

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2020

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2020 AT 09:30

Present

Councillor CA Green – Chairperson

JPD Blundell
M Jones

NA Burnett
KL Rowlands

N Clarke
JC Spanswick

T Giffard

Apologies for Absence

J Gebbie, RL Penhale-Thomas, RMI Shaw, T Thomas, HJ David and HM Williams

Officers:

Meryl Lawrence
Tracy Watson

Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Scrutiny Officer

Invitees:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Jackie Davies	Head of Adult Social Care
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Gill Lewis	Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer
Councillor Dhanisha Patel	Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Councillor Charles Smith	Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration
Nigel Smith	Finance Manager
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services
Councillor Philip White	Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help

163. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

164. CORPORATE PLAN 2018-2022 REVIEWED FOR 2020-21

The Interim Head of Finance and S151 Officer advised members that firstly the Corporate Plan had been refreshed for 2020-21, following a corporate planning process carried out between October 2019 and January 2020 with many within the organisation involved in the process, including a bottom up as well as a top down inclusive process this year. Secondly, there was a much greater focus on the Future Generations of Wellbeing Act principles and thirdly, the report focussed on what the authority was trying to improve and the resources needed, which was evident in the ambitions set out.

Members raised the issue that there was no specific reference to climate change within the report and felt, as a committee, this was a rapidly growing issue and needed to show the position the authority was in. The Chief Executive noted that this was clearly something that had gathered momentum and recognised this. He confirmed that a report was going to Cabinet in April.

A member noted the figures in relation to Homelessness on Page 10 and sought confirmation of the progress being made – are we helping all our homelessness and who are we leaving out? The Cabinet Member for Future Generation and Wellbeing explained that she had recently visited both the Huggard and Ty Tresillian provisions in Cardiff, along with the Group Manager for Housing and the Head of Partnership Services and acknowledged the relationship with Cardiff and noted the ongoing piece of work to see how a provision could be provided within the borough.

The Member further recognised that there were people who were unable to be helped and that may fall through the net and asked what was being done. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing acknowledged that many of these cases had mental health problems, but noted that a lot was being done to prevent them becoming homelessness in the first place. There was ongoing work with those that had lower level mental health problems. In terms of reaching out in the community, they were provided with help as part of their families. This was an issue not just supported by housing.

A member felt that the Education list on Page 10 should show Welsh Schools as a separate category.

A member noted that the last line of Page 12 stated a 'good' place for people to live, work, study and visit felt that this should say 'great'. The Chief Executive acknowledged this but explained that the challenge is trying to match the ambition at the front of the document with the actions in the rest of the document, however he was happy to make the suggested change.

A member noted a number of projects listed on page 16, which would deliver the outcomes to help Bridgend thrive over the long term and enquired how far are we along with these projects e.g. City Deal. The Chief Executive reminded members and officers that this was a long-term programme, where little would happen within the first two years, although he noted that some good initiatives had been undertaken. He confirmed that a report was going to Cabinet in March on City Deal. He felt it would be helpful to bring back a report on the flavour of ongoing work in terms of Valleys Taskforce, Ford, etc. The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration noted on Page 16, the Bridgend Business Forum, and felt should promote Bridgend as a place to invest, but noted that there were many closely guarded businesses in Bridgend, who were happy that way.

A member noted the targets on Page 19 in relation to the 'Percentage of Year 1 learners being taught through the medium of Welsh' and 'Number of Vacant Premises in Town Centres' and felt these should be realistic and challenging. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support noted that this related to the number of learners, and explained to members that there were surplus spaces in Welsh Medium, so that this was a challenging target just to maintain the status quo. The Chief Executive explained in terms of vacant premises that it was always a balancing act but sometimes it was challenging to standstill. A member further noted on Page 19 within 'vacant premises' this may suggest that we want more empty shops and therefore needed more information within the box. The Chief Executive suggested that perhaps appendices

should accompany the report to put some context to the some of the measures to the public. A member suggested that it would be useful as a percentage in each town centre e.g. 6 in Pencoed could be out of 7.

A member raised the issue that without a Welsh comparison, it was impossible to know where we are compared to other authorities, in the area of spend. There was research to be done, but this might be more meaningful to other people. The Interim Head of Finance and S151 Officer explained that this was what was trying to be done, but categorising the expenditure had become nigh on impossible as it was configured in different ways. This has been tried through spending assessment. What we are trying to do through the different services is trying to drill down as much as we can. We have made representations to the WG about cost, as most PAM's do not have cost indicators. The Deputy Leader acknowledged that this was a Bridgend focused plan, but that a link in to My Council in terms of comparison data could be added.

