

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - MONDAY, 3 JULY 2023

**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 MONDAY, 3 JULY 2023 AT 10:00**

Present

Councillor A Williams – Chairperson

H T Bennett	F D Bletsoe	P Davies	RM Granville
M L Hughes	M Jones	RL Penhale-Thomas	T Thomas
G Walter	AJ Williams		

Apologies for Absence

S J Griffiths

Officers:

Lucy Beard	Scrutiny Officer
Meryl Lawrence	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Jessica Mclellan	Scrutiny Officer

61. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

RESOLVED: That Councillor Alex Williams be elected as Chairperson of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year.

62. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Councillors declared personal interests in Agenda item 4:

- Cllr Heidi Bennett as an employee of an organisation which employs community navigators and as a member of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board (CTMRPB);
- Cllr Jane Gebbie as Chair of CTMRPB; and
- Cllr Amanda Williams as a family member is in a residential care home.

63. REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2022-23

The Chief Officer, Finance Performance and Change presented the report, the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with an update on the Council's revenue financial performance for the year ended 31st March 2023.

The Chair thanked the Chief Officer, Finance Performance and Change and Members discussed the following:

Council Wide

- Variances in the budget and the robustness of the budget setting process.
- Resource and budgetary pressures and the need for funding, change and input from central Government in order to sustain essential services.
- Performance and data management, accuracy of information and scrutiny of accounts by Audit Wales and the Governance and Audit Committee.

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- The possibility of borrowing and draw down on earmarked reserves to ensure some projects in the Capital Programme proceed.

Workforce, Recruitment and Retention

- The impact of the number of vacancies on Human Resources (HR) and the likely impact on the budget if the Council were fully staffed.
- The approaches to advertising for vacancies and other methods of recruitment including development of relationships with schools and universities.
- Time taken to recruit a successful applicant to a post and the business partner model regarding co-working between HR and Directorates.
- National terms & conditions, rates of pay, the Authority's ability to compete with other local authorities and the private sector and the potential for future collaborative arrangements.

Education and Family Support

- The number of schools predicting deficit budgets, the Local Authority's contribution towards rising energy costs, the potential of staff redundancies and the impact of the number of pupils on the roll.
- Inflationary pressures and the challenge of recruitment into Catering Services and the impact on the provision of breakfast clubs and school meals.
- The factors contributing to the underspend in the Family Support Group.
- The vacancies in the Corporate Health and Safety Unit, the impact on delivery and what the Authority is doing to mitigate their effect.
- The Authority's generous home to school transport offer and the likely timescale for the publishing of the Guidance from Welsh Government.

Social Services and Wellbeing

- Reliance on and cost of agency workers to meet statutory duties and the impact on continuity for families.
- The role of Social Work Support Officers.
- Overspend and waiting times for Disabled Facilities Grants, the increased cost of equipment and works and its impact on the ability to support people to live safely at home.
- Capacity in care homes and cost of care for elderly residents.
- The demographic and the impact on demand and need to ensure sufficiency of service provision.
- Estimated future budget pressures and the importance of cost-effectiveness, innovation and preventative services.
- Remodelling of Day Services for older people and Learning Disability Services and the possibility of future remodelling of other services.

Communities

- Challenges of recruitment.
- Support for Member Referrals and ways to improve the efficiency of the Members Portal.
- Budgetary and staffing pressures in the Planning and Development.
- The free car parking offer and sustaining and transforming towns.
- Reasons for the delay in opening the Pyle Community Recycling Centre.
- An update regarding the commercial letting of Ravenscourt.
- The impact of the underspend in the Playgrounds budget.

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- Reasons for the delay in the Permitting Scheme for road works.

Chief Executive

- The impact of printers and photocopying on the overspend on the ICT budget.
- The risk and potential cost of a possible cyber attack.

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

Council Wide

1. That all national legislative commitments and statutory services need to be fully funded by central Government and that the Committee fully support Cabinet in lobbying Westminster and Welsh Government to provide adequate funding to ensure a sustainable funding model in the future.
2. In order to manage the expectations of the public regarding future service provision, that there be a proactive corporate communications strategy setting out clearly the pressures within services, what can and cannot be achieved/maintained and what is funded by Council tax and what is funded by central UK funds through the Revenue Support Grant.
3. That consideration be given to how the information in Recommendation 2, above, be effectively communicated to the public, including consideration of putting the information on the Council website and in a newsletter accompanying Council Tax Demand letters.

Education and Family Support

4. That the Committee write to the Welsh Government expressing their concerns that any further cuts to the education budget would be unacceptable, given the 2% efficiency saving in 2023-24 and further annual 1% reductions predicted for forthcoming years.
5. The Committee acknowledged the difficulties of recruitment within catering services and the impact on the provision of breakfast clubs and requested an update on what was being done to ensure that vulnerable children were receiving breakfast before school.

and the Committee requested:

6. An update on when the Welsh Government review regarding home to school transport would realistically be published, given that no changes would be considered until the conclusion of the review.

