

No.

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid meeting held on 7th December, 2023.

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

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

Present: Councillor R.R. Thomas (Chair); Councillor H.M. Payne (Vice-Chair); Councillors A. Asbrey, W. Gilligan, R. Godfrey, E.J. Goodjohn, W.A. Hennessy, N.P. Hodges, J. Lynch-Wilson, N. Marshallsea and J.M. Norman

Co-Opted Members: M. Price (Roman Catholic Church), G. Scott (Welsh Medium Education), G. van der Burgt (Parent Governor – Secondary Sector), T. Williams (Vale Youth Council) and R. Goodjohn (Vale Youth Forum).

Also present: Councillors R.M. Birch (Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language), Dr. I.J. Johnson, E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health) and M.R. Wilson (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services).

615 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”.

616 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor E. Penn, L. Barrowclough (Parent Governor – Primary Sector), R. Morteo (Church in Wales), J. Clemett (Vale Youth Council) and A. Emmerson (Vale Youth Forum).

617 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 9th November, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

618 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor W.A. Hennessy declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 4 – Central South Consortium – Curriculum for Wales Update – Autumn Term 2023, in that he was a Governor of St. Helens Roman Catholic

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Primary School which was discussed during the presentation, and remained in the meeting during discussion of the item.

619 CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM – CURRICULUM FOR WALES UPDATE – AUTUMN TERM 2023 –

The presentation on International Languages within the Curriculum was introduced by the Central South Consortium's Assistant Director for Curriculum and Professional Learning and Associate Advisor for International Languages, and involved representatives from Sully Primary and St. Helen's Roman Catholic Primary Schools, who advised the Committee on their approach to the subject.

Following the presentation, in response to queries from the Committee, Officers provided the following advice.

- The Central South Consortium hoped that more events celebrating the achievements schools had accomplished around multi-lingualism would be possible, and would welcome Committee's input on this.
- Secondary pupils could be entered by their schools to take GCSEs in languages not ordinarily offered in schools. However, support for the pupils' preparation for the study usually came from the child's community, rather than the school, and this was normally privately-funded. The Central South Consortium could remind schools of this opportunity via their school bulletin.

Committee congratulated the schools involved for the work showcased, and subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T Officers and invited guests be thanked for their thorough and engaging update, and that the presentation be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the content of the presentation and discussions at the meeting.

620 REFRESH OF MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2024/25 TO 2028/29 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 20th November, 2023 was presented by the Operational Manager for Accountancy. Following presentation of the report the Officer provided the following additional advice:

- Current expectations were poor for an improved Local Government settlement in late December, over and above the 3% built in as part of the budget proposals, although there were possibilities for developments over the coming months with regards to teachers' pensions, for instance.
- There were cost pressures allocated to schools as part of these proposals, including around demographic pressures within special schools, and also

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towards the pay award, and growth in the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) sector.

- Due to the significant funding gap for cost pressures across the Council, and the savings thought to be achievable in the timeframe, cost pressures awarded to schools were not the full amount requested by them. However, the projected funding increase for schools was expected to be over the 3% assumed increase in settlement.
- School transport was currently over budget by approximately £600k across a number of sectors including primary, secondary special and ALN provision. Specific pressures were evident around ALN transport due to the increase of pupils going into special schools. This was partly due to an increase in pupils being transported across the Vale of Glamorgan, and also due to specific market conditions affecting the price of transport arrangements.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T both the reference and appended Cabinet report to review the work mitigating the cost pressures under the remit of the Committee be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the reference and report, to ensure an open and transparent approach to financial management in line with the approved Financial Strategy.

621 CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING SUMMARY REPORT (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 20th November, 2023 was presented by the Safeguarding Officer. Following their presentation of the report, the officer provided the following additional advice:

- Although it was not the current legal stance of the Council, the Safeguarding Officer would welcome the idea of making safeguarding training mandatory for all school governors.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T both the reference and appended Cabinet report on the activity that had been undertaken in relation to Corporate arrangements for Safeguarding across the Council be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the content of the report to provide assurance around safeguarding activity taking place across the Council as well as to ensure that there is a wide-reaching level of Member oversight.

