

ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 FEBRUARY 2020

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

20 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Naz Ismail – Youth Council Representative.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Christopher Lay to Committee following his nomination at the last Council meeting.

The Chairperson advised Committee that Item 6 had been deferred to a later meeting.

21 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

22 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2020 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson subject to the inclusion of Naz Ismail in the attendee list.

23 : DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN AND BUDGETARY PROPOSALS - TO FOLLOW

The Chairperson advised Members that this item provided them with an opportunity to consider those items in the draft Corporate Plan and draft Budgetary Proposals that fall within the responsibility of the Committee. Cabinet will consider these on Thursday 20th February, prior to Council on 27th February.

Members will have received an electronic set of documents for the meeting. The cover report was structured by Cabinet Member portfolio and the Chairperson would 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 would then be considered by Cabinet Member portfolio.

Corporate Overview

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance; Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources; and Ian Allwood, Head of Finance to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Weaver to make a statement in which he said that there had been a later Provisional Settlement and the final settlement was due just

before Budget Council. He hoped this would be timelier next year and he appreciated Scrutiny's role in these challenging times.

The Chairperson invited Officers to make their presentation after which he invited questions and comments from Members;

Members noted that the settlement was more than had been expected and asked how much more it had been. Officers explained that in July there had been an assumed £19million savings target, this was now £9.8 million which shows the scale change; modelling is constantly being updated and the Financial Resilience Model was equal to a 1% change in Revenue Support Grant (RSG). Members wondered why reserves were being used if the settlement was better than expected and Officers stated it was appropriate to use reserves; it is £750k lower than had been used previously. A few years ago Strategic Reviews had been set up, specifically for levelling the budget; savings are on top of 10 years of savings so you cannot underestimate the challenges faced; it is prudent to use reserves and they are put aside for that purpose.

Members noted the Council Tax assumption of 4% increase each year and asked how the new build houses are taken in account. Officers stated that they have to submit a Council Tax Base to Welsh Government, as the tax base increases the relevant share from Welsh Government then decreases from the RSG.

Members asked if the Financial Resilience Model (FRM) had been decreased from previous years and were advised that it had decreased from £4million last year to £3.8million this year.

Members wondered if it was time for a review of the Budget Contingency Fund and asked what work was being done with regard to savings and income generation. The Cabinet Member said this coming financial year would be a good time to conduct a review; he added that there is much lower risk as there is more due diligence and detailed planning than in previous years. It was important to see the effectiveness and realignments to see if the detailed planning has worked. Looking at resilience, they were still saving £10 million after ten years of savings so there needed to be some consistency with regards to settlements. Officers added that there had been more work on robustness and also a shift in focus to identify efficiency savings this year; there had been in excess of £1 million of savings already delivered in year.

Members referred to the proposed Arena being funded from the General fund for Capital Projects and asked if it was being supported by Welsh Government. The Cabinet member advised that it was. Members asked what would happen if there was no budget on 11 March. The Cabinet Member expressed concern that the previous Chancellor was asking for 5% cuts to Councils but they would be looking at this with great interest. There would be a report to Council in July and there was also a need to prepare for a decision on how we leave the European Union.

Members asked about interest cost on debts. Officers clarified with was £870 million, broken down as £326 million on HRA and £544 million on grant funding.

Into Work Services

The Cabinet Member explained that the Corporate Plan had included targets for performance of Into Work Services; there was great work being done and they were setting stretching targets.

Members were pleased to see Community Learning referenced in the Corporate Plan and asked in relation to Adult Community Learning, if cuts were being considered in the Learning for Life element. Officers clarified that there were no cuts planned here, they hope to increase the service which comes under Councillor Merry as its all cost recovery.

Economic Development Directorate

The Chairperson welcomed the Leader, Councillor Huw Thomas and Neil Hanratty Director of Economic Development to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited the Leader to make a statement in which he made reference to Regional Collaboration, ongoing commitment to legislation working through the Assembly and policies in place for City Deal Governance.

The Chairperson invited Officers to make their presentation after which he invited questions and comments from Members;

Members asked when they were likely to see something tangible coming out of the City Deal. The Leader made reference to the IQE semi-conductor site now being occupied and the project being underway; Central Train Station Project programming; Metro Plus across 10 Local Authorities; lots of smaller scale projects; Investment Pipeline for exciting opportunities and 60% of City Deal funding for the South Wales Metro.

Members reiterated previous concerns around Scrutiny of City Deal, and asked that this concern is fed back. The Leader stated that there is probably a role for this Committee over and above City Deal Scrutiny, to delve in and look further; Joint Scrutinies are complex and don't allow Members to get to the detail – this would be better from an individual Local Authority.

