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HEALTHY LIVING AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid meeting held on 6th February, 2024.

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

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor J.E. Charles (Chair); Councillor N.C. Thomas (Vice-Chair); Councillors G. Ball, C.A. Cave, A.M. Collins, R. Fisher, E.J. Goodjohn, J. Lynch-Wilson and J.M. Norman.

Also present: L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), E. Goodjohn, H.C. Hamilton, W.A. Hennessy, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport, and Wellbeing), Dr. I.J. Johnson and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

778 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair 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.”

779 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors I. Buckley, M. Cowpe and C. Stallard.

780 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 9th January, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

781 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

782 SIX MONTH UPDATE: CARDIFF AND VALE UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD – CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILY HEALTH SERVICES –

Colleagues from the University Health Board were unable to attend the meeting due to conflicting priorities / commitments and had sent their apologies in advance

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of the meeting. Therefore, the item was not considered by the Committee.

783 LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT – YEAR 11 PERFORMANCE REPORT (DEH) –

The Operational Manager for Neighbourhood Services, Healthy Living and Performance introduced the report, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the performance of the Leisure Management Contract in relation to its eleventh year (1st August, 2022 to 31st July, 2023) and the first of the agreed contract extension to 2030, following site visits offered to the Committee at all four leisure centres in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Legacy Leisure, the Council's Leisure Management contractor, was required to produce an annual report detailing performance, service improvements and any operating issues. The report (Appendix A) was presented to the Committee to allow the opportunity to assess the performance of the Leisure Management Contract over the previous 12-month period.

The Operational Manager, with support from the external Area Contracts Manager for Legacy Leisure, highlighted a number of successes over the past year as the service had bounced back from the Covid-19 national pandemic. These included a significant increase in usage compared to last year, the refurbishment of key facilities within the Leisure Centres and the implementation of the new Active Communities Strategy.

The report also detailed further actions that had been taken in response to the work undertaken by Audit Wales on the Sustainable Development Principle in their review of Outsourced Leisure Provision in November 2020.

At the end of the report presentation, the Operational Manager advised that, following a comparison exercise undertaken in 2023, the Vale of Glamorgan Council remained the only Local Authority in Wales that generated a revenue profit from its leisure services. In addition, the external Area Contracts Manager added that leisure remained a non-essential product and therefore customer engagement was by choice alongside consideration of other daily costs/commitments. Leisure services were also heavily reliant on utilities which were still twice the price than in previous years despite the recent slight decrease.

The Chair began debate on the item by thanking the officers present for the enjoyable and informative Committee visits arranged at the four Leisure Centres in the Vale of Glamorgan. The Chair then commended the improvements as listed in the appended Legacy Leisure Annual Report, however suggested that the addition of key performance indicators against each contract year would be beneficial to measure progress against planned improvements and to gauge the success of sustainability for developments. In response, the Operational Manager for Neighbourhood Services, Healthy Living and Performance shared their frustration that there were not national indicators that could be used to demonstrate the work that the Council and Legacy Leisure had been able to undertake, however, as part of the recent contract extension negotiation, the Vale of Glamorgan Council had

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introduced local performance indicators, in partnership with Legacy Leisure, that would be reported in future reports presented to the Committee.

The Vice-Chair then echoed the Chair's comments with regards to a positive report being received and a successful working partnership with Legacy Leisure as well as the fact that increased customer numbers following the national pandemic was encouraging to hear. The Vice-Chair then referred to reports in local media in relation to CCTV being present in changing rooms in the Cardiff Authority area and sought reassurance from officers in relation to this matter for the Vale of Glamorgan. In response, the external Area Contracts Manager advised that CCTV was not present in changing villages in any of the leisure settings in the Vale of Glamorgan. The Manager noted that CCTV models were in place within Leisure Centres outside of the Vale of Glamorgan area, however there was no current need or plan to implement CCTV in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Chair then asked after the main challenges for the service going forward and therefore the key objectives hoping to be achieved. In reply, the external Area Contract Manager advised that, as a charity, Legacy Leisure was required to meet its budgetary targets and to deliver on the targets set internally. The service wished to see a continued customer growth which was already documented in the first six months of the next 12-month reporting period and therefore positive to see. The service was also having a positive impact on its service users in relation to both exercise and general wellbeing which was a key performance indicator and critical in relation to the performance of the service. Work was ongoing to modernise leisure facilities across the Vale of Glamorgan and improvements to the Colcot Support Centre as well as Llantwit Major Leisure Centre were well underway and on track to deliver in the current financial year following Sport Wales funding secured by Council officers. It was also important for the service to strategise and implement solutions in relation to barriers presented as a result of the cost-of-living crisis and to allow individuals to continue to engage with leisure services at the best possible value. The service continued to work closely with Council colleagues to explore future partnership developments and new arrangements that could benefit the partnership.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing then took the opportunity to highlight that, had the Council not entered a partnership contract with Legacy Leisure previously, it was unlikely that the Council would still have four leisure centres in operation today. Other Council leisure services in Wales had significantly suffered as a result of the national pandemic and it was therefore incredibly pleasing to see that the Vale of Glamorgan was doing well in terms of delivery and, as Cabinet Member, they were very happy with how the partnership was being managed and the progress being made.

