

ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 FEBRUARY 2021

Present: Councillor Howells(Chairperson)
Councillors Henshaw, Gordon, Gavin Hill-John, Lay, Parkhill,
Robson and Stubbs

1 : APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Noted.

2 : TERMS OF REFERENCE

Noted.

3 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

4 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Lay declared a personal interest as Chair of Cardiff Bus.
Councillor Gavin Hill-John declared a personal interest as Vice Chair of Cardiff Bus.
Councillor Henshaw declared a personal interest as her daughter has received a business grant.

5 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

6 : CORPORATE PLAN 2021-2024 AND BUDGETARY PROPOSALS 2021-22

The Chairperson advised that this item provided Members with an opportunity to consider those items in the draft Corporate Plan and draft Budgetary Proposals that fall within the responsibility of this Committee. Cabinet will consider these on Thursday 25th February, prior to Council on 4 March 2021.

Members had received an electronic set of documents for the meeting. The cover report was structured by Cabinet Member portfolio and the Chairperson will refer Members to the relevant paragraphs of the cover report as the meeting proceeds. As per the Agenda, Members would firstly receive a briefing on the Corporate Overview of the draft budget proposals. The budget proposals and relevant parts of the Corporate Plan will then be considered by Cabinet Member portfolio.

Members were provided with brief overviews and presentations for each area, after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Corporate Overview (Cllr Chris Weaver, Ian Allwood, Chris Lee)

Members referred to the £67 million claims in Covid costs and asked if these had been agreed or were pending. Officers explained that 95% of the claims had been accepted and they had received the first 3 quarters claims back for both expenditure and lost income. There were no signals of risks/rejections. Welsh Government had asked that all claims be made up until the end of March then a tidy up would happen by the end of April. Officers have had to work diligently and show they are trying to keep figures down for claims.

Members asked with regard to Rents, why the Council did not follow Welsh Government guidelines. Officers explained it was due to the 49 rent weeks and that they are not operating above the WG guidelines.

Members asked if there was a potential of transfers in and out of the reserves dependant on the settlement amount. Officers explained that all things being equal it could be higher tens of thousands or lower hundred thousands; indication are that it would be minimal.

Members asked if there was any indication of reverting back to the 3 year settlement and were advised that there was no indication to extend beyond 1 year as yet although the Council continues to push for more medium/long term.

Members referred to the £204k to Youth Services in the FRM and asked which area in particular this was focussed on. Cllr Weaver explained that no areas had been identified, it would need to be used flexibly to meet the needs of young people who have become dis-engaged through the pandemic, and their needs targeted.

Into Work Services (Cllr Chris Weaver, Helen Evans)

Members noted that no financial pressures had been identified for this area and asked if Officers were confident to manage the area within existing resources. Officers explained they have been successful in getting external funding so they were sure they would be able to scale up to meet the demand that they will sadly see in the coming months.

Members noted the amount of jobs that have been lost in the retail sector and asked what types of jobs are currently available. Officers explained there were lots of Care work, Driver, Warehouse, IT, Call Centre opportunities. There would be a need to reskill the retail staff into the emerging sectors.

Adult Learning and Cardiff Commitment (Cllr Merry, Suzanne Scarlett, Helen Evans)

Members noted the fantastic work undertaken in the past year moving courses online and asked if there was the potential to increase the offer. Officers stated there was, they were looking at external funding, they have been able to reach more people as the digital courses are more flexible and inclusive.

Members asked for more information on UK Kickstart. Officers explained in relation to Kickstart, they are working closely with Into Work Services, Economic Development and Human Resources. There are 30 traineeships within the Council, fully funded by UK Government and Cardiff Council have committed to paying additional monies to bring them up to the living wage. We are also encouraging business and employer networks to take part in the scheme. People have to be

claiming Universal Credit to be eligible, so it was important to promote the uptake of Universal Credit too.

Members asked if Brexit had had any impact and were advised that they were not seeing anything specific as yet although it would be difficult to see that data coming through in the midst of the pandemic.

Housing and Communities (Cllr Thorne, Rebecca Hooper, Helen Evans)

Members sought clarification on line 52 and were advised that it refers to Hubs and Libraries purchasing newspapers. The Cabinet Member explained that during lockdown they had been provided digitally and this will continue.

