

Date: 28 Feb 2024

**Cllr Chris Weaver**

**Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance.**

*Correspondence Sent via e-mail.*



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Dear Cllr Weaver,

**CASSC Scrutiny Committee 26 Feb 2024: Draft Corporate Plan 2024-2027 and Draft Budgetary Proposals 2024-2025**

Our sincere thanks, to you, your Cabinet colleagues and officers, for attending Committee on 26 Feb 2024. Understanding and testing the decision making within the Council's proposed budget, and its Corporate Plan, is of vital importance. As such, the opportunity this meeting provides; to allow Committee Members, and members of the public, to examine or hear the rationale for the decision making, is welcomed; and we thank all attendees for facilitating this and attending our meeting.

**Corporate Overview**

Due to the ongoing cost of living crisis, we tested how the managing of the council's budget, particularly the aspects which have direct implications for residents (*such as council tax rises and increase in fees and charges*) is offset against demand on services, service sustainability and the council's future outlook. From the response, we heard managing this matter requires a constant, iterative discussion to ensure the decisions made on revenue raising from fees and charges are reasonable and are made with the current financial context in mind.

Due to the significant and sustained pressure on services within this committee's remit, it was interesting to explore the decision-making process regarding the use of reserves; for example how it is determined how much reserve is required to draw down, and how much reserve residual is deemed sufficient to ensure sustainability and lessen risk in future years.

From the discussion, we note the use of reserve is done in tandem with the service area, alongside continuous risk assessment and monitoring. Further, we also note officers' assurance later in the meeting, that when grant funding is achieved; this is often used to reimburse reserves.

We questioned the rationale for the £0.5m reduction in Adult Services' contingency budget, however we do recognise that within these budget proposals, Adult Services has seen an overall growth of around £15m which is welcomed.

Regarding the employee implications for the overall 2024-2025 budget proposals, we note that 62 posts are currently marked as '*TBC / Redeployment*' and we were informed the reasoning for the uncertainty is largely in part to many of the post being agency. Owing to the importance of employee implications, we would welcome in future years that employee implication be known prior to determining or proposing budget proposals.

Lastly, we welcome the increased level of response to this year's budget's consultation, and we hope this increased level of engagement between the council and residents continues on a positive trajectory.

### **Cllr Sangani – Cabinet Member for Public Health & Equalities**

As Cllr Sangani will be aware, we as a committee have been briefed by council officers, and third sector organisations, of the significant capacity issues and growing demand, facing the asylum seeker and refugee services the council manages. We are very aware that these services 'could soon reach breaking point.' Taking this into account, it was relatively disappointing there appears to be no additional steps being taken to address this issue in both the financial and Corporate Plan proposals before us.

Although we note and concur with Cllr Sangani and officers on the importance of external funding and partnership work (both inside and outside the Council) to address this issue, we are disappointed that more prominence or commitment to addressing this issue has not been included in the proposals, particularly in terms of assigning staff resource. In addition, we also have specific concerns around the reliance on grant/external funding in terms of sustainability in future years.

### **Cllr Peter Bradbury – Tackling Poverty and Supporting Young People**

We welcome the revision of the Advice Service targets (KPI 3.09 & 3.10) in the Corporate Plan as this increase of targets is something we have been requesting for some time. However, we were initially disheartened to see that despite past assurances on the importance of the Advice Services, and the administration's desire to protect the team wherever possible, a saving proposal for the loss of two posts within the Advice Services team had been put forward. Further, we also questioned how targets could be raised if resource within the team is diminished and the subsequent implications and pressures this could place on remaining staff.

From the discussion, we are aware, the posts within the saving proposal (*Ref: HACE11*) have been vacant from some time, and the proposed use of money within the Earmarked Reserves (*Ref: Line 67, General Reserves & Line 3, HRA reserves*) will be used to provide additional staff. Further, we have noted Cllr Bradbury's comments that we are currently in the second year of Shared Prosperity Funding, and the next (third year) of funding may present significant challenges for Cllr Bradbury's portfolio; and services within it. We look forward to working with the administration in navigating this in future years.

### **Cllr Norma Mackie – Cabinet Member for Adult Service**

When considering the overall achievability of the savings proposed for Adult Services, we noted all the service change proposals hold a degree of amber risk categorisation in terms of its achievability and residual.

For this reason, we sought insight on the proposals deliverability and were subsequently informed; the reasoning for the amber/green or amber/red categorisation is largely attributed to timescales owing to proposals largely relating to recommissioning of services.

Given the majority of the service change proposals for Adult Services are interlinked with the care an individual receives (*whether it be the costing or model of care provided*) we do wish to stress the importance of 'personalised care'.

Through our work with yourself and officers, and from the response we received at the meeting, we know the importance of personalised care is shared by the Cabinet

Member and service area. The discussion reassured us that care provision will only be offered to individuals where it best aligns with their needs and wishes.

We also wish to reiterate the importance of all proposals being carefully and slowly phased in, especially as it appears the proposals comprise a longer-term programme of change.

Remaining mindful of the sustained pressures within the council's Community Resource Team since the outbreak of the pandemic, and the ongoing efforts and initiatives being deployed to assist the team (*e.g., return to the teams reablement focus, new rostering et al*) we were disappointed to see their savings proposal (*Ref: ADUSC4*).