On the same topic of progress, the Vice-Chair then asked for an update in relation to the roofing repair works underway at Penarth Leisure Centre. To which, the Operational Manager advised that a visit had been arranged for the Leisure Centre Working Group to visit the Centre to be provided with an update in the near future. To their knowledge, work was being undertaken as scheduled however a more detailed update was pending from the contractors at the time of the meeting. The Officer added that swimming facilities from Penarth Leisure Centre had been

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successfully transferred to the Cardiff International Pool in Cardiff Bay and that the improvement works at Penarth Leisure Centre was being undertaken in three phases. The gym area would shortly be transferred to the main hall on a short-term basis, and it was hoped that the short-lived disruption would be worth the long-term benefits once completed.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked officers for presenting a positive report and offered their thanks to the external officers for joining the meeting.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMENDED –

(1) T H A T the performance of the Legacy Leisure Contract for Year 11 be noted.

(2) T H A T a Year 12 performance report, for the Leisure management contract, be presented to Committee in late 2024.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the content of the report to consider the performance of the contractor during the August 2022 to July 2023 period.

(2) To ensure Committee remains informed of progress on the Leisure Management Contract and provide members with the opportunity to comment on the same.

784 PROPOSED CORPORATE STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN WHO NEED CARE AND SUPPORT 2024-28 (DSS) -

The Head of Children and Young People Services presented the report, the purpose of which was to provide Committee with an overview of the proposed Corporate Strategy for Children who Need Care and Support 2024-28. The proposed Strategy was attached at Appendix 1 to the report and was the third Vale of Glamorgan Corporate Strategy for Children who Need Care and Support.

First endorsed by Cabinet in October 2016, the initial three-year Strategy marked a significant change in recognising the responsibilities of the whole Council in enabling children in need of care and support to receive the right help at the right time to improve their well-being and protect them from harm, and in aligning the roles of multiple directorates in delivering the associated actions.

The second Strategy built on those foundations and positively reflected the cross-sector relationships within its Action Plan. The third Strategy continued this legacy having been developed in partnership with external partners in Health, the Third Sector and through engagement with children and young people and their families and carers.

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The proposed Strategy identified how, utilising an integrated model of services, the needs of children, young people and their families would be met, within the resources available to the Council and its partners, during the period 2024 to 2028, and the Officer apprised the Committee on the four key objectives as set out on page 16 of the appended Strategy.

Both the Chair and Vice-Chair commended the report as presented and the Vice-Chair was pleased to see information contained within the Strategy in relation to preventative measures and therefore asked the Head of Service what the biggest challenges were in terms of early intervention.

In response, the Head of Children and Young People Services advised that there were multiple challenges which was why taking preventative measures was so challenging. Although 'edge of care' defined the point at which children were really at risk of becoming looked after, there were very many points before that stage that the Council and its partners wished to involve itself in an effective way by working together. Successful preventative work relied on having an effective well-resourced response at all levels. All parties involved in delivering the Strategy recognised the importance and the challenges presented in terms of the current financial context, however, continued to work together collaboratively and creatively.

Councillor Cave then noted a comment made within the officer's presentation in relation to regularly meeting with all partners to support the delivery of the Strategy and therefore queried how regular said meetings were and whether officers were working within a particular timeframe, to which, the Head of Service advised that the Strategy was a live document and therefore constantly under review. The usual meeting cycle was every six to eight weeks, however, at the point of producing a Strategy draft, more frequent collaboration was undertaken. Meetings would be arranged as required, but no less than on a six to eight week basis.

As a supplemental question, Councillor Cave asked whether the six to eight week meeting timeframe allowed the Strategy document to remain a live working document. In response, the Head of Service said yes but also advised that any objectives set within the Strategy required time to be implemented. It was also important to note that the partners involved in the Strategy development meetings did not just meet at said meetings but also in other sectors of their work and that all sectors were represented. Therefore, the Head of Service was comfortable with the frequency of meetings held.

Councillor Cave then expressed their interest in relation to the fact that, although partners were having regular contact with each other, they still required regular meetings to keep track of each other and keep track of changes in relation to the Strategy. In reply, the Head of Service advised that the meetings in relation to the Strategy provided the opportunity to specifically focus on developing and implementing the related Strategy Action Plan.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked officers for an excellent report and noted that the report was a valuable resource to all Councillors.

