

No.

ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 14th December, 2021.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The Meeting recording is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor B.E. Brooks (Chair), S. Sivagnanam (Vice-Chair); P. Drake, V.P. Driscoll, G. John, M.J.G. Morgan, A.R. Robertson, L.O. Rowlands and S.T. Wiliam.

Also present: L. Burnett, P.G. King and N. Moore.

654 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chairman read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

655 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor V.J. Bailey.

656 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 16th November, 2021 be approved as a correct record.

657 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

658 DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2022-23 (REF) -

The reference from Cabinet of 22nd November, 2021 was presented.

The Committee was advised that the Cabinet report had been referred as part of the programme of consultation requesting that any comments be shared with the Head of Policy and Business Transformation, and to inform revisions to the Annual

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Delivery Plan (ADP), as per the timetable for consultation set out in paragraph 2.15 of the Cabinet report.

The current ADP ended in March 2022 and therefore a new Plan needed to be approved and published setting out the Council's priorities for the next year. The Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and associated commitments for 2022 - 2023, as outlined in the draft ADP, would be reflected in Service Plans for 2022 - 2023. Work had commenced to develop the service plans which would be presented to the relevant Scrutiny Committees in the New Year together with proposed service improvement targets for 2022 - 2023.

Following consideration of the report, the Scrutiny Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED - T H A T the Cabinet reference, report and appended Annual Delivery Plan 2022-2023 Consultation Draft be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

659 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021 AND REVISED BUDGET FOR 2021/22 (DEH) -

The purpose of the report was to advise Committee of the progress relating to revenue and capital expenditure for the period 1st April to 30th September 2021 and the revised budget for 2021/22.

It was reported that the revenue position for 2021/22 would be challenging with the continuing pressure for services both operationally and financially as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. This would impact both as a result of incurring additional expenditure but also from a loss of income. Funding had been provided by Welsh Government to cover some of the issues. It was reported that the Neighbourhood Services & Transport department is currently projected to have an adverse variance of £1.5m against the 2021/22 budget and that this overspend is funded via the Neighbourhood Services & Transport Reserve. An efficiency target for the year had been set at £162k., the capital budget had been set at £25.229m this financial year and the 2021/22 budget had been amended for internal transfers and technical adjustments.

Councillor S. Sivagnanam queried when would source separation recycling be brought in for residents of Penarth and Dinas Powys. The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport advised that a Waste Transfer Station was currently being built at the Atlantic Trading Estate in Barry. This would likely be up and running some time during September next year.

Councillor S. Sivagnanam also queried progress relating active travel improvements between Cardiff Bay and Penarth. In reply, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that it was planned to produce a

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report on proposals in the next few months, which would include a range of options.

In reply to a query regarding when the Waste Transfer Station in Barry was first proposed, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport advised that she would report back on the exact start time but this would've been a number of years ago. There had been some issues which had caused delays such as sustainable drainage and a complicated Planning process, however construction was now in progress and anticipated to be completed during 2022. It was planned for an update report to be provided on this project some time during 2022. The Committee was also advised that the Recycling Reuse Shop should be open within 3 to 4 months.

With regard to a query raised by Councillor G. John around the location of the proposed train station for St. Athan, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport advised that a study had been initiated to look at appropriate sites, and the findings of this would inform whether the project could be taken forward.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the position with regard to the 2021/22 revenue and capital budgets be noted.
- (2) T H A T the revised budget for 2021/22 be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

660 INITIAL REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2022/23 (DEH) -

The purpose of the report was to submit for consultation, the initial revenue budget proposals for 2022/23.

The Accountant advised that the Council was required under statute to fix the level of Council Tax for 2022/23 by 11th March, 2022 and in order to do so, would have to agree a balanced revenue budget by that date.

The Council's provisional settlement had not yet been announced by Welsh Government and was expected this year on 21st December, 2021 with the final settlement due to be published on 1st March, 2022. Even though this crucial information had not yet been received, the budget setting and consultation process had to commence to meet statutory deadlines.