A member noted that the indicator on page 23 for 'Number of additional dwellings....back into use' seemed low. A member felt that the wording on page 25 'developing the skills and behaviours of staff' could do with re-wording. A member felt that the indicator in respect of the 'Percentage of managers attending the Managers Induction Programme' should show a target. The Interim Head of Finance and S151 Officer agreed to take these suggestions away to look at.

Members discussed the indicators in relation to Tree Management on page 28 and noted that despite being difficult to measure, this indicator could be improved. The Chief Executive agreed that this was a hot topic at the moment and explained that there was a bid in for funding. We can bring something back to scrutiny. A member stated that this is also a matter that can be brought up with Town and Community Council's (TCC's). Members and Officers discussed the 'Plant a tree in 73' scheme and suggested promoting 'Plant a tree before 23' which could engage with TCC's and schools. The Chief Executive noted the challenge was getting the balance right as they do require looking after and maintenance. A member further commented that as a council we should encourage landowners and residents to do this.

A member noted that this was a good plan that set out a vision and principles. He asked in respect of page 34 'Working with Others', whether there was going to be a performance management process in terms of our partnership working and what role can scrutiny play. The Interim Head of Finance and S151 Officer explained that in term of partnerships, they are all different, and have entirely different governance arrangements. This had been discussed at CPA. The key here was that they could equally all hold us to account, but noted this was an area for further development; how do we bring that back in to the proper governance. In terms of CPA we have performance measures that come to the board and in terms of the work, there would be opportunities to look at Halo and Awen. The Corporate Director explained that all Directorates are working on the Business Plan that fed into the Corporate Plan. In terms of the Cwm Taf Regional Partnership Board, there were 4 elected members and Governance was being looked at to make it more affective. She noted a piece of work from Welsh Government coming on the work of partnership boards. A member suggested that the committee might wish to think about inviting people from the public service board to future items.

Members wished to make the following comments and conclusions:

Members commented that the growing issue of Climate Change had not been included in the revised Corporate Plan.

A Member commented upon an error in the first and third paragraphs upon page 8 of the Corporate Plan.

Members requested that Welsh Medium Schools be included the Education list.

Members requested a pre-Council Briefing update upon progress on the City Deal and the Valleys Task Force (and Bridgend Business Forum)

Members requested that the statement on the last sentence of page 11 and 12 be amended to: "...help us make the county borough a **great** place for people to live, work, study and visit".

Members questioned the target for Welsh learners taught through the Medium of Welsh being static on page 19 of the Plan.

Members asked that the vacant premises in Town Centres be provided as percentages on Page 19 of the Plan.

Members commented that it was difficult to view the Authority's position against the Wales Average when viewing the Pie Charts. The Plan was Bridgend focussed but it was suggested that a link to My Council could be added to enable comparative data to be viewed.

Members queried the target for the number of additional dwellings brought back into use only being increased by only 2 this year.

Members felt that on Page 25 of the Plan the phrase: "...the behaviours of staff" could be misinterpreted and should be reworded.

Members asked that a baseline be established for the target on the Percentage of Managers attending the Managers Induction Programme who rated it excellent or good on page 27.

Members felt that the target of 3 for "Undertake schemes to increase the County Borough's tree cover" on Page 28 was not ambitious enough.

Members requested clarification on the target on page 28 in relation to 'Undertake the Council Tree Management programme' as they thought it was unlikely that the actions within the programme were 100% complete.

Members acknowledged that the Corporate Plan was a good Plan and set out the vision and principles and asked how the performance in respect of Partnership working would be managed.

165. **BUDGET MONITORING 2019-20 - QUARTER 3 REVENUE FORECAST**

The Interim Head of Finance and S151 Officer presented the report to Members with an update on the Councils revenue financial position as at 31 December 2019. By way of background, she explained that on the 20 February 2019, Council approved a net revenue budget of £270.809 million for 2019-20. Table 1 showed the comparison of budget against projected outturn at 31 December 2019. 4.1.2 showed a net underspend of £798k and 4.1.3 the reason for the underspend. The Prior Year Budget Reductions

were shown in 4.2.1 onwards. Table 2 showed that of the £2.342 million outstanding reductions, £1.795 million is likely to be achieved in 2019-20, leaving a shortfall of £547k. The revenue budget monitoring to 31 December 2019 was shown at Appendix 3.