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With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress made in developing a new four-year Corporate Strategy and Action Plan for Children who need Care and Support be noted.
- (2) T H A T the proposed Strategy and associated Action Plan, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be endorsed.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the content of the report to provide Members with opportunities to exercise oversight of a key strategic development for the Council.
- (2) To ensure that the Strategy is given close consideration and is informed by members prior to any subsequent approval by Cabinet.

785 INITIAL BUDGET 2024/25 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2024/25 TO 2028/29 PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 18th January, 2024 was presented by the Operational Manager for Accountancy.

The report and supporting PowerPoint slides delivered by the Officer provided Committee with an updated financial position for the Council following the UK Government Autumn Statement and Welsh Government (WG) Budget. The report set out the Council's proposed budget for 2024/25, including initial savings proposals and use of reserves to deliver a balanced budget for 2024/25. For context the report contained a summary of the principles set out in the Financial Strategy that had helped shape the proposals.

The Officer apprised the Committee on a challenging budget process and that some of the elements that Finance Officers were reporting as pressure points were emerging in the national picture. The Revenue Budget Headlines were as follows:

- The previous November report set out adjusted Cost Pressures circa £21m against approx. £38m unadjusted Cost Pressures. Work had been undertaken to assess ability to mitigate unawarded cost pressures. This included only 75% funding of assumed pay pressures for 2024/25.
- Priority had been placed in funding to Social Care, Schools, and Homelessness – mitigating issues seen in Schools in 2023/24 budget, ALN growth, CLA growth and increased complexity, increased complexity and growth in Adults Social Care, growth in Homelessness, and inflationary pressures.
- The WG Settlement was as anticipated, only 3.1%, which was an approximate £20k difference.

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- A Council Tax increase proposed 6.7% allowing some reduction in savings e.g., protection for supported bus services.
- Savings requirement of £7.8m was an unprecedented level and savings were proposed via tactical and transformational approaches. There was a higher level of savings in discretionary services and one small saving in Schools linked to energy reduction.
- There were significant pressures in future years too, £9.4m 2025/26. Therefore, the Council needed to think about the need to 'transform' and work had already been undertaken to consider what the organisation would need to look like in 2030 and how it would get there.
- Fees and charges were proposed at the 6.7% CPI requirement.

Councillor Cave began debate on the item by noting that it was a very challenging financial time and expressed their disappointment in the fact that WG were aware that the additional financial pressure would be passed on to members of the public via increases in Council Tax. In response, the Vice-Chair agreed with regards to Councillor Cave's comments that the WG settlement figure for the Council was lower than hoped, however noted that Councillor Cave was also aware that no additional funding had been provided to any Local Authority in Wales as a result of funds provided to WG from Westminster Government.

The Vice-Chair then asked the Director of Social Services how satisfied the Council was with regards to the Council receiving the expected service and value for money from external care providers in the private sector. By way of reassurance, the Director advised that private sector providers were inspected by Care Inspectorate for Wales to ensure service provider standards. The Council would also conduct its own quality assurance and social worker visits and complete related administrative paper records. Any concerns raised regards to an external provider would be escalated as per the process in place and any concerns would be addressed with the provider urgently and appropriately based on the level of concern. The Director added that the Council had not yet established fee levels in relation to external providers, but it was aware that the Council would have less funding than it would wish to receive.

The Leader of the Council then addressed the Committee and began by advising that WG had provided funding to Local Authorities within its budget compared to those in England, however, it was recognised by all that the financial situation was extremely difficult. The Council would be required to make tactical savings as well as transformational ones and it cuts were necessary. It was not just difficult decisions that the Council needed to make, there were also impossible ones due to the financial constraints. In addition, the Leader advised that , the Vale of Glamorgan Council would remain below the national average in relation to the proposed Council Tax rise and that the Council would be managing its finances in the most cautious way.

The Leader then provided an example of savings made in relation to bus services in the rural vale, to which Councillor Cave expressed her disagreement and asked for an explanation with regards to the term 'demand management' as quoted by the Leader in a previous Cabinet meeting. In reply, the Leader advised that the demand management term was in relation to how the Council would intervene at

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an early stage to prevent future unnecessary demand and pressure on its services whilst still providing essential services and allowing individuals to remain living as independently as possible.

In addition, the Director of Social Services advised that Councillor Cave's same question in relation to the term demand management was raised at the Working Party meeting and was a phrase that had been used by the Council for some time. The Director advised that the savings example as discussed by both the Leader and Councillor Cave was one of many and that many of the saving proposals, as set out in the report, could be considered as contributing to the Council's demand management approach. In relation to saving proposals, the Director advised that the Council was looking into developing its own residential provision in order to reduce costs that were incurred by housing individuals who required support outside of the Vale of Glamorgan area. Again, this example could be categorised under the umbrella term of demand management.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMENDED – T H A T both the Cabinet reference and appended Cabinet report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and appended report on the revised funding and spend assumptions, along with the draft saving proposals.

