideration and discussions with Cabinet Members and Officers, the Committee made the following recommendations and requests for additional information:</p> <p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Committee recommended that in addition to achieving substantial savings in revenue spending, consideration needed to be given to new controls on, and reprioritisation of, capital spending and whilst there might be value in introducing a moratorium on new capital projects, it was important not to lose opportunities for grant funding, the opportunity to invest in school projects, or funding necessary works.2. The Committee recommended that given the sizeable deficit for Homelessness, consideration be given to a need for a different approach, including a counterintuitive injection of capital, to bring the budget back on track.3. Members expressed concern regarding whether the Five Point Action Plan was an adequate response to the current situation and recommended that an update on the actions for the five points to date be reported for scrutiny at a future meeting of COSC. <p><u>Additional Information</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Members discussed that the budgetary situation required a careful evaluation of the reserves available to the Council and that whilst the Council had been prudent in building up reserves in the past, they are a finite resource in the current circumstances, and it was imperative to minimise the extent to which the Council is dependent on reserves to achieve a balanced budget this year. The Committee requested a breakdown of the current situation with the reserves from the Chief Officer - Finance, Housing and Change.5. Members discussed that it was becoming more and more difficult to separate the revenue and capital budgets because there are pressures in both and a decision in one impacts the other. The Committee requested details of the current situation with capital projects from the Chief Officer - Finance, Housing and Change, including those that are contractually committed and therefore not available to be reprioritised.
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Date Decision Made	25 July 2024
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117. Budget Monitoring 2024-25 - Quarter 1 Revenue Forecast

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>Following consideration of the report with Cabinet Members and Officers the Committee made the following recommendations and requests for additional information:</p> <p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>6. Given the budget outturn for 2023-24 and the emerging revenue forecast for 2024-25, the Committee recommended that there needed to be an urgent evaluation of the robustness of the current budget-setting process.</p> <p>7. Given the imperative to avoid having to issue a Section 114 notice in the future, the Committee recommended that consideration be given to the appointment of ‘internal commissioners’ to manage budgets in particular directorates.</p> <p>8. The budget deficits in schools - 75% are in deficit and the total amount is just over £5 million – are a corporate risk for the Council. As school governors are volunteers, and given their substantial responsibilities, there needed an enhancement of the support offered to them. As such, Members recommended the following:</p> <p>a. There was an urgent need to explore the required skill set and training needs of school governors.</p> <p>b. Whether ways could be found to enhance the support provided to school governors by utilising individuals who have had professional leadership roles in schools and therefore understand what can and cannot be done.</p> <p>c. That consideration should be given to extending an invitation to school governors to observe and on occasion contribute to meetings of SOSC 1.</p> <p>d. That the Corporate Director - Education, Early Years & Young People should provide a briefing to school governors (like that provided to head teachers) to help them understand the wider context of their role in a difficult budgetary situation.</p>
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	<p>9. Given the corporate risk associated with the budgetary situation in schools, the Committee recommended that there was an urgent need to consider the status of this issue as part of the Risk Register and whether the Regional Internal Audit Service (RIAS) should be requested to investigate it.</p> <p>10. Given the Council will receive at most a cash flat settlement (representing a 3% reduction in the revenue budget) from the Welsh Government this year, Members recommended that the Chair write to the Welsh Government to express their concerns about this and to request more information on their future approach to local government finance.</p> <p><u>Additional Information</u></p> <p>11. The Committee requested that case studies of the value of early intervention in adult and children's care be circulated to members of the Committee.</p> <p>12. The Committee requested an all-member briefing on Part 9 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 that requires local authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation with their relevant partners and others, in relation to adults with needs for care and support, carers and children.</p>
Date Decision Made	25 July 2024

121. Quarter 4 Year-End Performance 2023-24

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>Following consideration of the report with Cabinet Members and Officers the Committee made the following general comments and recommendations:</p> <p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>13. The Committee recommended that in light of the serious budget situation, there was a need to consider as a matter of urgency the appropriate balance between achieving sustainable cost savings and performance.</p>
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	<p>14. The Committee expressed that staff sickness, issues with recruitment and early retirement remained a risk for the Council, especially where lean staffing and sickness absence combine, and recommended that consideration be given to the combined impact of these in order to avoid leading to potentially serious service shortcomings.</p> <p>15. The Committee recommended that there was a need to produce a positive narrative about performance where there is good news.</p> <p>16. The Committee recommended that there was an urgent need for the Cabinet and Senior Officers to carry out a deliberate, ruthless and strategic exercise to identify the most important priorities – while eliminating or postponing less important ones.</p> <p>17. The Committee recommended that the number of well-being objectives, and the associated performance indicators, needed to be revised and that there was a need for a very limited list of priorities to guide decision-making.</p>
Date Decision Made	25 July 2024

119. Self-Assessment 2023/24

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>Following consideration of the report with Cabinet Members and Officers the Committee made the following recommendations:</p> <p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>18. Given that there were a number of performance indicators within the first well-being objective, Protecting our Most Vulnerable, for which performance is unsatisfactory or not very good, the Committee recommended that they needed to be addressed as a key priority.</p> <p>19. The Committee recommended that given some of the PIs – in respect of homelessness, for example - came from the Welsh Government and were no longer fit for purpose due to legislative changes, that it would be appropriate for officers to approach the Welsh Government to consider if they could be revised, and the outcome should be shared with Members at a future meeting.</p>
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	20. The Committee recommended that Cabinet Members be invited to the next meeting of the Committee on 9 September 2024, to provide an overview of their strategic approach and priorities for the coming year.
Date Decision Made	25 July 2024

120. Corporate Parenting Champion Nomination

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> That Councillor Alex Ulberini-Williams be nominated to represent the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee as an Invitee to meetings of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting.
Date Decision Made	25 July 2024

121. Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Service Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Nominations

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> That Members expressed concerns about the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Service Board (PSB) and Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC). Whilst acknowledging their responsibilities under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to hold the PSB to account and stating that there was merit in ensuring that there was a collaborative approach with other local authorities, the output of the PSB needed to be looked at as there appeared to be very little which is substantive for the JOSC to scrutinise. It was agreed that no Members would be nominated at this meeting and that Officers would convey the Committee's concerns and explore what improvements could be made to make it worthwhile for Members to participate on the JOSC.
Date Decision Made	25 July 2024

122. Forward Work Programme Update

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee approved its Forward Work Programme in Appendix A and noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet to track responses to the Committees' Recommendations made at previous meetings in Appendix B.</p> <p>That as advised, the Forward Work Programmes for the three Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.</p> <p>That performance of Disabled Facilities Grants needed to be addressed with a degree of urgency and a report be requested.</p> <p>The review of the Five Point Action Plan be requested to be reported to a future meeting of COSC.</p>
Date Decision Made	25 July 2024

123. Urgent Items

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>None</p>
Date Decision Made	25 July 2024

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this [link](#).

The meeting closed at 13:48.