When exploring the rationale for this budget proposal, we were informed the savings relates to a reduction in back office / admin related service and is being proposed as part of the teams ongoing reform and is not offered specifically to help the council bridge its budget gap.

We welcome progression of the council's neuro-divergent commitments yet sought clarity on how they will be achieved given it received no financial contribution within this budget proposal. From the subsequent discussion, we heard it is the intention for this work to be progressed by drawing upon current resource within the council, its partners and through grant funding.

We note, the work is currently in a scoping phase, and we look forward to monitoring its progression.

### **Cllr Thorne – Housing & Communities**

Given the significant, and ongoing housing situation we questioned if the revenue budget proposed for the service area is sufficient to address the sustained pressures placed on services and the range of commitments detailed in the Corporate Plan.

We note from the discussion, it is recognised the situation is challenging, however there is confidence it will meet the need; particularly as the service area will continue to apply for a range of grants.

We are aware of the forthcoming Welsh Housing Quality Standards and the significant financial and resource challenges this will generate. For this reason, we explored why no money had been set aside with the budget proposals for this issue and we heard although money is being put aside, challenges remain as the exact cost required for this work is not yet known.

We are aware and share the concerns of Cllr Thorne regarding the significant finance and resource this work will require. We therefore welcome the commitment that the forthcoming years there will be a concentrated effort on understanding how much this WHQS requirement will cost, and how will it be achieved. Further, we note and concur with Cllr Thorne that owing to the significant work required, clear direction and support must be offered by the Welsh Government.


Regarding volunteers, we commend and support the skills and opportunity volunteering provides individuals. However, given this year, and the previous year saw budget proposals to increase the use of volunteers in Hubs we are concerned about the unintended consequence and pressure this could place on paid staff. We note this concern is shared by officers and Cllr Thorne and we welcome the assurance that this will be closely monitored to ensure the proposal has no adverse impact for staff.

Lastly, in line with this Committee's performance monitoring work, we welcome the increased capital allocation for council house repairs, and the introduction of specific steps and KPI's on Council House repairs within the draft Corporate Plan.

On behalf of the Committee, thank you once again to you, your Cabinet colleagues and officers for attending Committee to facilitate our consideration of the proposals.

A response to this letter is not requested.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Taylor', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

**COUNCILLOR RHYS TAYLOR**

**Chair - Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee**

cc Members of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee  
Cllr Julie Sangani, Cabinet Member, Public Health & Equalities  
Cllr Norma Mackie, Cabinet Member, Adult Services  
Cllr Peter Bradbury, Cabinet Member, Tackling Poverty & Supporting Young People  
Cllr Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member, Housing & Communities  
Cllr Joel Williams, Chair – Policy, Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee  
Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resource  
Rita Rohman, PA/Secretary to Corporate Director, Resource  
Ian Allwood, Head of Finance  
Sarah McGill, Corporate Director, People & Communities  
Jane Thomas, Director, Adults, Housing & Communities  
Helen Evans, Assistant Director, Housing & Communities  
Gareth Newell, Head of Performance & Partnerships  
Dylan Owen, OM Policy & Improvement  
Group Leaders  
Cabinet Office  
Chris Pyke, OM Governance & Audit  
Tim Gordon, Head of Communications & External Relations



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Councillor Chris Weaver,  
Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance,  
Room 519,  
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Atlantic Wharf,  
Cardiff CF10 4UW.

Dear Councillor Weaver,

### **Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – 26 February 2024**

On behalf of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee I would like to thank you, Councillor Lister, Councillor Merry, Cllr Bradbury and officers for attending the Committee meeting on Monday 26 February 2024 to consider the Draft Budget Proposals 2024/25 and Draft Corporate Plan 2024-2027.

The meeting initially considered the Corporate Overview and was followed by scrutiny of the draft budget proposals and sections of the draft corporate plan relevant to the terms of reference of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. The comments and observations made by Members following this item are set out in this letter.

#### **❖ Corporate Overview**

In terms of your Portfolio, Members felt there were a number of issues that would require your input and commitment going forward and would appreciate your views on.

Firstly, the Committee wish to commend you and Cabinet colleagues for the commitments given to budgets in Education, Children's Services and the protection of the Youth Service budget. The uplifts were very welcomed particularly with regard to Children's Services where the uplift amounts to more than 12%. Notwithstanding the 4.3% uplift to the delegated schools' budget, the committee expressed concerns about the pressures on schools' budgets and the predicted significant deficit position in 2024/2024. We will support you in ensuring Directorates are achieving their

commitments and priorities and budgets are used effectively across all Directorates that fall within this Committee's Terms of Reference.

During our questioning, we asked you about the following issues and noted responses:

- The resilience of the budget and the robustness of the financial strategy, particularly in terms of protecting services
- The nature of any dialogue between Welsh Government and the Council given the predicted budget gap of £142.3 million over the next three years and the risk this poses to the delivery of services in the short and medium terms.
- The extent of collaboration in the provision of services across the region currently and in the future and the relationship between this and the potential for making efficiency savings that could then be devoted to the delivery of front-line services.
- Clarification around the use of the Financial Resilience Model
- The uncertainty surrounding the funding of the increased costs associated with the teachers' pension scheme and the significant implications should this not be fully covered.
- Reassurance that the teacher's NJC pay awards over the last two years have been covered in full and that this will continue for future awards.  
Reassurances also with regard to the pay awards for non-teaching and support staff.
- The key challenges to the budget across the Council
- Issues in relation to particular KPIs

In addition, we asked questions on the following areas. We request a response to these.