786 DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2024/25 TO 2028/29 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 18th January, 2024 was presented by the Operational Manager for Accountancy.

The report set out the current five-year Capital Programme for the period 2024/25 to 2028/29 and the Capital Bids that had been submitted for the period in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 for review by Committee.

The Council was facing significant pressures in relation to price inflation and the cost-of-living crisis which had seen increases in the costs of materials and labour. This had had an impact on the current schemes and also the funding available to fund new schemes within the Capital Programme.

The Officer advised that Capital Bids had been considered by the Council's Insight Board and the Senior Leadership Team and, in order to be able to fund high priority bids that had been submitted, a further review of the Capital Programme had been undertaken.

The risks associated with not progressing some of the high priority bids were significant and there would be some opportunity cost associated with identifying

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the level of funding. It was considered that the risk associated with not identifying said funding could be more significant than the risk associated with some high-cost schemes within the Programme that the Council were currently not able to progress.

In conclusion, the Officer apprised the Committee on Schemes that were proposed to be removed from the Capital Programme, with it being noted that the bid in relation to Llanmaes Construction was being added back in for the final proposals. Bids proposed to be funded which were relevant to the remit of the Scrutiny Committee were as follows:

- Repair and Renewal of Fire Doors Across the Residential Homes,
- Ty Dyfan Residential Home – Boiler Renewal Works,
- Cartref Porthceri Residential Home- Boiler Renewal Work,
- Penarth Leisure Centre – High Level Glazing & Cladding Phase 2.

With no comments or questions raised, the Committee subsequently

RECOMENDED – T H A T both the Cabinet reference and appended Cabinet report be noted.

Reason for recommendations

Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and appended report on the Draft Capital Programme Proposals for 2024/25 to 2028/29.

787 MATTER WHICH THE CHAIR HAD DECIDED WAS URGENT –

RESOLVED – T H A T the following matter which the Chair had decided was urgent for the reason given beneath the minute heading be considered.

788 MINUTES OF THE BUDGET WORKING PARTY MEETING –
(Urgent by need of requiring Scrutiny Committee consideration in line with timescales relevant to the Council's 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan consultation and approval process.)

The minutes of the Budget Working Party meeting held on 24th January, 2024 were presented by the Chair of the Committee who advised that the meeting proved very valuable for the Councillors that were present and therefore it was considered worthwhile.

The Vice-Chair of the Committee then proposed an amendment to Recommendation (4) whereby the meeting duration for the proposed Budget Working Group be amended from a quarterly basis to a six-monthly basis. Their reasoning in relation to the amendment was to allow adequate time for any progress to be implemented and therefore evident to the Working Group at subsequent meetings.

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Councillor Norman supported the Vice-Chair's amendment and agreed that meeting on a quarterly basis would be too narrow a timeline. Councillor Norman also noted that there were more officers present at the meeting than Elected Members and that officer time would be better spent elsewhere rather than attending a meeting to explain their efforts.

Councillor Cave acknowledged that a timeframe for the Working Group meetings was not agreed at the meeting itself however advised that, in their opinion, six monthly meetings would be too infrequent as the Council needed innovative efforts to move and develop quite quickly.

Councillor Fisher supported Councillor Cave's comments with regards to quarterly meetings and noted that the purpose of having the first meeting was not to bring officers to account but rather seek clarification.

With dissent amongst the Committee, the Chair called for a vote with regards to the amendment as proposed by the Vice-Chair of the Committee in relation to Recommendation (4), following which, the amendment was carried.

In conclusion, the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer advised that, in light of the recommendations agreed, it would be appropriate to forward the minutes of the Working Party meeting to Cabinet for its consideration, to which the Committee agreed an addition to Recommendation (1) that the minutes also be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the minutes of the Budget Working Party meeting on 24th January, 2024 be noted and referred to Cabinet for consideration.
- (2) T H A T an informative booklet or leaflet outlining what the Council and others offered in terms of help and support be produced by the Council.
- (3) T H A T an Innovation Day be arranged and hosted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council.
- (4) T H A T a Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee Budget Working Group be established to meet on a six-monthly basis.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the discussions held at the working party meeting and to inform both the wider Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.
- (2) To support elected members in dealing with enquiries received from the relatives of elderly individuals requiring support.

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(3) To invite external organisations that are making developments in technology and equipment, which may be used to support care services, to meet collectively to expand the Council's knowledge of external services and expertise available.

(4) To provide further and more regular opportunity for select members of the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee to receive additional insight and understanding of the significant and increased spending for the Social Services Directorate, identified savings, as well as future transformational opportunities for Members to better scrutinise future spending, with it being noted that any issues / recommendations be referred back to the Committee for consideration.