

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 JUNE 2021

Present: Councillor Walker(Chairperson)
Councillors Ahmed, Berman, Bowen-Thomson, Cowan,
Henshaw, Lister and Mackie

1 : APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON & COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Noted.

2 : TERMS OF REFERENCE

Noted.

3 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

4 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

5 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

6 : OUTTURN 2020/2021

The Chairperson advised Members that Committee has a remit within its Terms of Reference to monitor the Council's budget throughout the year and the Outturn 2020/21 is of particular interest following a difficult year. This report completes the financial monitoring process for 2020/21 and is an opportunity for Members to reflect on the Council's financial position at the year end, March 2021.

Members were advised that whilst the papers for this item would not be in the public domain until Friday, when Cabinet papers are published, the Leader had agreed that Committee could refer directly to the papers in its scrutiny.

Members were reminded that Appendix 8 would remain confidential when Cabinet papers were published as it contains exempt information of the description in paragraphs 14 and 21 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Therefore, if Members wished to ask questions that reference Appendix 8 Committee would need to go into closed session.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation & Performance; Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resource; Ian Allwood, Head of Finance; Anil Hirani, Operational Manager, Capital, Corporate & Treasury and Rob Green, Operational Manager, Schools & Budgetary Control to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Weaver to make a statement after which Officers provided Members with a presentation. The Chairperson then invited questions and comments from Members;

Members referred to Capital underspends and whether any analysis had been undertaken on this. The Cabinet Member explained that the appendices detail the under and over spends and that planning was underway to get back on track.

Members noted that the Household Waste Recycling Centre scheme had slipped for over a year and sought assurances that work was progressing on this. Members were advised that a site still needed to be identified but any detail on specific work could be sought from Officers in Waste Management.

Referring to Schools balances, Members noted the deficit budgets in some schools and asked if these had been referred to Audit. Members were advised that 8 schools were in deficit budget, 6 of these were planned and there had been 2 applications to move into deficit. Audit were aware of these.

Members asked about the Covid Hardship fund support for businesses and how long this would continue for. Officers advised that currently it was until the end of September 2021, but they were working with Welsh Government on an extension and criteria for the fund as the pandemic continues.

Members considered that the budget had been well controlled in such a difficult year and commended Cabinet Members and Officers for their work on this and the success in claims from the hardship fund. Members asked what lessons could be learned from this and what could be put in place going forward with regard to resilience of services. The Cabinet Member echoed the commendation of the work undertaken by Officers. He explained that the scale of the pandemic had required Central and Local Government intervention; it had shown the need for good financial resilience and resilience of services was very important. Digital Services had been significantly important and these would continue. Officers added that Covid-19 has provided opportunities for the transformation of digital services.

Members asked how this report would inform the Medium Term Financial Plan. Members discussed how the cost of Covid-19 would impact future budgets and the risks going forward would be savings and income. It was noted that there should be more clarity on funding in the future especially around the Capital Programme.

Members noted the underspend and the staff vacancies in the Parks service. Members also noted the underspend in Facilities Management but were aware that there would be a need for additional spending when the buildings open back up. Members were surprised by the overspend in Governance and Legal Services and were concerned there could be implications for the year ahead. Members were advised that there had been some realignment, but that it was complex to forecast spend on complex Children's Services cases. It had also been difficult to recruit in-house staff.

Members asked if borrowing levels were sustainable and were advised that full Council had approved the report on this. It was noted that the recovery from Covid-

19 would require increased investment and there was a judgement to be made as to how this is financed. Affordability is also reviewed annually.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey their comments and observations.

7 : MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PROCUREMENT FUNCTION

Members were advised that Committee has responsibility for scrutiny of the Council's Commissioning and Procurement service and were therefore scrutinising the Council's proposal to accept a 3 year Executive Delegation from Monmouthshire County Council to deliver their Procurement Function alongside our own.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation & Performance; Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resource and Steve Robinson, Operational Manager Commissioning & Procurement for this item.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Weaver to make a statement after which he invited questions and comments from Members;

Members sought clarity on the benefits to the Council. Members were advised that it would increase the resilience of the procurement function and also increase the knowledge base. This was seen as a good opportunity to be the first Local Authority to do this and to become a centre of excellence.