Culture & Leisure Portfolio

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Peter Bradbury, Cabinet Member Culture & Leisure and Neil Hanratty Director of Economic Development to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Bradbury to make a statement in which he said that this was as good a budget as he could have hoped for; savings proposals were based on previous decisions taken or income generation i.e. New Theatre. A Music Strategy Post has been created. With regards to financial pressures, the £1.5 million of investment was welcomed. There are areas that can be improved and these will be looked at. Apprenticeships have been created in the Directorate, in the Parks Wardens area.

The Chairperson invited Officers to make their presentation after which he invited questions and comments from Members;

Members discussed lines relating to New Theatre, St David's Hall and Cardiff Castle. It was noted that to improve the income from the Castle, higher quality products were needed for the shop. Members discussed the subsidy to St David's Hall reducing and the investment opportunities to improve commercial success.

Members discussed the commitment to plant more trees, the resources and staff to deliver this. Officers explained that for Ash Die Back and increasing the tree canopy in the City, they were looking at significant funding from Welsh Government.

Members noted the relocation of the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) from the Old Library to inside St David's Hall and the £20k savings. Members considered this may not work as well. Officers assured Members that the main TIC would remain in the Castle and that this was a satellite; there would a role for signposting people to the Castle and for people to pick up leaflets from St David's Hall; staff would receive training.

Investment & Development Portfolio

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Russell Goodway, Cabinet Member Investment & Development and Neil Hanratty Director of Economic Development to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Officers to make their presentation after which he invited questions and comments from Members;

Members were pleased to see that the Dr Who Experience was offered as a saving and asked why it wasn't offered last year. Officers explained that there were rates and security etc. in place, now they were gone it could be offered as a saving.

Members made reference to the 16.5 FTE's that had been lost in Economic Development and asked if this will affect the capacity to deliver major projects and the tourist offer. Officers explained that the vast majority of posts were either VS or vacant posts. With regard to capacity, officers considered they were spread thinly right across the service area, losses can be coped with as people will absorb other duties and work harder so there won't be a significant impact on service delivery; major projects are a skeleton team anyway, a Health and Safety post has been lost but it's been covered elsewhere.

Education, Employment & Skills Portfolio

The Chairperson welcomed The Deputy Leader, Councillor Sarah Merry Cllr Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member – Housing & Communities and Jane Thomas Assistant Director Communities & Housing to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Merry to make a statement in which she thanked Committee for their support of the Cardiff Commitment over recent years, it is a flagship policy in partnership working, with 200 employees conducting work that has been a key part of the Council's work. With regard to Adult Community Learning (ACL), the Cabinet Member wanted to flag up a future cut in funding; Welsh

Government intend to redistribute funding across Wales; whilst protected this year, going forward this means a potential cut of 50% which will mean a real challenge to deliver the service.

The Chairperson invited Officers to make their presentation after which he invited questions and comments from Members;

Members asked how Officers could measure the effect of the decreased ACL grant. Officers advised that they are doing a piece of work to see how they can mitigate the cuts, when the extent of the cuts are known then they will be able to determine what can be delivered and what courses can be run. Any cut will have an impact but the Cabinet Member said there may be a plan B for Adult Education but this is not known as yet.

Members referred to the Welsh Government National Strategy for English as a second language as asked if this was difficult to achieve as it gets dispersed across Wales and takes away from areas of high need. The Cabinet Member stated it was a concern; certain things were better in that they could be delivered locally/regionally rather than nationally but the responsibility is on us to advocate for a local voice.

Housing & Communities Portfolio

The Chairperson invited Councillor Thorne to make a statement in which she said that she was very pleased to say that, despite the difficult financial times, the Corporate Plan includes considerable investment in our services and our buildings, much of which is externally funded.

The new Construction Skills Hub will provide much needed experience for those aiming for a career in the construction industry. This is a partnership project between Cardiff Living new build programme, Into Work Services and the Procurement service.

£1.2m funding will be provided by CITB (Construction Industry Training Board) to provide a mobile training hub on the former Eastern High school site and will include practical work experience on site, including experience with low carbon technologies.

Work has also commenced on developing Whitchurch and Rhydypennau library buildings into hubs with help from the Intermediate Care Fund. While Targeted Regeneration funding is supporting improvement works in Riverside.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members asked what income is generated from room charges in Libraries and Hubs. Officers did not have the exact figures to hand but said it was quite a considerable amount, in the region of £100, 000.

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.

