

No.

## LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2021.

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

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

Present: Councillor G.C. Kemp (Chair); Councillor R.M. Birch (Vice-Chair); Councillors S.J. Griffiths, N.P. Hodges, T.H. Jarvie, J.M. Norman, A.C. Parker, S.D. Perkes and N.C. Thomas.

Co-opted Members: Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church), I. Cramb (Vale Youth Forum).

Also present: Councillors N. Moore (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources) and L. Burnett (Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration).

### 633 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”.

With the Chair’s permission, the Assistant Democratic Services Officer reminded Committee Members of the Council’s ‘Cabinet Decision Call-In’ and ‘Request for Consideration at a Scrutiny Committee’ procedures and that further advice and guidance was available to Members for both procedures via the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Team.

### 634 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from H. Gapper (Welsh Medium Education).

### 635 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 be approved as a correct record.

### 636 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

637 DRAFT WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION STRATEGY (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 was presented to Committee as contained within the agenda.

Appendix A to the report provided an assessment of the 2017-22 Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and a draft of a new five-year strategy for the 2022-27 period was attached at Appendix B. The report sought Cabinet approval to consult on the documents in order to inform and finalise the 2022-27 Promotion Strategy and to inform the development of an action plan to pursue its commitments.

Mr. David Thomas, External Consultant, had been engaged to undertake the assessment and was present at the meeting in order to provide Committee with further detail regarding the content of the report and draft Strategy.

Following the presentation of the reference and report, the Chair advised Committee that representations had been received from H. Gapper in his capacity as Co-opted Member for Welsh Medium Education. Mr. Gapper's comments had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting and were read aloud during the meeting by the Assistant Democratic Services Officer. Mr. Gapper emphasised the importance of offering opportunities for children and young people to use Welsh in social contexts in order that they viewed it as a language in which they could live their lives rather than solely that of their education. He suggested one approach might be to require or persuade organisations who used parts of the Council's estate to offer some of their provision in Welsh or bilingually.

In response to Mr. Gapper's representations, Committee Members made a number of comments which could be summarised as follows:

- Encouraging use of Welsh in voluntary organisations was a good idea in principle, but enforcing bilingual provision would make it even more difficult for organisations to find suitable leaders for these activities;
- Organisations sometimes did not know of Welsh speakers amongst their membership and it was possible that if they, with the Council's help or through grant funding, carried out a census of members they may well find themselves with Welsh speakers who would be willing to assist with bilingual provision. Moreover, establishing the presence of Welsh speakers within an organisation might encourage further Welsh speaking individuals to join;
- If emphasised within the Strategy it would demonstrate to Welsh speakers that it was a matter of government driven policy for the Council to increase bilingual or Welsh language provision in organisations.

Mr. Thomas and the Head of Policy and Business Transformation thanked Members and Mr. Gapper for their contributions, acknowledging that these suggestions could lead to meaningful action and that from an equalities perspective, a census as suggested could shed light on language matters within organisations outside of the Welsh Language, for instance British Sign Language. The Officer advised that Members' comments would be reflected as appropriate in relevant sections of the Action Plan.

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Having fully considered the reference and attached report it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the draft Welsh Language Strategy as appended to the reference from Cabinet dated 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 (Minute No. C720) be endorsed, having regard to the comments made above.

Reason for recommendation

To ensure that the Scrutiny Committee have provided feedback prior to consideration of a further, final draft version of the Strategy.

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

Cabinet, on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2021 had approved the draft Annual Delivery Plan 2021-22 and had resolved that the report be referred to all Scrutiny Committees as part of the programme of consultation.

The Annual Delivery Plan for 2022-23 was aligned to the Council's four Well-being Objectives, and detailed the activities that would be undertaken in 2022-23 to deliver those objectives. The commitments within the Annual Delivery Plan would be reflected in Annual Service Plans together with service improvement targets which would detail how different Council services would contribute to the delivery of the four Well-being Objectives.

Members, having given the draft Plan their full consideration, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the draft Annual Delivery Plan as contained in the reference from Cabinet dated 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2021 (Minute No. C742) be endorsed.

Reason for recommendation

To ensure that the Scrutiny Committee have provided feedback on the draft Plan as part of the programme of consultation.

