

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 - MONDAY, 20 JANUARY 2025

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON MONDAY, 20 JANUARY 2025 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor JPD Blundell – Chairperson

S J Bletsoe

I Williams

MJ Williams

Present Virtually

C Davies
N Clarke

P W Jenkins

J E Pratt

G Walter

Apologies for Absence

RJ Collins, MJ Kearn and W J Kendall

Invitees:

Councillor John Spanswick
Councillor Jane Gebbie
Councillor Paul Davies

Leader
Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member Social Services, Health and Wellbeing
Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment

Mark Shepherd
Carys Lord
Janine Nightingale

Chief Executive
Chief Officer – Finance, Housing and Change
Corporate Director for Communities

Deborah Exton
Victoria Adams

Deputy Head of Finance
Finance Manager – Communities, Education, Early Years and Young People

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Officers:

Rachel Keepins
Lucy Beard

Democratic Services Manager
Scrutiny Officer

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Martin Williams – Personal – Member of Coety Higher Community Council who are processing a large Community Asset Transfer

91. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> That the minutes of the meeting of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 dated 2 December 2024 be approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	20 January 2025

92. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025-26 to 2028-29

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> Following detailed consideration and discussions with Cabinet Members and Senior Officers, the Committee made the following recommendations and requests for additional information: Recommendations: <u>Budget Pressures</u> 1. Members discussed in detail the additional revenue funding required, over and above the current budget, to operate the waste service as an in-house service from 2026-27, as agreed by Cabinet in November 2024. Following consideration of the Future Waste report on the 30 September 2024 by the Committee, Members had felt that more investigation was needed to provide further analysis on whether the service should be brought in-house or not, and also recommended that a potential extension of the existing contract be considered.
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There was disappointment from Members that the previous recommendations made by the Committee had not appeared to have been considered and that there was now a £1.2 million budget pressure sooner than it was necessarily needed.

The Committee **recommended** that the insourcing of the service be looked at again, that modelling and further analysis be done and that the current contract be deferred for a further year to get a better understanding of the situation. Members were concerned that the costs predicted and associated budget pressure for this set for 2026-27 could potentially manifest itself during 2025-26 and also, whether there then could potentially be further recurring pressures for next year.

2. Members discussed the recurrent budget pressure associated with the closure of Bridgend Market and the recurring 300k per annum that was still being paid on the lease, as well as holding costs and covering the cost of the small market hall which was opened in the Rhiw centre where 5 traders currently operate. Members were informed that the future of Bridgend Market Hall itself was still being determined.

Members expressed concern that with the hundred-year lease that was taken out initially in 1971; the authority could potentially be paying out 300k for the next 47 years which would accumulate into millions.

The Committee **recommended** that this agreement be explored further to find a long-term resolution and address this funding pressure.

Budget Reduction Proposals

3. Members discussed the ongoing reduction in income across parking services and the specifics on the general downturn in car park income.

Officers explained that since the pandemic the Authority had seen a drop in its entirety across all the car parks with the exception of Porthcawl, in Salt Lake and Rest Bay car parks where the number of visitors has increased.

Members expressed that in their own experience, the car parks in Bridgend were very often full and considering the regeneration plans for Bridgend Town Centre, more car parking provision would be vital. The Committee **recommended** that further exploration be undertaken and evidence examined and reported to the Committee with regard to the car parking offer in the town centre and

the budget pressure as a whole.

4. Members discussed at length the reduction in staff who undertake enforcement activities relating to waste. The Committee were concerned with the failure to issue enforcement notices at present and feared what the outcome would be should the enforcement team be cut by such a significant amount.

Recognising the difficulty there was with the burden of proof, Members were greatly concerned there was a risk that the ability to react to these issues would be reduced if the cut was made and therefore the Committee urged and **recommended** the Cabinet revisit the reduction with a view to removing or reducing the proposal.

5. Members expressed concern over the budget reductions relating to increasing fees on Bereavement services, i.e. burial charges by 20%, and stopping the bi-annual supply of blue refuse sacks to all residents. The Committee felt that these proposals, particularly the increase in burial fees, could have a significant impact on the public and **recommended** that if there is any leeway or additional funding potentially available, or changes to budget proposals, that these reductions be prioritised for reconsideration and either removed, or, in the instance of the 20% proposed increase in burial fees, at least reduced.

Supplementary Recommendations

6. Members discussed the Porthcawl Metrolink Station and the justification behind having to pay ongoing revenue costs. They expressed their frustration that when first scrutinising the Metrolink Station they were not informed of the ongoing costs of £100,000 a year until the other redevelopment went ahead.

The Committee **recommended** that any potential revenue liabilities associated with future capital programmes and projects be looked into and predicted as far as possible and fully disclosed when the decisions are made, especially in this time of austerity.

7. Members expressed concerns over the current conditions of highways within the County Borough and the time taken to action any reported issues. Members questioned whether the proposed approximate £1M increase for Capital funding was sufficient to cover the work needed in the forthcoming year. The Committee **recommended** that consideration be given to whether there is any additional funding that could be allocated to this budget to ensure Highways are maintained to an optimal standard.

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	<p>8. <u>Forward Work Programme</u></p> <p>The Committee Recommended that the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Steering Group (either alone or utilising external, objective assistance) assess and review the Council's current CAT programme and consider its impact, and success stories, research any good practice from other Welsh local authorities and reflect on whether any lessons can be learned to progress and improve the Council's future CAT programme.</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Following detailed consideration and discussion with the Cabinet Member, Officers and Invitees, the Committee made the following requests for information:</p> <p>9. Members requested figures to show the income, expenditure and overall cost to Bridgend County Borough Council for burial services.</p> <p>10. Members asked Officers for clarification on what other Local Authorities provide with regard to the supply of blue refuse sacks to residents.</p> <p>11. Further to the appointment of the 2 x S.106 Officers, to facilitate a S.106 & Infrastructure Delivery Team within the Planning & Development Services the Corporate Director agreed that these Officers could potentially come along to a SOSC 3 to explain their roles.</p>
Date Decision Made	20 January 2025

93. Forward Work Programme Update

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>That the Committee approved the Forward Work Programme (FWP) in Appendix A subject to the inclusion of the recommendation below, noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet in Appendix B and noted that the FWP as approved by the Committee would be reported to the next meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee:</p>
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	1. The Committee requested that the outcome of the review to be undertaken by the CAT Steering Group, referred to in Recommendation 8 above, be added to the Forward Work Programme for the Committee. The Committee requested that a sample of Town and Community Councils with experience of CATs be invited to attend for this item to share their experiences, challenges and best practice, etc.
Date Decision Made	20 January 2025

94. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None.
Date Decision Made	20 January 2025

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this [link](#)

The meeting closed at 8:17pm.