A member noted that on page 58 of the report the Schools' delegate budget showed that at Quarter 3, 46% of all schools were projecting a deficit budget and expressed concern that some schools were more resilient than others and that for some schools this may mean that pupils lose out on extra curriculum opportunities. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support recognised that the figures tell a story with over half of our schools in deficit budget. He expressed concern that about 3 or 4 schools had severe deficits. He explained however that Brynteg has done a great job of reducing their deficit and it was expected they will break even but he noted that that is challenging for small schools as the number of pupils relate to the budget. He confirmed that he met with all head teachers on a termly basis and explained about the financial performance and monitoring board, who go line through line of the budget. He noted additional support grants were also available.

A member asked whether older schools were disadvantaged in terms of greater expenditure in respect of maintenance, and whether they received the same amount of funding. The Deputy Head of Finance explained that each school was funded mainly on the basis of the floor area; if schools are a similar size they get a similar amount, but the condition of the building is also taken into account, which is reflected in a condition factor weighting. It was something that was considered regularly to make it sure the funding is targeted to where it is needed, and looked at with the school budget forum to ensure funding is fair.

A member noted on page 61, the paragraph on Looked After Children and noted that it was clearly outlined why there was an overspend. He asked what was happening across Wales and whether there was any leadership coming out of Welsh Government (WG) to support the 22 authority's to manage the procurement and if the information on good practice could be shared. The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing explained that this was a much-pressured area and the council has been hugely supportive in terms of LAC and management of the budget. What the report did not show was the tremendous effort to reduce the overspend. She explained about the new model for residential services (Maple Tree House) and confirmed that there had been 16 different children through the service and 6 children in the assessment unit, who would have previously gone out of county at a cost of £4k a week. She was working with housing to develop alternatives with local providers; this was a good use of our social housing grant. In terms of nationally, Looked After Children was a priority for the First Minister and Deputy Minister who were presented with the whole story from every local authority, recently. The Looked After technical group continued to meet. Every local authority were discussing LAC reduction strategies. There were some issues around CAMNS. WG have a project looking at those as a case study. This had been talked about in corporate parenting. The member was reassured to know that this work was ongoing in WG but felt perhaps WG should market this a bit more to members. The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing said she would feed this through Corporate parenting.

A member noted on Page 60 there was a backlog on the adaptations work – are we resourcing this area to the full extent it needs. The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing confirmed that there was an overspend, as we are able to help more people although noted successfully grant funding. A member suggested looking at identifying a pot to invest in spend to save which could be treated differently.

A member asked do we know how many are going through the adoption service at the moment? The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing said she would come back with the figures.

A member noted on page 55, the 'Permitting Scheme for Road Works' and asked how much pressure do we put on WG to get an answer back. The Chief Executive explained that it was almost embarrassing how long this had been here. His personal view was that it should be taken out of the MTFs, as the latest thinking was a national scheme. There was no particular progress.

A member raised concern about the number of 'current staff vacancies' indicated on page 59. The Chief Executive explained that the first thing about vacancies are they are not deliberate but are where we are struggling to fill a post. Health & Safety was a corporate priority, but there was other ways of doing this, and noted there had been some progress on H&S. He recognised the balance between filling posts and identifying possible savings. Had the settlement not be so favourable we would be facing cuts and possibly looking at making savings. He noted an ongoing exercise identifying which posts were vacant. The Corporate Director Education & Family Support explained that Health & Safety recruitment had been difficult, particularly recruiting to the Principal post. Four vacancies had now been filled. He explained that they were working with HR to "grow our own", but that this comes with some risk. We have quarterly meetings with Deputy Leader attending. The Schools Transport Advisory Group (STAG) provides and ensures that issues are dealt with.

A member noted on page 63, the narrative on 'Fleet Services' was the same as last quarter and enquired if fleet services been restructured. The Chief Executive explained that in terms of fleet services we are confident that the restructuring and review of productivity have been carried out and is competitive as any service outside. The Deputy Leader confirmed that he had taken an interest in this and confirmed that they will be commercially viable.

A member noted the parking services underspend on Page 62 and asked if we know that the actual money is ring fenced for maintenance of the common and car park from rest bay. The Interim Head of Finance and S151 Officer confirmed that this was the total underspend for car parks and that they were shown on individual codes. The Deputy Head of Finance confirmed that there was no underspend from rest bay.

Members wished to make the following comments and conclusions:

Members expressed concern about the potential that pupils in financial deficit schools could miss out on extra-curricular activities and that it was essential that schools had guidance and shared best practice for setting up the best management and advice for setting up Friends Groups.

Members were reassured by the update upon the work being done by the Looked After Children Technical Group and how Maple Tree House had reduced the number of Out of County Placements for Looked After Children and the associated costs. They requested the report from the Looked after Children Technical Group to the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting be circulated to Scrutiny Committee Members for information.