- In the corporate overview and across individual portfolios, we asked questions in relation to the national context, particularly around grants. We **request** a response on what the administration intends to do in its dialogue with Welsh Government about grants, particularly the short and medium term position, given the very significant concerns about the coming year and the next 2-3 years; and how grants to schools will be distributed, as officers stated that this was an area that still required detail from Welsh Government.



- In the corporate overview and across individual portfolios, we asked questions in relation to KPIs. This resulted in us asking about results against these KPIs. We therefore **request** that going forward, the Corporate Plan includes current performance, not just in this area, but across all portfolios.
- We asked a question in relation to medium term financial forecasting and were pointed to the Medium-Term Financial Plan Annex 1, and you kindly provided a copy of this document to us via email before the end of the meeting. You also stated that detailed questions on this issue would be welcomed during the year. Therefore, we would like to take up this opportunity for issues within our terms of reference; and therefore, **request** that you provide us with suitable timelines of when we could do this, and we will add to our work programme accordingly.
- We also asked a number of questions seeking clarity around school budgets - both deficits and surpluses. We voiced our concerns around a potential £10m deficit, and how the Council is responding to, and supporting schools. Whilst we noted the responses received, officers stated that there needs to be a conversation between finance and education on this issue, particularly around ALN. Therefore, we **request** further clarity and information be provided on how this will roll-out over the coming months. In addition, we **request** that the response includes further information on how the local authority is going to work with schools to successfully manage deficits in a way that does not damage the quality of education, given that schools are facing very significant demands on a number of fronts.

#### ❖ **Children's Services**

The Committee welcomed the over 12% net increase in the Children's Services budget for 2024/25 and would like to thank the Cabinet for continuing to support this area.

We welcomed news from Councillor Lister that the innovations in Children's Services were coming to fruition, and we will look at this issue in detail at our meeting on the 7 May 2024.

During our questioning, we asked you about the following issues and noted responses:

- Youth Justice Service Restructure
- Assurances that the Service can meet demand.
- Ensuring that the safeguarding self-assessment and the recent inspection have been reflected in both the budget proposals and corporate plan
- Risks relating to placements
- Spend to save issues in relation to employees
- The impact of national strategies and policies going forwards (such as eliminating profit from care etc.).

### Budget Proposals

During the Q&A session, we asked a number of questions on the budget, particularly around what the service wishes to deliver with additional funding; the potential impact of efficiency savings proposed; and the review of the business support service. We noted the responses given.

### Corporate Plan 2023-26

In relation to the Corporate Plan, Members asked a number of questions in relation to commitments and KPIs. This included new KPIs and awaiting targets to be set; sought assurances that current KPIs could be met; and whether the Cabinet Member and officers were confident that the KPIs (K1.19 – 1.24) on external placements would be met. We also asked a question on new KPIs on the family advice service, which we will address more fully below.

### Family Advice Service

We asked about the progress of the service review in this area, and we heard that a service area alignment review was commenced; that an external company undertook a review (which revealed that clients were being referred to the MASH, rather than early help); and plans for a triage system. There was also a suggestion that bringing those two services together could improve preventative services and offer potential efficiency savings, and that some detail of this could be brought back to this scrutiny committee. We therefore **request** that this be done and that a timeline is provided for consideration by this committee.

## Demand on Services and Complexity of Demand

Members noted the range of reasons given for the complexity of cases coming into the service. We acknowledge the issues affecting the children & young people themselves such as poor mental health across all age ranges which is placing pressures on Children's Services and schools; the increase in children with neurodiversity issues, and difficulties in accessing services; and complexities around very young children and babies with complex needs and disabilities and meeting their needs.

We also note the wider complexities associated with poverty and parents' ability to support children; the increased impact of poor mental health on parents, including substance abuse and domestic violence; and we understand that Children's Services are trying to understand the impact of the significant change in the environment – pre-pandemic to now. We will continue to look at ways in which we can support this; as well as review these issues going forward.

## Children's Services General

As we have done at previous meetings, the committee would wish to seek reassurance regarding the efficiency savings and demands on the service. We would therefore **request** further information on this, particularly ensuring that there will not be any adverse impact on service delivery.

We also note that there are numerous discussions taking place (or planning to take place) between the Council and Welsh Government on a range of issues that affect Cardiff. We note that legislation on eliminating profit from care is imminent; and this could throw up more challenges for the Council. We also note and support Cllr Lister's desire for any conversation between Welsh Government and Council Leaders includes experiences of practice staff. If this scrutiny committee can support these discussions, we would welcome this opportunity.

## **Education & Lifelong Learning**

Notwithstanding the concerns expressed about the pressures on schools' budgets, members of the Committee would like to again commend the Cabinet for the continued priority given to education as set out in the Corporate Plan and in the budget proposals.