The Officer drew Members' attention to the table of shortfalls in funding, at paragraph 2.8 of the report, that were substantially higher than had been identified

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in previous years. He advised that due to the considerable uncertainty and the financial pressures on government, the financial plan had been based on three different scenarios with regards to funding from Welsh Government for the coming three financial years – a cash neutral settlement, a 1% reduction each year for the period of the Plan and a 1% increase each year. The Officer added that it could be the case that grant funding was provided going forward targeting specific service areas or initiatives. As the Council had seen positive settlements in the past year that in part reflected the increasing population of the County, a fourth scenario had been included that considered a scenario where the settlement for 2022/23 was at the same level as the 2021/22 settlement (4.42%).

Appendix 1 to the report set out the cost pressures within the remit of the Committee to the total of £2.882m. For context, the Officer added that the total amount of cost pressures across the whole of the Council was £22.5m.

Councillor G. John stated that this was the most challenging time financially for a long time, adding that the Committee could not do much until the settlement from Welsh Government was known. Therefore, all the cost pressures needed to be referred to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

Councillor L. Burnett (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration), with permission to speak, stated that Education and Social Services were a large percentage of the Council's overall budget. That left just over 26% for all other services including Waste and Highways. It was also important to recognise that costs had gone up with inflation currently at 4%. That was on top of the National Insurance increase which represented an extra £1m cost to the Council from April next year. The Cabinet Member explained that there was a reality of the Council in not responding to the financial challenges, as the £27m budget short fall for next year was very real. The Council had experienced austerity measures for over 11 years and services could no longer be cut to the bone. That was why the Council had been innovative and ambitious around the way some services were delivered, referring to the Big Fresh Catering Company as a successful example which turned a budget deficit into an operating surplus.

Councillor N. Moore (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance & Resources), with permission to speak, reiterated the comments of Councillor Burnett and that this was the most challenging financial time he had ever witnessed. In referring to the £2.8m cost pressures within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee he asked Members to remember that Neighbourhood Services and Transport had already used reserves of £1.5m to cover a budget shortfall for this year. Reserves were therefore already being used to balance the budget, and so the key for this process was to consider which services should the Council keep providing. With regards to Council Tax, the Executive Leader stated that Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) was currently just over 4%. Therefore, a rise in Council Tax at this level would not increase spending up to the Standard Spending Assessment for the Vale of Glamorgan. This would require a Council Tax increase of around 13%. The Executive Leader stated that he was not suggesting such a rise, but that highlighted the position of the Council, which had to achieve a balanced budget.

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Councillor A.R. Robertson stated that he appreciated the amount of pressure that the Council was under and queried the success of the Reshaping Services Programme and the decision to appoint two new Directors. In reply and in relation to Reshaping Services, the Executive Leader referred to the success of the Big Fresh Catering Company and the transfer of community libraries. Both were part of Reshaping Services. Other ways of working would've been implemented but the Council had seen continued financial reductions. With regard to the two extra Director positions, the Executive Leader stated that they would have an important role in taking on and tackling big issues facing the Council.

Councillor P. King (Cabinet Members for Neighbourhood Services and Transport), with permission to speak, referred to his service area which had been affected by circumstances outside of the Council's control. Not just Covid-19 or Brexit, but challenges such as the rise in energy costs. This rise had directly impacted on the financial savings achieved from the Council's roll out of LED street lights. In addition, the service had been affected by the rise in inflation which meant that cost of materials had also increased, as had the cost of fuel.

With regard to the LED street lighting project, Councillor L.R. Rowlands stated that reports had indicated that 70% of lamps had been converted, but if the original target of 90% had been achieved then the Council would've likely achieved more savings. In reply, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport confirmed that the current completion rate was around 90%, but there had been a delay which had not just been caused by Covid-19. The Officer added that if the lights had not been converted to LED, then costs to the service would've been a lot more. Therefore, it was the right decision to move to LED lighting. The remaining 10% were for the ornamental fixtures which were more difficult to replace.