Members asked whether an Invest to Save fund could be explored for Independent Living rather than expressing this as an overspend, as the funding was upon preventative measures which reduced pressure on other service area budgets.

Members asked for the number of children going through the Adoption Service at the moment.

Members expressed concern at the number of vacant posts not being able to be filled, but welcomed the work being done on identifying the posts and whether they could recruit.

Members asked that the Health and Safety in Schools Scrutiny topic be progressed, as the Scrutiny Vacant posts had now been filled.

166. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2020-21 ONWARDS

The Interim Head of Finance and S151 Officer began by saying that she was indebted to the Deputy Head of Finance and the Interim Group Manager – Chief Accountant in terms of the Capital Strategy. She continued by explaining that the controls around Capital Expenditure were based on legislation and this was the second report, following the requirement to publish a Capital Strategy last year. The Capital Strategy is presented to Council as a Policy Framework document and links with the Corporate Plan, Treasury Management Strategy (TMS), Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the Council's Asset Management Plan (AMP). The MTFS has 13 principles, 3 which refer to the Capital Programme. Section 2 talks about capital expenditure and table 1 on page 91 sets out the estimates of capital expenditure and table 2 the Capital financing. Section 3 is linked to the wellbeing objectives, previously the corporate objectives, with other key drivers the asset management requirements and health and safety works plus commercial activities. The rest of section 3 links to the objectives of capital security, liquidity and then yield. Section 4 sets out the financial context, section 5 looks at capital expenditure bids, section 6 governance and risk management and section 7 knowledge and skills.

The Deputy Head of Finance noted that whilst the report had been updated, figures would change for the final version to be presented alongside the MTFS in February, in line with the updated capital programme.

A member noted on page 97, that the table seemed to show a variety of jumps in terms of total borrowing and long-term liabilities e.g. £117m in 18-19, £130m in 20-21, £135m in 21-22 and £143m in 22-23 and asked if there was any particularly reason for 2021 looking very different. The Interim Group Manager – Chief Accountant explained that the debt increase next year related to the increase in spending on the Capital Programme and related increase in borrowing.

A member noted the guiding principles on page 89, and understood that the Corporate Plan drives capital investment, but how do we ensure parity across all four corners of the borough. He further asked what was being done to manage the risk and remain in budget. The Deputy Leader explained that there was a whole borough approach whilst considering areas of priority e.g. Maesteg Town Hall. We will consider if we can get match funding to support that project e.g. sea defences in Porthcawl. In terms of managing the risk, that is a far more difficult exercise, and you can over estimate to make sure you come in budget. You can either put the risk on the authority or on the contractor, who carries that risk. We need to manage that and have a happy medium. The Interim Head of Finance and S151 Officer echoed the Deputy Leader, confirming that this had been previously raised at council, and that we rarely see schemes come in under budget. Either you try really hard to get it as accurate as possible, but it could then become an abortive scheme or you get a happy medium. Audit committee have taken a keen interest and are completing a piece of work to look at the variance e.g., builder, price, and variances we get in terms of procurement.

A member raised the issue of interest rates and asked if we were getting the best deal. The Interim Head of Finance and S151 Officer explained that whilst interest rates were at an all-time low, our rate would be historically higher and cannot just be changed. It would have to be profiled carefully.

A member asked for clarification in terms of knowledge and skills. The Interim Head of Finance and S151 Officer explained that we haven't stopped training people. We try to accommodate people training and working and continue to train staff to study CIPFA and AAT, and we have also asked to be part of the new apprenticeships scheme.

Members wished to make the following comments and conclusions:

Members questioned how the Authority could ensure that communities across the county borough had parity of capital investment and would like to see a more strategic approach being made to capital investment.

A Member commented upon an error in the Table 2 on page 91, which should read 2020-21.

A Member referred to Section 7, page 107 Knowledge and Skills and welcomed the CIPFA and AAT training being provided corporately and the request to be included in the apprenticeship funding.

167. **SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN - OUR STRATEGIC 5 YEAR VISION**

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing began by explaining that there would be a presentation, explaining the strategic vision, and noted that all aspects of the Directorate were in one plan. There was a line of sight with the Corporate Plan, Regional Plan, the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and Well-being of Future Generations Act. She explained that the plan was a detailed an extensive document that was structured to include setting the scene, children's services, transition services (children to adulthood), adult social care services, wellbeing services and delivery of the action plan, and talked briefly on each area.

The Business Change Programme Manager went through a presentation, which he explained was based on the document.

A member thanked the Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing and her team for the extensive report and picked up on the point of communication, particular between the authority and Bridgend Town Council. She noted the reciprocal nature of channelling resources which the council are no longer able to fund. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing agreed that this was something which could be taken away to look at.

