

ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 FEBRUARY 2024

Present: Councillor Wong(Chairperson)
Councillors Berman, Henshaw, Jenkins, Jones, Lloyd Jones,
Shimmin and Thomson

72 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Brown-Reckless

73 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Interest were received from:

- Cllr Thomson – personal/prejudicial interest – about to take a role with the National Theatre Wales which receives Shared Prosperity Fund funding.
- Cllr Jackie Jones – personal interest – Trustee of Safer Wales
- Cllr Henshaw – personal interest – Deputy Lord Mayor and has family members working for the Council.

74 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2024, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

75 : DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2024-2027 & DRAFT BUDGETARY PROPOSALS 2024/25

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 remit of the Committee.

Members received the scrutiny cover report as part of their pack of papers and this is structured by Cabinet Member portfolio, Members would be directed to the relevant paragraphs of the cover report as the meeting proceeds.

To start, Members would receive a briefing on the Corporate Overview of the draft budget proposals.

Then, the budget proposals and relevant parts of the Corporate Plan would be considered by Cabinet Member portfolio.

Corporate Overview

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Chris Weaver (Cabinet Member – Finance, Modernisation & Performance), Chris Lee - Corporate Director Resources and Ian Allwood – Head of Finance for this section.

The Cabinet Member was invited to make an opening statement after which Members were provided with a presentation from Officers.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members requested that future budget papers provided to Scrutiny Committees include the full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) information as standard. Members also asked for all EIAs carried out on the 2024/25 Budget proposals to be circulated to all Scrutiny Committees, to ensure transparency and accountability.

Members acknowledged the Council's commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) within the Corporate Plan. The Committee heard there has been a central focus of CEDAW in the development and delivery of key Council strategies, such as Cardiff & Vale's Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Strategy.

Members explored the process used to determine the use and allocation of reserve funds and noted the assurance provided by the Council's Section 151 Officer regarding the retention of reserves to maintain financial resilience.

Members requested a breakdown of the proportion of capital financing covered by income from projects being borrowed for, grants, and funds from the council's general revenue/reserve fund. Members considered this would provide clarity on the impact of borrowing on the Council's revenue budget.

Members expressed concerns regarding the financial situation with schools and stressed the importance of close collaboration with schools to manage and mitigate the financial challenges effectively.

Cllr Burke's Portfolio

For this section, the Chairperson welcomed Cllr Burke, Cabinet Member for Culture, Parks & Events; Neil Hanratty, Director for Economic Development, Jon Day - Operational Manager, Investment & Tourism and Jon Maidment, Head of Parks & Cardiff Harbour Authority.

The Cabinet Member was invited to make an opening statement after which Members were provided with a presentation from Officers.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members questioned why there is no proposed price increase for hiring Cardiff Castle, considering the current financial context. Members heard that this was to promote the Castle. Members suggested that even though promoting the Castle is important, a price increase could be considered.

Committee Members highlighted the potential for generating income through fees for filming in the city, given Cardiff's popularity for TV production companies. Members requested information on when Cardiff's filming fees last increased, comparison of costs with neighbouring cities, and a wider fee comparison with core cities.

Referring to the Mansion House Budget Proposal, Members sought assurance and confirmation that the gifting agreement allows the Council to lease or dispose of the

property. Members welcomed the assurance provided verbally but requested written confirmation once further checks are undertaken.

Members discussed the Protocol Budget Service Change Proposal and acknowledged the reduced programme of events for the Lord Mayor resulting from the proposal. Members were assured that the impact will be managed carefully through resource utilisation in the Council's Event teams.

Members expressed concern about potential safety implications due to proposed changes in the Playground Budget Proposals. Officers advised that the proposals would not have an adverse impact on safety or statutory obligations.

Committee Members sought clarity on how the proposal to reduce park rangers would impact Friends Groups and requested further information to understand the potential impact on community engagement and park maintenance.

Members raised concerns about the proposal to reduce apprenticeship posts in the parks scheme, considering the Council's commitments surrounding education and employment.

Discussing the Pentwyn Leisure Centre Redevelopment, Members noted the anticipated conclusion of the Pentwyn Leisure Centre redevelopment by summer 2025. Officers pointed out the allocation of £3m in the Capital Programme for the project and the intention to access Welsh Government funding for carbon reduction. Members were pleased to note the success of the community engagement on this project following recommendations made by this scrutiny committee.