During our questioning, we asked you about the following issues and noted responses:

- Performance in relation to specific KPIs, including school meals
- Deletion of a post in School Admissions
- Capital Programme, especially around school organisation planning
- Alternative funding for areas such as sports facilities

### Budget Proposals

Much of the discussion on overall budget proposals have already been addressed earlier in this letter. However, further questions were asked in the following areas:

### Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Members asked a number of questions in relation to the funding of ALN, including seeking assurances that interim funding is available and on the Council's radar; whether ALN additional funding has been clearly communicated; what support is being offered in understanding when schools can approach the Council for financial assistance; and the overlap between ALN, with Children's Services and School Transport.

We also asked for clarity on the numbers of those children who have Individual Development Plans and noted that 8% of the current school population have them, which has a knock-on effect in terms of demand and need for provision for complex needs. We would seek assurances in this area and therefore **request** that further information be provided.

### Active Travel

Linked to discussions on ALN, Members asked whether there were funds in place to shrink the radius from schools (currently 3 miles for Secondary schools and 2 miles for Primary schools) – both in the short time and into the longer term. The Head of Finance stated that he could provide further information on this issue. Therefore, we **request** that this information be provided.

### Education Psychologists

Members asked about the deletion of vacant posts in this area. (Appendix 6a in scrutiny papers) We heard that the rationale for deleting these posts was that they

were long standing posts that were named on the system, but the structure had moved on and that there was a full complement, and no reduction in service. The Director suggested that she could clarify this position; and we therefore **request** further information be provided on this proposal.

### Single Sex Toilets

Members asked for the number of single sex toilets in schools and whether there had been any issues in schools in relation to this. The Director of SOP responded that he had not had any issues brought to his attention but could find more information/ further clarity on this. Therefore, we **request** further information be provided.

### **Supporting Young People**

#### Youth Service

Members have, at previous meetings of this Committee, championed the work of the youth service and would wish to state that it fully supports the work that Cllr Bradbury and officers are aiming to achieve in this area, and progress to date.

As with previous years, this Committee wishes to again strongly advocate a move towards sustainable core funding; and consider putting the service on a statutory basis – reducing the reliance on grant funding. We agree with Cllr Bradbury's desire to move from a 50/50 budget split to a 75/25 split. We would therefore **request** your thoughts on this and a commitment from the administration to work towards this in the coming years.,

As Members stated that the meeting, youth services do not just offer activities to young people in their areas; but also have a community cohesion role; provide mental health and well-being support; and tackle criminal exploitation.

We strongly support Cllr Bradbury's vision to rebuild the service; support the locality approach and would wish to offer our support in discussions with Welsh Government on this issue.

**To recap**, the Committee is requesting the following information:

### **Corporate**

- A response on what the administration intends to do in its dialogue with Welsh Government about grants, particularly the short and medium term position, given the very significant concerns about the coming year and the next 2-3 years; and how grants to schools will be distributed, as officers stated that this was an area that still required detail from Welsh Government.
- Agreement that, going forward, the Corporate Plan includes current performance, not just in this area, but across all portfolios.
- Provide us with suitable timelines of when we could ask questions relating to progress against the MTFP during 2024/25.
- School budgets – to provide further clarity and assurances on discussions relating to ALN, and how this will roll-out over the coming months. We also request that the response includes further information on how the local authority is going to work with schools to successfully manage deficits in a way that does not damage the quality of education, given that schools are facing very significant demands on a number of fronts. We would also welcome an in-year update, at the appropriate time, on the schools' budget deficit position and how this is being managed.

### **Children's Services**

- Family Advice Service – that the results of any reviews of the family advice service be brought back to this scrutiny committee and that a timeline is provided for consideration by this committee.
- Children's Services General – provide reassurances regarding the efficiency savings and demands on the service; particularly assurance that there will not be any adverse impact on service delivery.

## **Education & Lifelong Learning**

- ALN - clarity and assurances on the numbers of those children who have Individual Development Plans, and narrative in terms of demand and need for provision for complex needs.
- Active Travel – the Head of Finance provide further information on the impact on funds to shrink the radius from schools (currently 3 miles) – both in the short time and into the longer term.
- Education Psychologists - That the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning provide further information on the rationale for deleting 2 x Education Psychology posts.
- Single Sex Toilets - that the Director of SOP provide details of the number of single sex toilets in schools and whether there had been any issues in schools in relation to this.

## **Supporting Young People**

- Youth Service – that a commitment be given towards sustainable core funding for the Youth Service; and consider putting the service on a statutory basis – reducing the reliance on grant funding.

I would be grateful if you would consider the above comments and work with the relevant Cabinet portfolio holders to provide a response to the content of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', written over a light blue grid background.

**COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN**

**Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

Cc: Members of Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Ash Lister, Cabinet Member for Social Services (Children's Services)  
Councillor Sarah Merry, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education

Councillor Peter Bradbury, Cabinet Member for Tackling Poverty & Supporting Young People  
Councillor Joel Williams, Chairperson of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee  
Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources  
Ian Allwood, Head of Finance  
Melanie Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning  
Richard Portas, Programme Director of School Organisation Planning.  
Suzanne Scarlett, Suzanne Scarlett, Operational Manager – Partnerships & Performance, Education & Lifelong Learning  
Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities  
Deborah Driffield, Director of Children’s Services  
Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services  
Dylan Owen, Policy and Improvement  
Adam Foster, Head of Cabinet Office,  
Claire Deguara, Cabinet Support Office  
Tim Gordon & Jeremy Rhys, Media and Comms  
Cllr John Lancaster – Group Leader  
Cllr Rodney Berman – Group Leader  
Cllr Andrea Gibson – Group Leader  
Gavin McArthur – Chair Governance & Audit Committee