639 CURRICULUM FOR WALES: JOURNEY TO 2022 – AUTUMN TERM 2021 UPDATE –

The Assistant Director for Curriculum at Central South Consortium (CSC) presented to Committee an update regarding progress being made towards the roll-out of the Curriculum for Wales, which was due to be introduced in maintained schools and funded non-maintained nursery settings from September 2022. The presentation advised of updates to the implementation timeline and outlined the range of professional learning and support provided by CSC to all schools in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Subsequently, representative staff members from Pendoylan Church in Wales Primary School and Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg were invited to address

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Committee, and Members were provided with a presentation from each school reflecting on their own journeys so far in preparing for the roll-out of the Curriculum for Wales.

Following the presentations, the Principal Improvement Partner for CSC expressed thanks to the representatives for their honesty in conveying, through their presentations, that it was not one easy journey to delivering the Curriculum for Wales. The Chair noted it was pleasing to see the progress that was being made and requested that the presentation slides be circulated to Members following the meeting.

With permission to speak, the Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration expressed that she felt very fortunate to be able to carry out visits to Vale of Glamorgan schools within her role, during which she had seen phenomenal work being carried out around preparation for the Curriculum for Wales, and she stated this was a huge credit to staff in schools across the Vale.

There being no further queries or questions it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T thanks be expressed to the representative staff members of Pendoylan Church in Wales Primary School and Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg for their presentations, and that the contents of their presentations be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

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

#### 640 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL TO 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2021 AND REVISED REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2021/22 (DLS) –

The Operational Manager for Accountancy presented the report which advised Committee of the progress relating to revenue and capital expenditure for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2020. The revenue position for 2020/21 was challenging, with additional pressure for the service both operationally and financially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2021/22 budget had been amended for internal transfers, and Appendix 1 to the report set out the amended budget together with the necessary adjustments to be made.

With regard to revenue, it was anticipated that the forecast for Learning and Skills at year end could be an overspend of £106k and therefore this would need to be funded from the Directorate's reserves. A savings target for the year had been set at £59k and it was anticipated that this would be achieved in full by year end, as detailed in the statement attached at Appendix 2 to the report. The currently approved capital budget had been set at £38.36m, and Appendix 3 detailed financial progress on the Capital Programme as at 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2021.

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Having fully considered the report it was subsequently

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.

641 INITIAL REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2022/23 (DLS) –

The Operational Manager for Accountancy presented the report which submitted for consultation the initial revenue budget proposals for 2021/22. The Council was required under statute to fix the level of Council Tax for 2022/23 by 11<sup>th</sup> 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 (WG) and was expected this year on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2021 with the final settlement due to be published on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2022 and the report therefore set out a number of possible scenarios.

The report outlined cost pressures which related to the remit of Committee as identified by relevant departments. These totalled £4.4m and were set out in Appendix 1 to the report. Reserves were set out at Appendix 3 to the report, and in respect of those relating to Learning and Skills the majority were tied up in the implementation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band B Programme.

Following the Officer's presentation of the report, the Chair invited the member of the public who had registered to speak to address Committee. Dr. V. Browne was speaking as Chair of the Vale Schools Budget Forum and his comments could be summarised as follows:

- The Forum acknowledged the strong support received from the Local Authority which was in a difficult position;
- While a number of schools in the Vale were carrying forward large balances, this could be explained by additional grant funding received largely due to COVID-19, and underspends relating to exam fees and supply teachers;
- In respect of WG funding, the Vale of Glamorgan was the lowest funded Local Authority per pupil;
- A number of central issues were placing pressure on the budget, for instance work being carried out regarding Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision, and increasing pupil numbers;
- Quantitative data showed that the current cohort in schools had been severely impacted by the pandemic, in particular with regard to emotional issues, literacy and numeracy;

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- The Forum wished to emphasise that while it understood the difficulties faced by the Council in setting its budget, every pound allocated to schools would be put to the best possible use to support young people.

In response to a query from Councillor Perkes, Dr. Browne confirmed that a number of schools had vastly increased their out of hours provision in a bid to assist pupils getting back on track following the pandemic, and Pencoedtre High School was in fact participating in a WG pilot examining the impact of extending the school day.