The Chair referred to the cost pressure relating to Coastal Resorts and asked whether alternative ways could be explored to keep the resorts clean and to a high standard. For example, this could be through the greater use of volunteers. The Executive Leader suggested that one area he would look at was the possibility of introducing an ANPR car parking monitoring system at the car parks at Nells Point and Harbour Road. This would help to increase footfall and be an invest to save opportunity. The Committee agreed with the Chair's recommendation and the recommendation of the Executive Leader.

Councillor G. John then highlighted the importance to fund cost pressures relating to statutory services including, Sustainable Drainage, Waste and Highway Maintenance. The Chair stated that it was important for the Council to also explore alternative ways that all cost pressures could be provided. This was agreed by the Scrutiny Committee.

There being no further comments or queries, it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T within the area of Neighbourhood Services, the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee be advised of the importance to fund cost pressure 5 – £100k relating to Coastal Resorts in order to keep them open and attractive to visitors. In addition, the Council should explore alternative ways, such as the use of volunteers, to help maintain cleanliness and standards at our Coastal Resorts.
- (2) T H A T the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee considers the recommendation of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee for an ANPR car parking monitoring system to be introduced at Nells Point and Harbour Road car parks.
- (3) T H A T within the area of Neighbourhood Services, the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee be advised of the importance to fund cost pressures relating to statutory services such as Waste, SUDS (Sustainable Drainage) and Highway Maintenance.
- (4) T H A T the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee considers the recommendation of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee for the Council to explore alternative ways that services and the related cost pressures are delivered.

Reason for recommendations

- (1) In order to maintain standards at Coastal Resorts in order to attract visitors.
- (2) In order explore the possibility of introducing an ANPR car parking monitoring system to encourage more visitors and as an invest to save opportunity.
- (3) In order to maintain funding for statutory services.
- (4) To explore alternative ways that services can be delivered.

661 INITIAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2022/23 TO 2026/27 (DEH) -

The purpose of the report was to submit the Initial Capital Programme Proposals for 2022/23 to 2026/27 to Committee for consultation.

The Accountant highlighted that again the Provisional General Capital Funding for 2022/23 has not yet been announced by Welsh Government (WG) and is expected on 21st December 2021 with the Final Settlement due on 1st March 2022.

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The level of capital funding included in the report had assumed the Council would receive the same amount of General Capital Funding in 2022/23 as in 2021/22 and will then remain constant for the remainder of the period of the programme. General Capital Funding had therefore been assumed as £6.867m for 2022/23 which was made up of £3.438m General Capital Grant and £3.429m Supported Borrowing.

Appendix 1 set out the Initial Proposals for the Capital Programme for this Committee between 2022/23 and 2026/27 as approved on 10th March 2021, including any subsequent approvals and Appendix 2 set out the Capital bids for 2022/23. In total there were 22 bids submitted for this Committee which totalled £10.741m in 2022/23 and £23.871m over the 5 years of the capital programme. The Accountant highlighted the table at 2.6 which detailed the General Capital Funding and internal resources required to fund the proposed schemes for the Council as a whole for 2022/23. This totalled £62.223m

In being asked to comment on priorities, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that it was difficult to rank in order as all of the Capital Bids for her service area either reduced Council risk or improved public health and safety. For example, the Boverton Road retaining wall presented a safety risk to the Highway. Councillor G. John stated that as local ward member it was imperative for public safety that funding be provided for the Boverton Road retaining wall.

The Chair therefore suggested that all the Capital bids that related to health and safety needed to be funded and the Committee agreed for this to be referred to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

Subsequently it was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Corporate Performance and Resources Committee considers the importance of prioritising capital bids within the area of Neighbourhood Services relating to statutory services such as Waste and Highway Maintenance, in order to reduce risk and improve public health and safety.

Reason for recommendation

In order to fund capital bids relating to statutory services which reduce risk and improve public safety.

