

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2 DECEMBER 2020

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

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

1. Purpose of report

- a) To present the proposed initial items for the draft interim Forward Work Programme, including those items delegated to the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
- b) To request any specific information the Committee identifies to be included in the items for the next meeting, including invitees they wish to attend;
- 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 focused 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 6th 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 4th and 25th August 2020 and produced recommendations to COSC on 7th September 2020 which were further reported to Cabinet on 15th September, and a formal response from Cabinet has now been received and is being reported to this Committee meeting. Members of the Recovery Panel have recently received the Public Service Board's Community Impact Assessment to read and reflect upon the content in full, prior to its next meeting in December, to utilise the information when the Panel considers and selects its next key area of focus to be examined in greater detail.
- 3.2 A Combined meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees 1 and 2 was held remotely via Skype for Business on 13th 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 21st July 2020 and took a decision on the preferred option, and considered the recommendations upon Learner Travel on 15th September 2020 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 24th July 2020, with 3 meetings being supported to date, and arrangements are underway for the fourth meeting.

Recommencing of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 3.4 The Schedule of Meetings for the remaining municipal year was agreed at the Annual Meeting of Council on 30th 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

- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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”).

- 3.7 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 the Annual Meeting of Council on 30th 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 Forward Work Programme Update reports have been submitted to Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees held in October / November for consideration, with the outcomes being fed back to this Committee to set a focused overall Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.
- 4.3 At the time of the reports, the Council had been advised that due to the revised timing of the Local Government financial settlement from Welsh Government, scrutiny of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) would need to be considered by Scrutiny Committees after Cabinet considers draft MTFS proposals on 19th January 2021 and not in the December cycle of meetings as originally planned. Consequently, arrangements have been made to move the date of the January meetings to facilitate this, as approved by Council on 18th November 2020.
- 4.4 At the first meeting of SOSC 1, 2 and 3 which were held in October and November, the Committees received Forward Work Programme Updates and agreed to receive updated briefings from the relevant Corporate Director upon the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic upon their Service areas and the operational response, in the next meetings in December and that the MTFS would be considered in the January cycle of meetings, for the reasons stated in paragraph 4.3 above.

Identification of Further Items

- 4.5 The SOSCs were also asked whether they wished 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. The SOSCs agreed it would be prudent to wait until the Corporate Directors report to their December meetings, before identifying further items for consideration for inclusion in the Forward Work Programme.
- 4.6 The draft interim Forward Work Programme for COSC and the SOSCs is presented below:

First Cycle of Meetings (for information):

Scrutiny Committee:	Date:	Report:
Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1	19 th October 2020	- Forward Work Programme Update;
Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2	11 th November 2020	- Nomination to Corporate Parenting Committee;
Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3	16 th November 2020	- Nomination to Public Services Board Scrutiny Panel.
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	2 nd December 2020	- Nomination of a Chairperson; - Budget Monitoring 2020-21 Quarter 2 Revenue Forecast; - Cabinet response to Cross-Party Recovery Panel Recommendations; - Nomination to Corporate Parenting Committee; - Nomination to Public Services Board Scrutiny Panel; - FWP Update Report.

Second Cycle of Meetings:

Directors have been requested to present a verbal update upon the impact of Covid-19 upon their service area / their operational response, at the next SOSC meetings:

Scrutiny Committee:	Date:	Report:
Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1	7 th December 2020	Corporate Director - Education and Family Support
Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2	14 th December 2020	Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing
Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3	17 th December 2020	Corporate Director – Communities
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	14 th January 2020	- Corporate Plan 18-22 reviewed for 21-22; - Quarter 2 Performance; - <i>Capital Strategy 21-22 onwards (may be at this meeting or with MTFS in January meetings below.)</i>

Third Cycle of Meetings:

Scrutiny Committee:	Date:	Report:
Combined Scrutiny Committee of all Scrutiny Members for	Wednesday 20 th January 2021 at 10am	Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy for: - Education & Family Support; - Communities.
Combined Scrutiny Committee of all Scrutiny Members for	Thursday, 21 st January 2021 at 10am	Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy for: - Social Services & Wellbeing; - Chief Executive's.
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Monday, 1 st February 2021 at 10am	Medium Term Financial Strategy and Draft Budget Consultation Process (to present the Committee with the final report of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) and the responses from all the Subject the SOSCs and the final BREP Recommendations upon the Draft Budget Proposals and MTFS.

Corporate Parenting

- 4.7 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.
- 4.8 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

- 4.9 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. Following consultation with Scrutiny Chairs, the following training sessions have been arranged via Microsoft Teams:
- One session of Scrutiny Questioning Skills for all Scrutiny Members on Monday 30th November at 2pm;

- One session of Scrutiny Chairs' Training for 3 Scrutiny Chairs, 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 on Wednesday, 25th November at 10am.

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 draft interim Forward Work Programme in paragraphs 4.6 above, including the items delegated to the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
- b) Identify any specific information the Committee wish to be included in the item for the next meeting, including invitees they wish to attend;
- c) 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.

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26 November 2020

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