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Fy Nghyf / My Ref: Budget 24.25 [CE:0047799]  
Dyddiad / Date: 29 February 2024

Councillor Lee Bridgeman  
Chairperson Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee  
Cardiff Council  
County Hall  
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Annwyl / Dear Lee,

**Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – 26 February 2024  
Draft Budget Proposals 2024/25**

Thank you for your letter received on 28<sup>th</sup> February and the useful comments raised. I can assure you that Cabinet was able to reflect on the points raised prior to our meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

The following paragraphs address each of the Committee's further information requests:

**Corporate**

**Request: A response on what the administration intends to do in its dialogue with Welsh Government about grants, particularly the short and medium-term position, given the very significant concerns about the coming year and the next 2-3 years; and how grants to schools will be distributed, as officers stated that this was an area that still required detail from Welsh Government.**

This Council along with all other local authorities will continue to undertake dialogue with Welsh Government at all levels and stress the need for early indications of changes in grants and levels of funding. I recognise that grants are a significant factor in the funding for schools and I have been assured by officers that as funding information is received it is passed out to schools.

**Request: Agreement that, going forward, the Corporate Plan includes current performance, not just in this area, but across all portfolios.**

We note your request that, going forward, the Corporate Plan includes current performance, not just in this area, but across all portfolios. I would remind the committee that the Corporate Performance Dashboard has been developed to provide performance data on all Corporate Plan KPIs. This includes information on performance over time and

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**GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI**

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedl.

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The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh, English or bilingually. We will ensure that we communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay.



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FAIRER  
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against target. These KPIs can also be viewed by Well-Being Objective, by Directorate as well as by Scrutiny Committee based on their Terms of Reference. The dashboard can be accessed [here](#) and further training on its use can be made available should members find that useful.

**Request: Provide us with suitable timelines of when we could ask questions relating to progress against the MTFP during 2024/25.**

The Cabinet will receive an annual Budget Strategy Update in July that will provide a refresh and a strategy update for 2025/26 and the Medium Term. I am happy to attend your Scrutiny Committee during 2024/25 at any time. If the Committee wanted to explore further the process by which specific service area calculate expected future demand, for example Children's Services, you may want to invite the Cabinet Member and an officer for that service area as well, who may be able to discuss this with you in more detail.

**Request: School budgets – to provide further clarity and assurances on discussions relating to ALN, and how this will roll-out over the coming months. We also request that the response includes further information on how the local authority is going to work with schools to successfully manage deficits in a way that does not damage the quality of education, given that schools are facing very significant demands on a number of fronts. We would also welcome an in-year update, at the appropriate time, on the schools' budget deficit position and how this is being managed.**

It is the responsibility of the Individual School Governing Body to set a balanced budget based on the financial allocation provided from the formula, grants and any other income available. Individual schools are best placed to make decisions for their children, and we understand that there will be difficult decisions to make. However, this is one of the reasons why a deficit budget maybe required in the short term if there is a view from the Director of Education that educational outcomes would otherwise be severely compromised. Deficits will need to be managed and no school will be allowed to simply increase its deficit year on year.

Officers in Education and Finance work with schools to support them setting their budgets and will continue to do so over the coming weeks and months, and groups of Headteachers will be meeting as 'Efficiency Boards' to collaborate and support each other and help identify savings and best practice that will help schools set and manage their budgets. Regarding ALN, I think this may be best addressed in a detailed session with the Cabinet Member for Education and her officials, though if there are specific finance elements, I'd be happy to try to answer any questions the Committee has.

### **Children's Services**

**Request: Family Advice Service – that the results of any reviews of the family advice service be brought back to this scrutiny committee and that a timeline is provided for consideration by this committee.**

There is a review of the interface between Early Help and Children's Services at the point of first contact which has commenced, and I have asked officers to provide the Committee with updates as it progresses. No review of the Family Advice Service is currently planned.

**Request: Children's Services General – provide reassurances regarding the efficiency savings and demands on the service; particularly assurance that there will not be any adverse impact on service delivery**

It is a very challenging budget and along with all services Children's Services have looked to see how we can deliver some efficiencies in line with the direction set out in the Children's Services strategy. We will strive to ensure that any impacts are kept to a minimum and that over time will lead to more sustainable service delivery.

### **Education & Lifelong Learning**

**Request: ALN - clarity and assurances on the numbers of those children who have Individual Development Plans, and narrative in terms of demand and need for provision for complex needs.**

We currently have 3196 Individual Development Plans (337 are local authority maintained for the following cohorts: Children Looked After, Elective Home Education, Early Years, Education other than at school, Dual Registered, Detained, the rest are school maintained) for learners identified as having ALN (under the new ALN system).

5,554 currently are recorded as having SEN (school action, school action plus and statement of SEN) or ALN.

In Cardiff we are seeing an increase in the demand for specialist provision for learners with significant and complex needs; this is due to a combination of factors including but not exhaustive to the increased identification of ALN, increased complexity of need and learners moving into Cardiff. I have asked officers to provide you with more data in this regard.