Communities

The Committee made the following Recommendation:

7. That consideration be given to there being a dedicated resource to support the Communities Directorate in processing and responding to Member Referrals and that consideration be given to ways in which to make the Member's Portal more effective and efficient in keeping Members updated with the status of referrals.

Recruitment

The Committee expressed concern regarding the Council-wide issue of recruitment and retention and acknowledged that whilst Directorates were working on this in isolation, felt that it required a corporate approach focussing on the 7 Principles contained in the Corporate Plan.

The Committee therefore Recommended:

8. That an overarching workforce plan is needed to address the reasons for the Council not being commercially competitive and its inability to successfully recruit and retain staff.
9. That consideration be given to more integrated working between Human Resources and Directorates to avoid Directorates trying to address the issue of recruitment in isolation/in silos and to holistically strengthen the HR functions and achieve the objectives of the overarching Corporate Plan.
10. That the Council work with schools to inform students, before they choose their GCSE and A Level options, regarding the career prospects of working for the Local Authority, across a wide range of professions and specialisms and likewise work with Welsh-medium schools, given the shortage of Welsh speaking staff in the Authority. It was also recommended that the Council establish links with universities in order to secure graduate employees and to drive forward recruitment for the Authority.
11. That there should be an agreed National level of salaries and terms and conditions for all positions in local government in order to ensure that the Council has an equal footing in terms of competitiveness with other local authorities and the private sector.
12. That a review be undertaken regarding the need to advertise in national newspapers for jobs over a certain grade and whether these roles would attract more applicants if alternative and, possibly more local, advertising was pursued.

The Committee expressed concern regarding the loss of successful candidates due to the delay in obtaining a Disclosure and Barring Service check and queried the reason for the delay and whether there was anything that could be done to reduce the waiting time to stop candidates finding work elsewhere.

64. **CORPORATE PLAN DELIVERY PLAN 2023-24 AND PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK**

The Chief Executive presented the report, the purpose of which was to propose a one-year Corporate Plan Delivery Plan (CPDP) to support the Council's new Corporate Plan and an updated Corporate Performance Framework to help the Council to measure progress on it.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive, the Committee commended the Corporate Policy and Public Affairs Manager and the Corporate Improvement Officer for their work on the Plans and Framework and Members discussed the following:

- The role of the Governance and Audit Committee and avoiding duplication.
- The importance of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART) Performance Indicators, avoidance of baseline setting unless necessary and a possible move towards Objective and Key Results.

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- The role of members of the public and the importance of communication and management of expectations.
- Ensuring the CPDP is meaningful and relatable for the public and all staff.
- The timeline and anticipated next steps for the CPDP.
- The concerns recently identified by Audit Wales, including data quality and accuracy.
- The importance of proportionate, clear and informative data.

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

13. That consideration be given to how the roles as set out in the 'I am a ...' section of the draft Performance Framework may be effectively cascaded and communicated to all staff and the public.

That future reports regarding performance be developed to include a holistic overview in the form of an executive summary to succinctly summarise performance as measured against the Corporate Plan. The Committee expressed concern regarding Officer time and effort required to present complex data and welcomed concise and proportionate information which could be more sustainable and influential.

65. CORPORATE PARENTING CHAMPION NOMINATION

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report, which requested the Committee to nominate one Member as its Corporate Parenting Champion to represent the Committee as an invitee to meetings of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting.

The Chairperson invited nominations, following which it was

RESOLVED: That Councillor Tim Thomas be nominated to represent Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee as an Invitee to meetings of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting.

66. CABINET RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS MADE ON THE CALL IN OF THE CABINET DECISION IN RELATION TO THE RECYCLING AND WASTE SERVICE POST 2024

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented the report, the purpose of which was to present the Committee with the Cabinet response to the Recommendations made by the Committee on the Call-In of the Decision of Cabinet of 14 June 2022, in relation to the report on Recycling and Waste Service Post 2024, submitted to Cabinet on 18 October 2022.

Following discussions regarding the reasons for the delay in the response being provided it was

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Cabinet response attached as Appendix A to the report.

67. 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

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any further items for consideration on the FWP having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 3.6, asked the Committee to note the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet to track responses to the Committee's recommendations made at previous meetings in Appendix B, the Directorate Performance Dashboards in Appendices C, D, E and F, the Regulatory Tracker in Appendix G and asked the Committee to note that a further update to the Tracker would be reported to a future meeting for information, following its report to Governance and Audit Committee.

The Committee requested that consideration be given to the scheduling of a report regarding the challenges of workforce, recruitment and retention, avoiding any duplication of work by the Governance and Audit Committee and that consideration be given to the scheduling of the report on Cyber Security at an appropriate time in the Committee's FWP for the upcoming year.

There were no further items identified for consideration on the FWP having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 3.6, and this could be revisited at the next meeting when the Quarter 4 Performance data 2022-23 was due to be presented.

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

RESOLVED: That the Committee approved the FWP in Appendix A subject to the inclusion of the above items and noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet in Appendix B, the Directorate Performance Dashboards in Appendices C, D, E and F and the Regulatory Tracker in Appendix G.

68. URGENT ITEMS

None.

The meeting closed at 15:14