Members welcomed the confirmation of £1.5m Shared Prosperity Funding for leisure projects, specifically naming Pentwyn for development.

Cllr Goodway's Portfolio

For this section, the Chairperson welcomed Cllr Huw Thomas – Leader of Cardiff Council (in place of Cllr Goodway); Neil Hanratty, Director for Economic Development; Donna Jones - Assistant Director, County Estates and Jon Day - Operational Manager, Investment & Tourism.

The Leader was invited to make an opening statement after which Members were provided with a presentation from Officers.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members explored risk management aspects related to significant sums allocated within the Capital Programme. Members welcomed the assurance provided by Cllr Thomas regarding resilience and future spend.

Members acknowledged the importance of indicative economic forecasts, particularly regarding interest rates, in providing additional assurance and confidence. Members welcomed the commitment to closely monitoring and assessing the development of projects.

Members sought confirmation on funding for the Velodrome at the Sports Village, considering potential new options for the Band B rebuild of Cathays High School. Members were advised that timeframes for these projects are still unknown but emphasised the commitment to providing a 'state of the art' school and highlighted the importance of exploring all opportunities regarding the location of the Velodrome and Cathays High School rebuild.

Cllr Merry's Portfolio

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Sarah Merry - Deputy Leader, & Cabinet Member for Education, Suzanne Scarlett, Partnerships & Performance Manager and Carly Davies Cardiff Commitment Programme Manager in Education & Lifelong Learning, Partnerships & Performance.

The Cabinet Member was invited to make an opening statement after which Members were invited to ask questions and make comments/observations.

Members welcomed the allocation of £200,000 to Cardiff Commitment through the Financial Resilience Mechanism. Additionally, they appreciated the insights provided by Cllr Merry regarding opportunities for the Council to access funding to further support this commitment.

Cllr Bradbury's Portfolio

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Bradbury – Cabinet Member, Tackling Poverty & Supporting Young People and Helen Evans - Assistant Director – Housing and Communities for this section.

The Cabinet Member was invited to make an opening statement after which Members were provided with a presentation from Officers.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members acknowledged the achievements of the Into Work teams, particularly the increase in support for jobseekers from ethnic minority communities. However, they emphasised the importance of assessing the number of meaningful interventions in collaboration with the Race Equality Taskforce. Additionally, they stressed the importance of the Scrutiny Performance Panel's recommendation to develop sustainability KPIs and targets related to this issue for inclusion in future Corporate Plans.

Members also highlighted the need for further exploration into why disparities exist in accessing the labour market despite differences in academic performance among ethnic groups. They stressed the importance of this issue remaining a priority for Cabinet and expressed appreciation for Cllr Bradbury's commitment to addressing it.

Cllr Thorne's Portfolio

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities; Rebecca Hooper – Operational Manager, Neighbourhood Regeneration and Helen Evans - Assistant Director – Housing and Communities for this section.

The Cabinet Member was invited to make an opening statement after which, officers delivered a presentation and Members were invited to ask questions and make comments/observations.

Members expressed satisfaction with the local consultation process for the reduced hub and library opening times proposals (Ref: HACSC3) but still had concerns about the potential impact on staff, local groups, and residents. They requested a breakdown of how the proposal would affect each listed library/hub to better understand the impact in their communities. Additionally, they discussed the impact of the saving proposal to increase volunteers in the Hub & Libraries (Ref: HACSC5) and expressed concerns about the potential loss of knowledge and skill. They noted the need to retain specific knowledge and skills and were informed that it would take roughly 4 or 5 volunteers to match the equivalent workload of 1 full-time equivalent position due to the fluctuating available hours of volunteers.

Members tested the equitability of Hubs and Libraries, noting that they are not located in every ward of the city. They welcomed the assurance from the Cabinet Member that the value of Hubs & Libraries is recognised and would be protected as much as possible.

Some Members expressed concern about the removal of physical newspapers from libraries and hubs, emphasising the significance of this loss for some residents. They appreciated the assurance given at the meeting that this concern was recognised and would be carefully managed. Members also welcomed the agreement from Officers to explore the proposal for future consultation or other relevant work of the service area, considering the possibility of business sponsorship to support the availability of hard copy newspapers in Hubs & Libraries, which could provide them with advertisement opportunities.

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

76 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

77 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

19 March 2024, 4.30pm

The meeting terminated at 6.30 pm