**Request: Active Travel – further information on the impact on funds to shrink the radius from schools (currently 3 miles) – both in the short time and into the longer term.**

Further information is provided below:

- We are targeting all ALN pupils in New Curriculum Year 9 and above with independent travel training, so that those pupils that are capable to be trained, are trained with this life-skill and reduce future transport requirements.
- For ALN pupils the distance criteria does not apply for most cases as transport entitlement is based on their individual needs in line with the Welsh Learner Travel Measure. As a result, the majority of pupils receiving transport on ALN grounds within the city live within the 2 and 3 mile criteria already.
- With more ALN SRB units being opened across the city the distance ALN pupils travel, or are transported will gradually reduce over coming years, with more pupils being able to attend more local provision. (Although demand is still out stripping supply of places)

- Provision allocation is prioritised based on the pupils with the greatest need for the support.

**Request: Education Psychologists - further information on the rationale for deleting 2 x Education Psychology posts.**

These posts have been vacant for a long period of time and the service is able to deal with the current capacity of cases without them. Whilst additional resources would be welcome, it is incumbent on all services to make efficiencies where they can.

**Request: Single Sex Toilets - details of the number of single sex toilets in schools and whether there had been any issues in schools in relation to this.**

We do not hold the information that breaks down into unisex or single sex toilets in schools.

### **Supporting Young People**

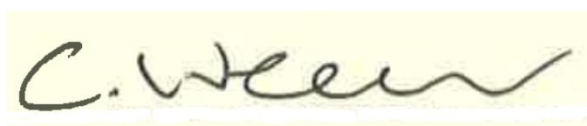
**Request: Youth Service – that a commitment be given towards sustainable core funding for the Youth Service; and consider putting the service on a statutory basis – reducing the reliance on grant funding.**

The Welsh Government's Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board is currently reviewing the Legislative basis for Youth Services in Wales, and is overseeing an Independent Review of funding and expenditure on youth work services. Cardiff Youth Service is actively represented in the Strategic Participation Groups involved in this work. We will continue to work towards a sustainable model for youth work in Cardiff, building upon the imminent changes agreed by Cabinet in November 2023, whilst working alongside the national review team to set the direction for the future.

The financial picture for the Council going forward is challenging, and there are potentially difficult financial decisions that will need to be made, so in this context any consideration of additional base budget funding, for any service area, will be considered each year alongside the need to set a balanced and sustainable budget. I am pleased however to reiterate that we have not proposed any cut to Youth Services this year, and we recognise the value and importance of this service.

I hope that this letter captures all the points raised in your letter and thank you again for your support in the budget process.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely,



**Councillor / Y Cyngorydd Chris Weaver**  
**Aelod Cabinet dros Gyllid, Moderneiddio a Pherfformiad**  
**Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance**

**Cc:**

Members of Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Ash Lister, Cabinet Member for Social Services (Children's Services)

Councillor Sarah Merry, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education

Councillor Peter Bradbury, Cabinet Member for Tackling Poverty & Supporting Young People

Councillor Joel Williams, Chairperson of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee

Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources

Ian Allwood, Head of Finance

Melanie Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning

Richard Portas, Programme Director of School Organisation Planning.

Suzanne Scarlett, Operational Manager – Partnerships & Performance

Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities

Deborah Driffield, Director of Children's Services

Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services

Dylan Owen, Policy and Improvement

Adam Foster, Head of Cabinet Office,

Claire Deguara, Cabinet Support Office

Tim Gordon & Jeremy Rhys, Media and Comms

Cllr John Lancaster – Group Leader

Cllr Rodney Berman – Group Leader

Cllr Andrea Gibson – Group Leader

Gavin McArthur – Chair Governance & Audit Committee



Date: 28 February 2024

Councillor Weaver  
Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation and Performance  
Sent Via E-mail

Dear Councillor Weaver,

**Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee: 28 February 2023**

On behalf of the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee, our sincere thanks to you, your Cabinet colleagues, and officers, for facilitating our scrutiny of the draft Corporate Plan 2024-2027 and draft Budgetary Proposals.

This letter summaries the key comments and observation made by Members at the meeting. Please also note our requests, listed at the end of our letter.

**Overall Corporate Overview**

Members note shortly before the meeting, yourself and officers received the final settlement from the Welsh Government which confirmed the Council remains in the anticipated financial position on which this budget is based; and so no further addendums will be required.

As I'm sure you will agree, undertaking Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) on the budget proposals is of vital importance and it was pleasing to hear, all relevant budget proposals have been subject to an EIA, and the findings of which, have informed the Council's consultation and engagement activity.

Remaining mindful to the importance of these assessments, and the recent Motion passed by Council, we are of the view that, in future years the budget papers provided to Scrutiny Committees must include the full EIA information as standard.

Further, we ask that all the EIA's carried out on these 2024/25 Budget proposals be circulated to all Scrutiny Committees.

From the meeting's discussions, Members note, and are reassured, that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) remains a key commitment within the Council's Corporate Plan and has a central focus in the development and delivery of key Council strategies, such as Cardiff & Vale's Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Strategy.

Turning our attention to financial matters, it was interesting to explore the process used to determine the use and allocation of the reserve funds and we note the assurance offered by the Council's Section 151 Officer, that within these budget proposals, the Council will retain a level of reserves that provides financial resilience.