Economic Development (Cllr Huw Thomas – Leader, Neil Hanratty, Jon Day)

Members discussed the £50k growth, noting it was a post to support the Economic Policy Manager. Officers explained the importance of working smarter and sourcing funding, building capacity to grow capacity. It was noted that the service area had been hit hard with budget cuts in previous years and that some savings proposals had been taken out by Cabinet to keep resources in the service over the next year, to work hard at finding partnerships and using other peoples resources.

Members asked about confidence in delivering Central Railway Station and a station in Splott. The Leader explained it will enable a higher capacity of people going through Central station; Metro Central unlocks the possibility of Central Station/Cardiff Bay/Splott/St. Mellon's. The indoor arena also comes into play here.

Culture and Leisure (Cllr Bradbury, Neil Hanratty, Jon Maidment, Kath Richards)

Members sought clarification on why fees and charges were being increased at St David's Hall while others were not. The Cabinet Member explained that the increase in fees was in line with other areas; they were trying to budget as close to what they would do in normal times. Members were informed that there had been successful claims from WG for loss of income for St David's Hall.

Members noted that in the budget consultation, Culture came out as the least priority. The Cabinet Member considered that in normal years it would have been a higher priority, but this past year people have not been able to use cultural venues. He added that he believes there is a bright future for the Cultural Sector post pandemic.

Members discussed the non-inclusion of drainage works at Glenmount Park; the Cabinet Member advised that they still want to improve drainage in that area, they are talking to developers as the park has not been handed over to the Council properly as yet; the Cabinet Member committed to working with the local Ward Member on this issue.

Members asked about Park Rangers and employee costs and were advised that £112k was going into employee related expenditure, increasing Rangers, having a greater presence in the parks, enforcement and engaging with the local community.

Members sought clarification on what methods were used for weed control. Officers explained that there was currently a trial whereby they were using 2 different method and 2 different products; the performance would be assessed alongside costs and

environmental impacts. The trial was being undertaken in 2 wards this season at a cost of £50k, there would be a suitability report produced in October/November.

Members wondered if there was an opportunity to grow the Allotments Team as they do a lot of important work. Officers advised that it had been a long time since the last Allotment Strategy and there was an opportunity to review it and create capacity and issues of concern.

Members noted that playground improvements were taking place across the City, all at the same time. Members asked about the strategy for around 5 years' time when they would all need improvements at the same time. The Cabinet Member explained they will spread the programme over a 5 year period as it is more manageable for the service; it had been important to invest this year as improvements were needed right across the City.

Investment and Development (Cllr Goodway, Neil Hanratty)

Members noted the budget cut in relation to losing 1 FTE in Tourism and asked if this was wise when the focus should be on driving the tourism sector forward. The Cabinet Member explained that it had been one of the easier savings to make as the person was leaving their post anyway and there was some hope of private investment to replace the post. Officers added that some savings lines had already been realised, and some savings had been taken out by Cabinet for this year. The importance of finding money from other sources was stressed and it was noted that some funding had been provided by WG to market the sector post pandemic. Officers explained funding was available from the BID's promoting the city centre funding stream and that there will be post-covid grants to promote Cardiff. Cllr Goodway stated that a coordinated marketing approach will be needed when we are able to attract people back to Cardiff.

Members discussed increasing costs for small business units and were assured that there would be no increase to existing tenants.

Members queried the performance target for 1,000 jobs created/ safeguarded, wondering whether it was too low given the number of jobs in Cardiff. Officers explained the target related specifically to jobs where the Council had played a proactive, direct role in creating/ safeguarding.

Members asked about Cardiff Parkway and a recent radio announcement about the London Link. Officers were not aware of any announcement and had spoken to the promoters a week ago and work was ongoing. Cardiff Parkway was important not just for Inter City links but also for local connectivity to East Cardiff. The Cabinet Member added that the project was not dependant on the London link, if it was not appropriate in the immediate term, he was sure demand would drive it going forward.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

7 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

8 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 11 MARCH 2021 AT 4.30PM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS.

The meeting terminated at 6.45 pm