Members asked how the time spent working on this would be recorded and were advised that they use a specific package to record all the overheads, as discussed with finance colleagues and keep everything separate from Cardiff Council business.

Members wondered if there was Corporate Support for this and were advised that there was, Corporate Resource Directors had always supported this collaborative approach and would like to develop and take it further.

Members considered that going forward the Council could look to partners outside of South East Wales too.

Members considered that the benefits of this could have been set out more clearly in the report.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey their comments and observations.

8 : RE-PROCUREMENT OF THE COLLABORATIVE SOUTH EAST WALES HIGHWAYS AND CIVILS CONSTRUCTION FRAMEWORK

Members were advised that this item scrutinises the Cabinet proposal to approve the Council's Commissioning and Procurement team to re-procure arrangements for construction and civils consultancy commissions on behalf of all public sector bodies in Wales. As such, the Committee could test how the Council will benefit from taking the lead in this re-procurement.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation & Performance; Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resource; Steve Robinson, Operational Manager Commissioning & Procurement and Chris McClellan, Senior Category Manager for this item.

Cllr Weaver made a brief statement after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members asked whether the levy would cover Cardiff's costs and were advised that it would. The board that manages the framework approves staff costs and consider it to be very competitive compared to others.

Members discussed the social value pot and asked how the spend is determined. Members were advised that it would be spread fairly around the region.

In relation to Quality Control, Members had concerns about operators that have had negative reports in the past still being able to join the framework. Members were advised that there are KPI's on time, quality and cost; if an operator has 3 or more negative reports they can be suspended; training is provided for officers for the management of contracts to mitigate against this issue.

Members asked how pricing is audited and were advised that there is Average Price Guidance and a Schedule of Rates which is updated annually, there are also comparisons undertaken across companies.

Members considered that the report could be more self-explanatory, an easier read and use less technical language throughout.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey their comments and observations.

9 : SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

Members were advised that this year Scrutiny are taking a new approach to the formal reporting to Council of scrutiny achievements in 2020/21. This is the first combined Scrutiny Annual Report, capturing the work of all 5 Scrutiny Committees. This is intended to be a much more outward facing document than previous versions and will hopefully appeal to a much wider audience. It has been designed to be read digitally however it will be available to download in large print from the website. It is still draft and to that extent Members comments are welcomed. The report is due to be considered by Full Council on 24 June 2021.

Members commented that this was a good format, more accessible and easier to read but there were a lot of quotes from Cabinet Members in the report and it is a Scrutiny report.

RESOLVED: to approve the draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21 to be laid before Council.

10 : COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMING 2021/22

Members were advised that they need to consider their approach to constructing a work programme up to the pre-election period in April 2022. Committee's responsibilities fall within three Cabinet portfolios: the Leader; the Cabinet Member for Investment and Development; and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance.

Members were advised of the options as to how they approach the work programming: whether to hold an additional informal work programme forum or whether the Chairperson and Principal Scrutiny Officer gather together potential items in liaison with Members, senior managers, and reference to corporate documents and Committee's previous work; then circulate (e-mail) to Members for prioritisation. The final draft incorporating all Members preferences, however gathered, would be brought back to the September Committee. Given the delicacy of organisational recovery and the unusually short year/fewer meetings, The Chairperson was inclined to encourage the latter option.

The Principal Scrutiny Officer added that due to the Council being in recovery, there was not an expansive programme of work and Members should focus on pre-decision items but there was an opportunity for them to bring areas of specific interest or concern forward. Members were provided with a schedule of proposed dates for upcoming Committee meetings.

RESOLVED: to

- I. Note the proposed dates for PRAP scrutiny committee;

Agree the approach to developing the Committee's work programme for 2021-22 - that the Chairperson and Principal Scrutiny Officer gather together potential items in liaison with Members, senior managers, reference to corporate documents and Committee's previous work; then circulate (e-mail) to Members for prioritisation.

11 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None

12 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14th July 2021 at 4.30pm via Microsoft Teams.

It was agreed that the meeting scheduled for October be moved to 11th October.

The meeting terminated at 6.45 pm