In terms of borrowing, and its implications on the Council's revenue budget, Members would appreciate a break-down on what proportion of capital financing is covered by income stemming from the projects we are borrowing for, what proportion is covered by grants, what proportion is money allocated from the council's general revenue/reserve fund etc.

Lastly, Members note and share the concerns of yourself and officers regarding the financial situation with schools and hope, through close collaboration with schools, we manage and mitigate the situation.

### **Councillor Burke's portfolio**

Given the current financial context, and overall budgetary position of the Council Members noted and questioned why no price increase has been proposed regarding hiring Cardiff Castle. Although we note the rationale is in part due to the promotion of the Castle, given the wider context, the committee would like this to be given consideration.

Remaining in the remit of fees and charges, given the city's status and its popularity for tv production companies, Members believe charges for filming in the city could be a significant avenue to generate income; and so, queried why the budget proposals contain no proposed price increase for filming in the city.

Upon reflection, Members wish to explore this matter in greater detail and so will task our support officer to work with the relevant officers to allow us to examine this topic in greater detail.

To facilitate our future consideration, we would like to receive insight on when the filming fees for Cardiff last increased, the costs our neighbouring cities charge for filming along with a wider fee comparison with core cities.

Regarding the Mansion House Budget service change proposal (*Ref: ECDSC4*) we sought assurance and confirmation that the gifting agreement allows the Council to lease or dispose of the property. From the discussion we note the assurance provided; however, we welcome written confirmation of these assurances, once further checks on this matter have been undertaken. In addition, we welcome the agreement that the full detail on the Mansion House proposal will be brought to Cabinet and this Committee at a future date.

In conjunction, we were informed as a result of the Protocol budget service change proposal (*Ref: ECDSC14*) there will be a reduced programme of events for the Lord Mayor, however this impact will be carefully managed through utilising resource in the Council's Event teams.

We noted our concern regarding the playground budget proposals (*Ref: ECDSC8 & ECDSC9*) exploring if this will result in safety implications. Through the response we were informed these results will have no adverse impact on safety or statutory obligations.

We again highlighted our concern regarding the budget service change proposal to reduce the provision of park rangers (*Ref: ECDSC6*). It was unclear to Members how this proposal would impact on Friends Groups, so we would appreciate further clarity on this matter.

In addition, remaining mindful to the Council's aspirations and commitments surrounding EOTAS, some Members raised concerns regarding the proposal to reduce 3 apprenticeship posts in the parks scheme (*Ref: ECDSC13*).

In terms of the Pentwyn Leisure Centre redevelopment; we note the development work is anticipated to be concluded by summer 2025, £3m has been allocated to this project within the Capital Programme, and the intention for this project to access Welsh Government funding in relation to carbon reduction.



We also welcome the confirmation that £1.5m of Shared Prosperity Funding has been agreed in January 2024 for the development of leisure projects; of which, Pentwyn is specifically named.

We wish to reiterate the importance of your Cabinet colleague's engagement with this scrutiny committee on the Pentwyn redevelopment proposals and their acceptance of our recommendation regarding a firm grounding for local community consultation. We are of the view, agreeing to this recommendation, and ensuring the development has firm local community consultation is vital.

### **Councillor Goodway's portfolio**

Members wish to pass on their thanks to Cllr Thomas for answering questions on this portfolio, in the absence of Cllr Goodway.

Given the significant sums of monies allocated within the Capital Programme to projects in our remit we explored the aspect of risk management. We note the risk management assurance made by Cllr Thomas regarding resilience and future spend. Further, we note Cllr Thomas' view, that the indicative economic forecast, particularly around interest rates, is given additional assurance and confidence.

We as a Committee, look forward to closely monitoring and assessing the development of these projects.

In terms of the velodrome at the Sports Village, we sought confirmation on its funding, in light of the potential new options for the Band B rebuild of Cathays High School. We note timeframes are still unknown but there is a strong commitment to provide a 'state of the art' school; and all opportunities regarding location are worth exploring.

### **Cllr Merry's Portfolio**

Members are pleased to note that Cardiff Commitment is to receive an allocation of £200,000 through the Financial Resilience Mechanism. Further we also welcome the insight offered by Cllr Merry at the meeting regarding the opportunities for the Council to access funding to further support this commitment.

### **Councillor Bradbury's portfolio**

Members recognise the overall achievement and performance of the Into Work teams, noting in particular, the increase in the number of jobseekers supported from the ethnic minority community.

However, we do wish to stress the importance of the Performance Panel's action (*Appendix 2, Feb 2024*) for the executive to assess, in collaboration with the Race Equality Taskforce, the number of meaningful interventions. And, in line with this work, we are of the view a sustainability KPI and target on this matter should be developed and included in future Corporate Plans.

It was also important to recognise that the academic performance of different ethnic groups did not translate into the ability to access the labour market, and further work is needed to explore why this discrepancy can occur and what we as a Council can do to address it.

We do wish to stress the importance of this issue remaining at the fore of Cabinet's priorities and are pleased to note, Cllr Bradbury's commitment toward addressing this, and more general inequity matters.