With permission to speak, the Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration wished to address Committee and her points could be summarised as follows:

- At present, £114m was allocated to Education, with £98m of this going to schools, which equated to an immediate delegation of 40% of the Council's budget, a much larger figure than that of other service areas, for instance Social Services;
- Vale of Glamorgan pupils were the lowest funded, however the Local Authority had not set their Council Tax at the Welsh average level and this would always come back and affect the budget;
- There were more than £4m of cost pressures identified in Education and all were essential, with many centring on matters relating to ALN;
- Balancing the budget was a difficult task, but the Council was and always had been aspirational and innovative, wanting to measure itself not only according to Welsh standards but to those set across the United Kingdom.

Councillor N.C. Thomas wished to reiterate concerns he had raised at the previous meeting regarding the importance of the Youth Service, and he asked that Committee advocate to Cabinet on behalf of the service as a cost pressure for consideration. The Operational Manager for Accountancy and Director for Learning and Skills noted that the Youth Service was not listed as a cost pressure (as its funding was currently still in place), and asked for clarification as to whether the Councillor wished for Committee to request additional funding for the service. The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, with permission to speak, echoed Officers' points, adding that with there being £27m of cost pressures identified across the Council it would not be possible to fund each one, it would therefore not be advisable to add another if not needed. He added that an additional cost pressure could be incorporated in the course of the year if necessary, and wished to assure Members that the question of funding for the Youth Service had been raised, and the need to protect the service's current level of funding (as suggested by Officers) was not lost on Cabinet.

With Members having fully considered the report it was subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the Initial Revenue Budget Proposals for 2022/23 be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

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

642 INITIAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2022/3 TO 2026/27 (DLS) –

The Operational Manager for Accountancy presented the report which submitted the Initial Capital Programme Proposals for 2022/23 to 2026/27 to Scrutiny Committee for consultation. The Provisional General Capital Funding for 2022/23 had not yet been announced by Welsh Government (WG) and was expected on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2021 with the Final Settlement due on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2022. General Capital Funding had been assumed as £6.867m for 2022/23, made up of £3.438m General Capital Grant and £3.429m Supported Borrowing.

Appendix 1 to the report set out the Initial Proposals for the Capital Programme for Committee between 2022/23 and 2026/27 as approved on 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, including any subsequent approvals. A list of capital bids received for the Directorate was shown in Appendix 2 to the report, although due to the uncertainty in the level of funding that would be provided, no schemes were to be approved for inclusion in the Capital Programme and further assessment would be carried out by the Budget Working Group once the level of funding was known and consultation had taken place.

With permission to speak, the Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration advised that the handover of Pencoedtre High School was due to take place on target and the new site to be opened in the new year. She elaborated that Band B programmes were progressing well, on time and within budget.

With there being no further questions or queries it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Initial Capital Programme Proposals for 2022/23 to 2026/27 be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

643 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE 2021/22 (DLS) –

The report advised of the Council's progress at Quarter 2 (Q2) (1<sup>st</sup> April, 2021 to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2021) towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (2021/22) (ADP) commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

Appendix A to the report provided a summary of how the Council was performing against each of its Well-being Objectives which were specific to the remit of the Committee. Performance exceptions within the remit of the Committee were presented at Appendix B to the report, while detailed performance commentary for all actions and measures was provided at Appendix C.

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The Council had made positive progress delivering its in-year commitments in relation to its ADP. This performance had contributed to an overall Green status for the Plan at Q2.

Progress made against the 53 actions and 5 quarterly measures which were specifically within the remit of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee could be summarised as follows:

- GREEN: 50 actions (94%) and 3 measures (60%).
- AMBER: 2 actions (4%) and 0 measures.
- RED: 1 action (2%) and 2 measures (40%).

With regard to the 1 action and 2 measures attributed a Red performance status, the impact of COVID-19 was identified as a contributory factor.

The Director of Learning and Skills gave a presentation to Committee which highlighted key achievements accomplished during the year, along with identified areas for improvement. Progress in relation to Coronavirus recovery was also reported to Members with the presentation highlighting issues pertinent to the Committee's remit.

Following the presentation of the report, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources wished to clarify to Committee that the figures within the report relating to library visits did not capture the click and collect and online work which had been carried out during this period.

Having fully considered the report it was subsequently

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

(3) To ensure Members maintained an oversight of the recovery issues impacting on the work of the Council and their respective Scrutiny Committee.