662 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE 2021/22 (MD) -

The purpose of the report was to present Quarter 2 performance results for the period 1st April, 2021 to 30th September, 2021 in delivering the Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

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The performance report presented progress at Quarter 2 (1st April to 30th September 2021) towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan (2021/22) commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

Positive progress had been made in delivering the in-year commitments in relation to the Annual Delivery Plan (2021/22). This performance had contributed to an overall GREEN status for the Plan at Quarter 2 (Q2).

All 4 Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives were attributed a Green performance status at Q2 to reflect the progress made to date. This was positive given the ongoing challenges arising from the pandemic. 95% (296 out of 313) of planned activities outlined in the Annual Delivery Plan had been attributed a Green performance reflecting the positive progress made during the Quarter, 2% (5) an amber status and 3% (12) of planned activities were attributed a Red status.

Of the 12 actions attributed a Red performance status during the Quarter, 25% (3) were directly as a result of service reprioritisation measures undertaken in response to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In relation to those areas, where appropriate, work was now recommencing as part of the recovery plans and strategy. Progress in relation to Coronavirus recovery was being reported to Members in the presentation accompanying the performance report and focused on highlighting issues pertinent to the Committee's remit. The Coronavirus recovery update formed part of quarterly performance reporting to ensure Members maintained an oversight of the recovery issues impacting on the work of their respective Committees. From this perspective, Members were requested to note the progress to date in relation to Coronavirus recovery.

Of the 42 quarterly performance measures aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, data was reported for 36 measures where a performance status was applicable. 61% (22) measures were attributed a Green performance Status, 6% (2), Amber status and 33% (12), Red status. Data was unavailable for 6 quarterly measures due to reprioritisation measures undertaken in response to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. A performance status was not applicable for 107 measures including a number of annual indicators (89) and those establishing baseline performance for the year (18).

In relation to the 12 measures attributed a Red performance status during the Quarter, the impact of COVID-19 had contributed to 58% (7) missing target.

In relation to the planned activities within the remit of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, 95% (97 out of 102) were attributed a Green performance status, 0 Amber status and 5% (5) Red status. Of the 5 attributed a Red performance status, the impact of COVID-19 was identified as a contributory factor in the reported slippage for 1 action. Of the 7 quarterly measures reported, 71% (5) were attributed a Green performance status, 14.5% (1) Amber status, and 14.5% (1) Red status. In relation to the 1 measure attributed a Red status, the impact of COVID-19 had contributed to missing the target for 0 of the measures. The report sought Elected Members' consideration of Q2 performance results and the proposed remedial actions to address areas of identified underperformance.

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Upon consideration, the Scrutiny Committee was recommended to refer their views and any recommendations to Cabinet for their consideration.

In response to a number of queries raised by Councillor A.R. Robertson, officers advised the following:

- RP/A004: Work with UK Government, Welsh Government and Cardiff Capital Region to support and promote inward investment projects. – the 3 pieces of work included the development of a master plan for Barry, a bid to UK Government's Levelling Up Fund and some investment schemes following on from that bid.
- NS/A010: Continue to progress the WeITAG studies which deliver transport improvements for Penarth to Cardiff Bay, M4 Junction 34 to A48 and Dinas Powys) – this work had been superseded due to a policy change by Welsh Government, so would now mainly focus on Active Travel proposals.
- NS/A017: Improve structures within Dinas Powys to enhance access to existing school and community establishments. – The structures referred to were the school and library bridges.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank staff for achieving some excellent results during extremely difficult times.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22 commitments, as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Wellbeing Objectives within the remit of the Committee, be noted.

(2) T H A T the remedial actions to be taken to address areas of underperformance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee be noted.

(3) T H A T the progress being made through the Council's Recovery Strategy and Directorate Recovery plans in response to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting regarding the progress being made towards achieving the Council's commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22 aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.

(2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting regarding how the Council is effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to meet its performance requirements as outlined in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and reflects the requirement of the

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Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in that the Council maximises its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.

(3) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting regarding the recovery issues impacting on the work of the Council within the remit of the Committee.