

**CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2022**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD IN HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES/REMOTELY - VIA  
MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2022 AT 10:00**

Present

Councillor A Williams – Chairperson

H T Bennett  
M L Hughes

F D Bletsoe  
M Jones

P Davies  
G Walter

S J Griffiths  
AJ Williams

Officers:

Lucy Beard	Scrutiny Officer
Lynne Berry	Group Manager Housing & Community Regeneration
Joanne Ginn	Housing Solutions Team Leader
Ryan Jones	Strategic Housing Commissioning Manager
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Manager
Meryl Lawrence	Senior Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Jessica Mclellan	Scrutiny Officer
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Richard Granville, Councillor Ross Penhale-Thomas and Councillor Tim Thomas.

Councillor Heidi Bennett gave her apologies from 11.30am and Councillor Paul Davies gave his apologies from 12.30pm.

Officers:

Carys Lord - Chief Officer - Finance, Performance and Change  
Janine Nightingale – Corporate Director for Communities

Invitees:

Councillor Jane Gebbie - The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing  
Councillor Neelo Farr - Cabinet Member for Regeneration

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Freya Bletsoe and Councillor Amanda Williams declared personal interests in agenda item 4 as a person known to them is in temporary accommodation.

26. BUDGET MONITORING 2022-23 QUARTER 2 REVENUE FORECAST

The Deputy Head of Finance presented the report, the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with an update on the Council's revenue financial position as at 30 September 2022.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Head of Finance and Members discussed the following:

- Whether the funds from the projected underspend on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme needed to be returned to Welsh Government or

retained in general Council funds and, considering the cost-of-living crisis, whether it was prudent to have a modest raise in the Council Tax to ensure a higher collection rate.

- The meaning of the term, 'channel shift pressures'.
- Where the one-off efficiency savings would be made, whether they had yet been identified and whether there had been any applications received from Directorates to draw down from the Budget Reduction Contingency Reserve.
- What alternatives were being considered to the most significant budget reduction proposals unlikely to be achieved in full in the financial year.
- Reasons for the significant variances, particularly projected overspends, in the each of the Directorates including the projected:
  - overspend in Adult Community Learning;
  - overspend in Learning Disabilities Home Care and Day Opportunities;
  - overspend and volatility in Planning and Development; and
  - underspend in Housing and Homelessness and the possible impact of the 6-month Ukrainian Refugee Host Sponsorship coming to an end.
- Steps being taken to try to address the workforce challenges within Social Services, the cost and reliability of agency staff and difficulties with recruitment across the Authority.
- The terminology around the use of reserves for capital projects, how often they are reviewed and how the purpose of reserves held could best be communicated to the public.

The Chairperson advised that there were no further questions for the Invitees, thanked Invitees for their attendance and, advised that if they were not required for the next Item, they may leave the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee made the following Recommendations:

1. The Committee fully supports the Council's discussions with the UK Government regarding further funding or continuation of the 'Homes for Ukraine' Scheme and noted the impact of the 6-month sponsorship period implemented through the Scheme coming to an end and the risk of refugees becoming homeless. The Committee agreed to monitor this as part of their FWP.
2. That when the Council look to make a press release regarding the upcoming budget consultation that Officers be mindful of improving communication to residents and improving understanding of the budget and purpose of reserves held.

**Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP)**

3. That BREP consider how the budget is set for the Social Services and Wellbeing (SSWB) Directorate to reflect the demographics of the County Borough, the level of demand and the statutory duties of the Directorate.

4. That early indications of each Directorate's proposed draft budgets be presented to BREP with potential options for budget reductions at the next related meeting each Director has been invited to attend.

and the Committee requested:

5. That they receive greater detail on the reasons for the 56.2% variance and significant overspend in the Planning and Development section of the Communities Directorate which the Committee noted was an understaffed department.
6. A written response from the Corporate Director -Social Services and Wellbeing on the following:
  - a. The reliability of agency workers and providers;
  - b. The cost difference between an agency worker compared to a full time Social Worker;
  - c. On average, how many agency workers work in the SSWB Directorate; and
  - d. The average length of stay for agency workers in the SSWB Directorate.

## 27. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

The Head of Performance and Partnerships presented the report the purpose of which was to update the Committee on the provision of temporary accommodation within Bridgend County Borough Council.

The Chair thanked the Head of Performance and Partnerships and Members discussed the following:

- Concerns about whether the current service procurement measures were the most appropriate to ensure protection for the most vulnerable people in our communities and what lessons could be learned from recent negotiations with commercial temporary accommodation providers, acknowledging that the most recent matter involved an extension of an existing agreement rather than a new contract.
- Whether the 21 individuals placed into temporary accommodation were in accommodation provided by contracted providers and concerns about whether their placements were at risk.
- Whilst acknowledging the pressures on temporary accommodation, the likely impact of Part 4 of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 on the availability of private and social rental properties its effect on the Authority.
- That the new legislation could result in empty properties coming back into use more quickly and the positive impact this could have on Bridgend.
- Whether the new legislation regarding fitness for human habitation apply to temporary accommodation.
- Concerns regarding the upheaval and stress caused to a family moving into temporary accommodation and the package of support offered to families in this situation.

The Chairperson advised that there were no further questions for the Invitees, thanked Invitees for their attendance and advised that they may leave the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee made the following Recommendation:

7. That a review be conducted on the procurement of temporary accommodation and how to secure its longevity and that this be reported back to the Committee at an appropriate time.

and the Committee requested:

Information on the package of support that is provided to families and individuals relocated to temporary accommodation with particular consideration of the impact on the welfare of children who are relocated away from family and friends and whether they have to change school.

28. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Committee with the Forward Work Programme (FWP) in Appendix A for discussion and consideration, requested any specific information the Committee identified to be included in the items for the next two meetings, including invitees they wished to attend, requested the Committee to identify any further items for consideration on the FWP having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 4.3 and presented the FWPs for the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees 1, 2 and 3 as Appendices B, C and D for coordination and oversight of the overall FWP.

She also advised that the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet was attached as Appendix E to track responses to the Committee's recommendations made at previous meetings and the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheets for each Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee were also attached as Appendices F, G and H.

There were no further items identified for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 4.3, and this could be revisited at the next meeting.

There were no requests to include specific information in the item for the next meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee considered and approved its Forward Work Programme in Appendix A, noted the Forward Work Programmes for the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees following consideration in their latest respective Committee Meetings in Appendix B, C and D, and noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheets to track responses to the Committees' recommendations made at previous meetings in Appendices E, F, G and H.

29. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.