622 QUARTER 2 REVENUE MONITORING 2023/24 (DLS) -

The report was presented by the Financial Support Manager. The purpose of the report was to advise Committee of the Quarter 2 Revenue Monitoring position for 2023/24.

The table below set out the Revised Budget by Directorate.

Directorate	Amended Budget 2023/24 £000's	Projected Outturn 2023/24 £000's	Variance £000's	Unplanned Use of Reserves £000's	Residual Variance 2023/24 £000's	Use of Reserves 2023/24 £000's
Schools	114,239	114,410	171	171	0	8,921
Learning and Skills	14,050	14,671	621	621	0	1,718
Social Services	85,260	93,529	8,269	5,884	2,385	9,912
Environment and Housing	31,809	33,009	1,200	0	1,200	295
Corporate Resources	17,081	16,781	-300	0	-300	519
Place	3,401	3,493	92	92	0	485
Policy	30,678	27,393	-3,285	0	-3,285	-42
Use of Reserves	-2,096	-2,096	0	0	0	-2,096
Total	294,422	301,190	6,768	6,768	0	19,712
Housing Revenue Account	15,538	15,538	0	0	0	0
Adjusted Total	309,960	316,728	6,768	6,768	0	19,712

The revenue position for 2023/24 continued to reflect challenging demand and inflationary pressures, with increasing demand in respect of Children's and Adults Social Care. Significant increases in the cost of placements and care packages and Support for Additional Learning Needs continued to be an area of significant pressure within Learning and Skills. The Council was also experiencing continued inflationary pressures in respect of School Transport. Across services inflationary pressures were also being experienced in respect of pay, most notably where market forces were being utilised and for the funding gap between provision for the 2023/24 pay award and the pay award for 2023/24.

The Council had identified a number of steps to be taken in year to help mitigate this emerging overspend and safeguard reserves, this included tighter controls on expenditure and recruitment and a review of the Capital programme. The Corporate Resources Directorate had identified a potential underspend of £300k to be offset against emerging overspends and there was a projected underspend of £1m against Council Tax income due to the projected collection of arrears, new properties, changes in allowances and premiums on empty homes.

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Challenging savings and efficiency targets had been set for 2023/24 and this included a target of £2.75m for schools and £4.628m of Corporate savings. The progress against these savings targets was reflected in the Appendix and summarised in the table below.

Directorate	Target	Projected	% Achieved	Mitigation	Mitigation Achieved %	Shortfall	Shortfall %
	£'000s	£'000s		£'000s		£'000s	£'000s
Policy	1,615	1,615	100%	-	0%	-	0%
Resources	582	331	57%	250	43%	1	0%
Neighbourhood and Housing	1,000	640	64%	40	4%	320	32%
Learning and Skills	564	383	68%	-	0%	181	32%
Social Services	681	556	82%	-	0%	125	18%
Place	265	173	65%	-	0%	92	35%
Total	4,707	3,698	79%	290	6%	719	15%

Projected transfers to and from reserves were set out in the table below.

As at	Balance 01/04/2023	Capital Funding	Planned Transfer (from) reserves	Planned Transfer to reserves	Unplanned Draw down from Reserves	Estimated Balance 31/03/2024
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
General Fund	11,523	-	- 496	0	- 171	10,856
Insurance	4,877	-	0	0	0	4,877
Service Reserves	22,521	- 672	- 6,329	42	- 6,666	8,896
Risk and Smoothing Reserves	29,802	- 3,276	- 3,966	0	-	22,560
Capital	17,726	- 10,331	0	403	-	7,798
Schools	7,254	-	-	0	- 6,500	754
Housing Revenue Account	16,486	- 15,537	0	0	0	949
Total	110,190	- 29,816	- 10,791	445	- 13,337	56,690