A member noted the statistics and the need to plan ahead and asked if the Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing was getting sufficient help from the Welsh Government to channel the budget and whether there was any indications of any help from the Welsh Government, for people over the age of 85. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing acknowledge the Integrated Care Fund (ICF), which was a significant investment in our service, but noted that this was still grant funding. The Head of Adult Social Care gave some examples whilst recognising the change in demographics. The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help noted the £9m commitment to health & social care and confirmed that what was being done for

residents was second to none. He noted that the Minister had announced that Regional Partnership Boards will move towards Health Parks, and noted that the authority was geared up for this based upon the population needs assessment.

A member asked for reassurance that the health authority was paying their full share. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing explained that this came via health but must be spent within the partnership. Money coming out of the acute sector was harder to shift. She felt that within the all Wales work, the authority had a better relationship with the partnership compared to other areas. In term of CAMHs and Children, this was a pressured area and needs investment; the health contribution needs to be reviewed. There was a lot more work to do, but the foundations were there.

A member asked about whether an audit of future skills had been carried out and did any of our care providers see issues when we leave the EU. The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help explained that those conversations had been had yesterday. There were indications of issues with recruitment and retention and conversations about skilling. We need to identify the importance of care worker roles and about giving them the skills for the job across Health and Social Care. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing explained that the Social care Wales staff register and equivalent body in health, had worked together to raise awareness of the skills shortage. I-Care Wales Bridgend looked at how you recruit staff as there were concerns that people would rather go into retail. She explained that the authority was looking at growing our own. The Head of Adult Social Care explained that there were staff shortages in adult services, occupational therapists, social workers in Children's Services. She noted the M4 corridor and the lack of a national pay scale, with other authorities' such as RCT giving an incentive, along with Caerphilly, who pay more. People can ultimately move around. She further noted that there had been a concerted effort in Children's Services and noted that they still lost staff, but often internally. The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Years noted the recent services of job fairs, but reiterated the lack of national pay scale.

A member commented that the size of the document did not make it easy to consult upon and noted the action plan at the end of the document was incomplete and sought clarification that this was work in progress. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing explained that it was indeed work in progress and recognised that it did look stark, but will be populated.

A member enquired whether there was any mention of a cooperative model in social care, and felt this type of model should be encouraged e.g. direct payments, and felt this would be good to see incorporated into a long-term strategy. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing noted further work was required to develop alternative community models including cooperatives and would take that out to consultation with groups. In relation to direct payments, she was looking at trusts, and cooperatives, and felt there was opportunity here, and acknowledge that it didn't jump out in the document enough. The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Years felt it would be useful to get the Wales Cooperative centre to talk to us, on a localised basis.

Members wished to make the following comments and conclusions:

A Member proposed that that communication with the larger Town Councils upon the Well-being agenda funding could identify potential ways they could connect in overlapping areas with outreach areas to reach the maximum need and not waste resources.

A Member welcomed the audit of the population but felt that an audit of skills and work was needed, with cooperation from further and higher education upon future skills and knowledge required for service delivery.

Members expressed concern about difficulty recruiting and questioned how much recruitment had been undertaken, and how regularly adult services recruitment is undertaken.

Members recognised the population needs assessment as good practice and requested that it is disseminated to Members and that the good practice of the population assessment be shared with other services.

Members recommend that the Wales Cooperative Centre be invited to present to the Authority regarding Cooperative Models.

168. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny presented the Committee with the topics scheduled for the next two Committee meetings in Appendix A, as follows:

- 23 March 2020 - Shared Regulatory Services;
- 30 April 2020 - Replacement Local Development Plan Planning Process.

The Committee requested:

- That the report includes analysis of the development plan, Consultation process especially outside of planning, S106 Partnership Opportunities, how links in with growth in job opportunities, school modernisation, post 16 Education.
- That the appropriate Cabinet Member and Officers from Education, Social Services, Housing, and Planning be invited to attend.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny drew Members’ attention to the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees’ Forward Work Programme which included the topics prioritised and agreed by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the March round of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees in Table 1, and the list of proposed future topics in Table 2.

She advised the Committee of the following updates to table 1:

- The Combined Meeting of SOSC1 and SOSC2 scheduled for 9 March had been moved to 19 March at 2.30pm to consider reports upon Learner Travel and Post 16 Education post-consultation as requested.
- Youth Offending had been confirmed as a topic for SOSC1 on 20 April.
- Further clarification upon the scope of the Waste Management / Refuse Centre report to SOSC3 on 27 April would be requested at the March meeting.

169. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 12:59