

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - TUESDAY, 27 JANUARY 2026

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 TUESDAY, 27 JANUARY 2026 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor A Ulberini-Williams – Chairperson

F D Bletsoe
H Griffiths

JPD Blundell
AJ Williams

N Clarke
MJ Williams

HJ David

Present Virtually

S J Griffiths

J Llewellyn-Hopkins

RL Penhale-Thomas

T Thomas

Apologies for Absence

M L Hughes
Councillor John Spanswick, Leader and
Kelly Watson – Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory, HR and Corporate Policy

Invitees:

Councillor Jane Gebbie	Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member Social Services, Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Hywel Williams	Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance
Councillor Martyn Jones	Cabinet Member for Education and Youth Services
Councillor Eugene Caparros	Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment (Job Share)
Councillor Gary Haines	Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment (Job Share)
Councillor Neelo Farr	Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Development and Housing
Councillor Melanie Evans	Cabinet Member for Resources

Jake Morgan	Chief Executive
Carys Lord	Chief Officer – Finance, Housing and Change
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing
Janine Nightingale	Corporate Director - Communities

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Deborah Exton
Joanne Norman
Nigel Smith

Deputy Head of Finance
Group Manager – Financial Planning and Budget Management
Group Manager – Chief Accountant

Officers:

Meryl Lawrence
Jessica Mclellan

Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Scrutiny Officer

Declarations of Interest

Councillor A Ulberini-Williams – Item 4 - Personal - Current Post-holder - Chair, Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the Scrutiny Budget Working Group regarding discretionary salaries and husband works as a classroom teacher at Pencoed Comprehensive School.
Councillor AJ Williams – Item 5 - Personal - Community Governor at Coety Primary School.

181. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> That the minutes of meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee dated 11 December 2025 be approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	27 January 2026

182. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-27 To 2029-30

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> Following consideration of the report and detailed discussion with Cabinet Members and Senior Officers, the Committee made the following recommendations and requests for additional information and agreed to submit the Recommendations to Cabinet on 3 February 2026:
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	<p>Recommendations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>Council Tax</u> The Committee expressed concern regarding the proposed above inflation increase to Council Tax and the pressure many residents are facing in balancing their household budgets to meet the cost of Council Tax. The Committee therefore strongly recommended that Cabinet considers reviewing its final budget settlement including the current reduction proposals and using the unallocated funding from the uplift to 4.6% to ensure the lowest possible Council Tax.2. <u>Narrative re: Demographic</u> With reference to paragraph 3.1.3 of the Cabinet report, the Committee recommended that further narrative be included regarding the changing demographic of the County Borough and that there be a greater breakdown of age ranges, e.g. young people, adults and older people, etc. to further understand the future impact on pupil numbers in schools and the provision of social care for service provision planning.3. <u>Fully Funding National Policy Commitments</u> The Committee recommended that all new policy commitments resulting from legislative pressures from UK or Welsh Government (WG) should be fully funded and that the Committee fully support Cabinet in lobbying Westminster and WG to provide adequate funding.4. <u>Transformation in Schools and Education</u> The Committee discussed the need for transformation across the whole Council, specifically the schools and education function to see what can be done better and the impact that the funding formula applied to schools budget allocations has on the variances between schools' budget balances and recommended:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. that work be undertaken to provide better understanding of the reasons for the variances between schools' budget balances;b. that the funding formula applied to schools' budget allocations be reviewed; and that the above be fed back into next year's budget setting together with an update regarding what transformation has taken place in schools and education.5. <u>Flood Prevention and Public Realm</u> The Committee discussed Cabinet's response to Recommendation 17 from the Scrutiny Budget Working Group which stated, 'the Directorate will look to prioritise spend on flood prevention measures', but highlighted that it is vital reference is made to funding for flood prevention in the
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	<p>MTFS and recommended that Cabinet consider including flood prevention measures within the narrative in <i>NEW 4, Public Realm</i>, in the Additional Final Settlement Budget Pressures, £1.5m.</p> <p>6. <u>Council's Approach to Flood Prevention and Engineering Services</u> Members referred to the link between the Scrutiny Budget Working Group Recommendations 17 (Flood Prevention) and 18 (Engineering Services) and highlighted the opportunity to utilise engineering and nature-based solutions to flood prevention. The Committee recommended that consideration be given to looking at flood prevention with an engineering focus, e.g. planting trees to create wetlands to slow water flow away from housing to prevent flooding, replacing verges with sustainable drainage systems, etc. and being bolder and more proactive in the attraction and use of available grants and funding.</p> <p>Requests for Additional Information</p> <p>7. <u>Council Tax – Second Homes</u> The Committee discussed the Council's Policy for second-home Council Tax charges and requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. the comparative information from other Local Authorities regarding their level of charges;b. whether they have reduced their rates;c. the impact on the number of second homes in their local authority area; andd. the impact that the increase in Bridgend's charges has achieved. <p>8. <u>Energy Rates for Schools</u> The Committee requested information regarding the projected cost of electric, gas and water for schools in the upcoming financial year and how it is envisaged that this will impact on schools' budgets.</p> <p>9. <u>Budget Pressure – Additional Learning Needs (ALN)</u> The Committee referred to the announcement from Welsh Government in December regarding a further £8.2m funding this year for ALN and requested the quantum of that funding allocated for Bridgend, when the funding was expected to be received and whether further grant funding was expected in year which could be offset against the recurring Budget Pressure.</p> <p>10. <u>School Improvement</u> The Committee referred to EDNEW 2, School Improvement, in the Emerging Directorate Pressures of £225k and that there was previously a £500k contribution towards Central South Consortium and</p>
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	<p>requested that when the funding for disaggregating from the service is finalised, details of whether the difference has resulted in a revenue saving.</p> <p>11. <u>School Maintenance</u> The Committee referred to <i>SCHNEW 1, Building Maintenance</i> and the recent announcement from Welsh Government regarding an additional £20m funding for school maintenance and requested the quantum of that funding allocated for Bridgend, when the funding was expected to be received and the impact on this Emerging Directorate Budget Pressure.</p> <p>12. <u>In-House Residential Provision – Children’s Services</u> The Committee referred to SSW 1 in the Emerging Directorate Pressures and requested a breakdown of the shortfall on Homes 1, 2 and three months of Home 3.</p> <p>13. <u>Community Chest Sports Fund</u> The Committee referred to <i>NEW 3, Sports Development</i>, in the Additional Final Settlement Budget Pressures and requested a breakdown of how much will be available for the Community Chest sports fund for match funding for Clubs, Community grants and awards.</p> <p>14. <u>Transport – Bus Route Pilot Schemes</u> Members referred to COM 2 – Emerging Directorate Pressures and <i>NEW 6, Transport</i>, in the Additional Final Settlement Budget Pressures which both relate to the pilot schemes for new bus routes and the Committee requested details of the new proposed routes and the likely costs of the proposed schemes.</p>
Date Decision Made	27 January 2026