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Following presentation of the report, officers provided the following additional advice:

- There were a number of facets to the growth in school transport requirements, in addition to those based on a preference for Welsh medium education, including ALN and access to public transport across the Vale of Glamorgan. The Council had made Welsh language education more accessible through growth in Welsh medium schools, and had focused on more rural areas to address these factors.
- There was some use of reserves as part of the budget strategy for 2023/24 and it was likely that an increase in the use of service- and risk-based reserves would be seen.
- Some service reserves such as those for Social Services were experiencing significant depletion, and there was also a reduction in the Learning and Skills reserve.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the position with regard the Authority's 2023/24 Revenue Budget be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the content of the report to inform Committee of the projected revenue outturn for 2023/24.

623 CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2023 (DLS) –

The report was presented by the Finance Support Manager, the purpose of which was to advise Committee of the progress on the 2023/24 Capital Programme for the period 1st April to 30th September, 2023 within their remit. Details by scheme were shown in Appendix 1 attached to the report.

Appendix 2 to the report provided a summary of the position of the Capital Programme by Directorate from approval at Council on 6th March, 2023 through to 30th September, 2023, including any changes requested within the report. The report set out any requested changes to the 2023/24 and future years' Capital Programme.

The report noted the current approved Programme of £129.298m, but it was important to note that this was unlikely to be delivered and slippage was requested of £18.801m. Schemes would be closely monitored over the coming months and it was anticipated that further slippage requests would be requested in future reports.

Due to the current financial situation the Councils Capital Programme had undergone a review. The report requested changes that would release funding back into the Council's reserves, capital receipts and other sources of capital

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funding to ensure finances were more sustainable and the Capital Programme was deliverable. It was proposed to remove some uncommitted schemes and vire money to help mitigate future year's revenue pressures as shown in the table below:

Funding Source	£'000
Reserves	2,174
Capital Receipts	500
General Capital Funding	2,450
Borrowing	400
Revenue Contribution to Capital	21
Total	5,545

Following presentation of the report, and having fully considered its contents, Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress made on delivering the 2023/24 Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.
- (2) T H A T the use of Emergency Powers within the remit of the Committee, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.
- (3) T H A T the changes to the 2023/24 and Future Year's Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee, as summarised in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.5 and detailed within the body of the report from paragraph 2.13 onwards, be noted.

Reason for Recommendations

(1-3) Having regard to the content of the report to advise Committee of the progress on the Capital Programme, the use of Emergency Powers and changes to the Capital Programme.

624 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE 2023/24 (DEH) –

The report was presented by the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources, the purpose of which was to present Quarter 2 performance results for the period 1st April to 30th September, 2023 in delivering the 2023/24 Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

Due to current capacity challenges within the Corporate Performance Team, the format for the Quarter's (Q2) Annual Delivery Plan Monitoring Report had been revised temporarily, to continue to provide Elected Members with an overview of progress in delivering the Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the remit of each Scrutiny Committee. The presentation appended at Appendix A to the report provided a summary of progress against the Annual Delivery Plan

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commitments for 2023/24 as aligned to the remit of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee.

The report sought Elected Members' consideration of Q2 performance results and the proposed remedial actions to address areas of identified underperformance. Upon consideration, the Scrutiny Committee was recommended to refer their views and any recommendations to Cabinet for their consideration.

Following presentation of the report, the officer advised the following:

- Shared Prosperity Fund funding had supported employability support programmes through Adult Community Learning (ACL), as well as with young people.
- Further information on homelessness projects could be forwarded to Committee.
- Good progress was now being made around the delay experienced regarding the special school funding formula (areas for improvement, Objective 1 within the report).

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Quarter 2 performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 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.

Reason for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the content of the report to ensure the Council clearly demonstrates the progress being made towards achieving its commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.

(2) To ensure the Council is effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to meet its performance requirements, as outlined in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and reflecting the requirement of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that it maximises its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.