

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1

19 OCTOBER 2020

### REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL, HR & REGULATORY SERVICES

#### FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

#### 1. Purpose of report.

- a) To present proposed initial items for the Committee's draft interim Forward Work Programme;
- b) To request any specific information the Committee identify to be included in the item for the next meeting;
- c) To request the Committee to identify any further items for consideration on the Forward Work Programme for the remainder of the municipal calendar of meetings, using the agreed criteria form.

#### 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:

1. **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.
2. **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. **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

##### Scrutiny Update

3.1 Following the Covid-19 Pandemic lockdown in March, Scrutiny Committees were initially postponed as the Council focussed upon key priorities in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. A report was presented to Cabinet in June 2020 requesting that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) consider the creation of a Cross-Party Recovery Panel. The COSC met on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and approved

the establishment of a Recovery Panel with the aim of shaping, informing and advising Cabinet on the Council's recovery planning to form the basis of the recovery phase of the pandemic. The Panel met 6 times and heard from 5 sets of invitees between 4<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> August 2020 and produced recommendations to COSC on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020 which were further reported to Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> September, and a formal response from Cabinet is expected. The Recovery Panel is now awaiting the Public Service Board's Community Impact Assessment to consider the findings, before selecting the next area of focus to be examined in greater detail.

- 3.2 A Combined meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees 1 and 2 scheduled in March was postponed due to lockdown, but was subsequently held remotely via Skype for Business on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020. Scrutiny considered proposals for Post-16 Education and Learner Travel and made recommendations to Cabinet upon the proposals. Cabinet considered the Scrutiny recommendations for Post-16 Education on the 21<sup>st</sup> July and took a decision on the preferred option, and considered the recommendations upon Learner Travel on the 15<sup>th</sup> September' and deferred the decision to amend the Local Authority's Learner Travel Policy until after the review of the current statutory distances by Welsh Government in March 2021.
- 3.3 Planning and preparations for this year's cycle of Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) meetings commenced well ahead of the first meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020, with 3 meetings being supported to date, and arrangements are underway for the fourth meeting.
- 3.4 Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings did not recommence while Scrutiny Officers supported 6 meetings of the Recovery Panel during August, to enable the Panel to conclude its initial recommendations to be reported to COSC and Cabinet in September.

#### Recommencing of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 3.5 The Schedule of Meetings for the remaining municipal year was agreed at Annual Council on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020. As the Recovery Panel has now been established, it is recognised that, moving forward, meetings of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees will need to be focused and strategic to avoid a duplication of work.

#### Forward Work Programme

- 3.6 Under the terms of the Council's Constitution, each Overview and Scrutiny Committee must publish a Forward Work Programme (FWP) as far as it is known.
- 3.7 An effective FWP will identify the issues that the Committee wishes to focus on during the year and provide a clear rationale as to why particular issues have been selected, as well as the approach that will be adopted; i.e. will the Committee be undertaking a policy review/ development role ("Overview") or performance management approach ("Scrutiny").
- 3.8 The FWPs will remain flexible and will be revisited at each COSC meeting with input from each Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SOSC) and any information gathered from Forward Work Programme meetings with Corporate Directors and Cabinet.

#### **4. Current situation / proposal.**

- 4.1 Following the approval of the schedule of Scrutiny Committee meeting dates at Annual Council on 30<sup>th</sup> September, the scheduling of standing statutory reports to Scrutiny Committees upon: the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Performance, the Corporate Plan, Budget Monitoring, Scrutiny Annual Report, etc. has been mapped.
- 4.2 This Forward Work Programme Update report is being submitted to the Committee for consideration and the outcome will be fed back to COSC on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 to set a focussed overall Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.
- 4.3 At the time of reporting, the Council has been advised that the Local Government Financial Settlement from Welsh Government will be later than expected, and so scrutiny of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) will need to be considered by Scrutiny Committees after Cabinet considers the draft MTFS proposals on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and not in the December cycle of meetings as originally planned. Consequently, arrangements will be made to move the date of the January meeting to facilitate this, subject to approval by Council.
- 4.4 It is proposed that it would be timely that the Committee receives an updated briefing from the Corporate Director – Education and Family Support upon the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic upon the Education and Family Support Service area and the operational response at its next meeting on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 at 9.30am. The Committee is therefore asked to identify any specific information they would like to be included in this update for their next meeting.

#### Identification of Further Items

- 4.5 The Committee is requested to identify any further items for consideration on the interim Scrutiny Forward Work Programme for the remainder of the municipal calendar of meetings, using the prior agreed criteria form. 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.

#### Corporate Parenting

- 4.6 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.
- 4.7 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.

### Scrutiny Member Training

4.8 Members may recall that Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Questioning Skills Training for Scrutiny Members and Training for Scrutiny Chairs was postponed due to the national lockdown. However WLGA can now offer the training via Microsoft Teams software, which has recently been installed on Members' devices. It is therefore proposed that the following sessions be provided via Microsoft Teams (dates to be arranged):

- One session of Scrutiny Questioning Skills for all Scrutiny Members;
- One session of Scrutiny Chairs' Training for 3 Scrutiny Chairs, and invite the Chair of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel, the Chair of the Cross-Party Recovery Panel and the Chair of the Public Services Board Scrutiny Panel.

## **5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules.**

5.1 The work of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee relates to the review and development of plans, policy or strategy that form part of the 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. Any changes to the structure of the Scrutiny Committees and the procedures relating to them would require the Bridgend County Borough Council constitution to be updated.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 There are no equality impacts arising directly from 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 The delivery of the Forward Work Programme will be met from within existing resources for Overview and Scrutiny support.

## **9. Recommendations.**

9.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Confirm the proposed initial items for the Committee's draft interim Forward Work Programme in paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 above;
- b) Identify any specific information the Committee wish to be included in the item for the next meeting;
- c) Request the Committee to identify any further items for consideration on the Forward Work Programme for the remainder of the municipal calendar of meetings, using the agreed criteria form.

**K Watson**  
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**13 October 2020**

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**Background documents:** None