24 : HUB & LIBRARY STRATEGY 2019-2023

The Chairperson advised that this item enabled Members to carry out pre-decision scrutiny of the report to Cabinet titled Hub & Library Strategy. The report contained 2

key elements: first, the proposed Strategy; and secondly, the proposed Library Collections Policy. The Chairperson proposed that Committee look at these in separate sections to avoid confusion.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member Housing & Communities; Jane Thomas (Assistant Director Communities & Housing) and Nicola Pitman, Lead Library & Strategy Manager to the meeting.

Hub & Library Strategy

The Chairperson invited Councillor Thorne to make a statement in which she said that the Strategy sets out the very wide range of services provided through the hubs, adding that much good work is already happening and the strategy sets this out; including the very good performance of the library service.

Councillor Thorne added that the strategy also sets out the wide-ranging plans the Council has for future development and improvement. These plans include the continued roll out of hubs across the north of the city.

The success of the hubs have been widely recognised, not least by health colleagues, who have plans to extend the current Hub building in the Maelfa so that they can co-locate health services on site.

The Chairperson invited Officers to make their presentation after which he invited questions and comments from Members;

Members referred to staff qualifications, asking how many more were needed to meet the target and if there were any particular locations with issues. Officers explained that they need 13 and they have 7; the Strategy team works across the City supporting all libraries; NVQ3 is supplied for staff but this is not included in the target, which requires a degree qualification.

Members were grateful for the advice provided to residents on bus passes and asked if they also provide advice on Universal credit. Officers explained that they provide lots of money advice in Hubs, as well as help with the systems.

Members considered that the Money Advice Service was excellent and asked how this could be better promoted so that people know it's about budgeting as well as benefit advice. Officers stated that it is promoted in Hubs, it's provided in new tenants sign ups too. More needs to be done to target certain cohorts and so that people know it's not just for the unemployed; all Members have a responsibility to promote the service in their Wards.

In relation to Hubs, Members welcomed that they were Dementia friendly and provided help with isolation and inclusion. Members were keen to know about the vision for libraries without hubs and what services would be provided and also noted the importance of dovetailing any clubs into existing community provision to avoid competition. Officers agreed they wouldn't want to compete with existing provision and inclusion officers were looking at existing provision to signpost clients to. Officers stated that most libraries would be Hubs or Hub like, except Cathays Library which would be stand alone as the Heritage Library; staff would be trained appropriately.

Members asked if Libraries could accept donations and were advised that Friends of groups exist and they fundraise and can help libraries but not with direct donations.

Members asked if there was any work with schools to promote Hubs as a place to go in the evenings for things like homework clubs etc. and building on the strong success of the Hubs. Officers explained they conduct weekly school visits into Hubs, they are promoted as part of the summer reading challenge; there are targeted sessions that support the curriculum etc. Officers will continue to work with schools to see what they want provided and continue with homework clubs, intergenerational clubs etc. To build on the success it was important to provide what people want such as social inclusion through walking/football/netball clubs etc.

Members asked for an update on Cardiff Royal Infirmary and were advised that it will be going ahead as a Hub and a report will be brought to Committee on this.

Library Collection Policy

The Chairperson invited Councillor Thorne to make a statement on the Collections Policy in which she said that she was aware that some of the committee have visited the Dominions Way bookstore and would be aware of the need for a clear approach to our library collection. The policy sets out a clear way forward for the service in terms of the purchase, sharing, retention and disposal of our books.

The Chairperson invited Officers to make their presentation after which he invited questions and comments from Members;

Members referred to a previous visit to the stacks and noted the building was in poor condition. Members asked if this resulted in deterioration of the books, also Members noted the large amount of periodicals in storage. Officers explained that leaks in the building had been fixed and the book conditions were fine. With regard to periodicals, Officers explained that they would be offered out to institutions at first and if no take up they would be recycled.

Members discussed sharing rare books and consulting with the academic community. Officers said they will consult on policy and principles rather than where each book is going, a decision on that will be taken on its merits.

Members asked what proportion of rare books were significant to Cardiff. Officers explained they have separated out the special books and those of special interest to Cardiff.

Members noted that the lease is up on Dominions Way in 20 months and asked what the plan was moving forward and whether any savings would be made. Officers considered they would be downsizing but were not sure of savings at this point there may even be a need to roll on the existing lease.

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.

25 : LAND AT CALLAGHAN SQUARE - INVESTMENT & DEVELOPMENT - TO FOLLOW

Item Deferred.

26 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

27 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 12TH MARCH 2020, 4.30PM

The meeting terminated at 7.30 pm