183. Capital Strategy 2026-27

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>Following consideration of the report and detailed discussion with Cabinet Members and Senior Officers, the Committee made the following recommendations and requests for additional information:</p>
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	<p>Recommendations</p> <p>15. The Committee discussed the accuracy and timeliness of data in the Quarterly Capital Programme reports to Council and recommended that consideration be given to the use and inclusion of real time data and the timeliness of reporting. In particular, that any approved key projects, delays or additional spend on projects are included.</p> <p>16. The Committee recommended that visual infographics are included, e.g. flowcharts, diagrams, etc. demonstrating how projects are instigated, the approvals process for a project to be accepted for the Capital Programme and how return on investment or the revenue impact of a project is assessed.</p> <p>17. The Committee expressed concern regarding foreseeable delays or slippage in the delivery of Capital Programmes and recommended that all projects receive robust sign-off and that project management is standardised across all projects and programmes to ensure the correct escalation points take place at the right times.</p> <p>18. The Committee referred to Cabinet’s response to Recommendation 3 from the Scrutiny Budget Working Group which was accepted but the narrative response did not indicate any further action would be taken and recommended that as part of the proposed transformation growth, consideration be given to how Capital Programmes in other Local Authorities and organisations are managed to explore best practice and to evaluate, inform and improve Bridgend’s approach.</p> <p>Requests for Additional Information</p> <p>19. The Committee requested how much of the total of the Capital Programme of £303m, is allocated to the achievement of the Net Zero 2030 Commitment.</p> <p>20. The Committee requested sight of the risk registers and other illustrative examples of risk management of Capital Projects.</p>
Date Decision Made	27 January 2026

184. Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Service Board (PSB) Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) Nomination

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> The Committee agreed to defer the report to its meeting on 26 March 2026.
Date Decision Made	27 January 2026

185. Forward Work Programme Update

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> The Committee approved its draft Forward Work Programme in Appendix A subject to the following additions, noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet to track responses to the Committees' Recommendations made at previous meetings in Appendix B and noted the Forward Work Programmes for the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees in Appendices C, D and E. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Council's Preparedness to Respond to Storms and Adverse Weather to include the Council's Strategy regarding Flood Response and Prevention; and2. Quarterly Updates from the Transformation Programme Board once established.
Date Decision Made	27 January 2026

186. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	27 January 2026

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

The meeting closed at 15:58.

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