### **Cllr Thorne's portfolio**

Generally, Members were pleased with the diligent approach regarding local consultation for the reduced hub and library opening times proposals (*Ref: HACSC3*). However, we do still have concerns regarding potential impact of the proposal on staff, local groups, and residents. As such, we would like to request a break-down of how this proposal would affect each of the listed libraries / hubs in turn (*albeit indicative, if still unknown*), to enable local members to understand the impact in their communities.

We also explored the impact of the saving proposal to increase volunteers in the Hub & Libraries (*Ref: HACSC5*). Assessing the impact, or potential loss of knowledge and skill this proposal could entail. From the response, we note the need to retain specific knowledge and skill is recognised and so specific posts within the Hubs and Libraires will be retained. In addition, we were also informed it would roughly, on average, be 4 or 5 volunteers to match the equivalent workload of 1 FTE, due to the fluctuating available hours of volunteers.

In line with this we also tested the equitability of Hubs and Libraires given they are not located in every ward of the city. We note this is recognised by the Cabinet Member and welcomed the assurance within the discussion the value of Hubs & Libraries is recognised, and they will be protected as much as possible.

Some Members highlighted their concern regarding the removal of papers and periodicals from libraries and hubs; noting this would be a significant loss for some. We welcome the assurance offered at the meeting that this is recognised, and it will be carefully managed. We are also pleased to note, officers agreeing to explore our proposal for the future consultation (*or other relevant work of the service area*), exploring the possibility of business sponsoring the availability of hard copy newspapers in Hubs & Libraries, which in turn, provides them with advertisement.

Thank you once again to you, your Cabinet colleagues, and officers for attending Committee and facilitating our consideration.

To confirm, this letter requires a response please, to the following requests:

### **Request**

1. **Members request:** all the EIA's carried out on all the budget proposals be circulated to all Scrutiny Committees.
2. **Members request:** a break-down on what proportion of capital financing is covered by income stemming from the projects we are borrowing for, what proportion is covered by grants, what proportion is money allocated from the council's general revenue/reserve fund etc.
3. **Members request:** written confirmation that the Mansion House gifting agreement, allows the Council to lease or dispose of the property.
4. **Members request:** clarity on how the budget proposals, to reduce provision of park rangers will impact on Friends Groups.
5. **Members request:** a break-down of how the proposal to reduce opening and closing times, will affect each of the listed Libraries / Hubs in turn (*albeit indicative, if still unknown*).

Regarding our request to explore filming charges in the city in more detail and for the additional information requested; our support officer will be in touch with relevant officers to take this request forward.

Yours sincerely,



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**COUNCILLOR PETER WONG  
CHAIR, ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Members of the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee  
Zack Hellard – Youth Council representative  
Group Leaders  
Chair, Governance & Audit Committee  
Cllr Merry Cllr Thorne Cllr Thomas Cllr Bradbury Cllr Goodway Cllr Burke  
Chris Lee Ian Allwood Gill Brown  
Neil Hanratty Jon Day Jon Maidment  
Helen Evans Rebecca Hooper  
Rita Rohman Christine Brain Clair James  
Cabinet Support Office  
Chris Pyke Tim Gordon Jeremy Rhys

**SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y CABINET  
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Fy Nghyf / My Ref: Budget 24.25/ECSC [CE:0047770]  
Eich Cyf / Your Ref: SharePoint/E&C Library/Correspondence/February 2024  
Dyddiad / Date: 29 February 2024

Councillor Peter Wong  
Chairperson Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee  
Cardiff Council  
County Hall  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Annwyl / Dear Peter,

**Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee – 27th February 2024  
Draft Budget Proposals 2024/25**

Thank you for your letter dated 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and the useful comments raised. I can assure you that Cabinet was able to reflect on the points raised prior to our meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024. The following paragraphs address each of the Committee's further information requests:

**Request: All the EIA's carried out on all the budget proposals be circulated to all Scrutiny Committees.**

All relevant budget proposals have been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), the findings of which have informed the Council's consultation and engagement activity, thereby ensuring that the voice of those disproportionately impacted by any changes is heard in the budget setting process. Impact Assessments will also reflect the findings of the consultation and engagement activity undertaken. These EqIAs will be made available to members via a dedicated SharePoint space.

**Request: a break-down on what proportion of capital financing is covered by income stemming from the projects we are borrowing for, what proportion is covered by grants, what proportion is money allocated from the council's general revenue/reserve fund etc.**

The Capital Financing budget reflects the estimated costs of undertaking the Council's Treasury Management activities (interest payable and receivable) and other costs in relation to capital expenditure activities including provision for Prudent Minimum Revenue Provision (A sum towards repayment of historic capital expenditure paid for by borrowing money). Numerous factors that can impact on the costs such as timing of borrowing, scheme progress and interest rates.

Your information is processed under the Data Protection Act 2018 to fulfil Cardiff Council's legal and regulatory tasks as a local authority. For further information on what personal data we hold and how long we keep it for, please view our Privacy Policy; [www.cardiff.gov.uk/privacynotice](http://www.cardiff.gov.uk/privacynotice). If you have concerns about how your data has been handled, contact the Council's Data Protection Officer via [dataprotection@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@cardiff.gov.uk). Your information has been shared with PSL in order to contact you today. For further information on how PSL manage personal data, please view Privacy Policy; <https://pslprint.co.uk/privacy-policy/>

**GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI**

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

**WORKING FOR CARDIFF, WORKING FOR YOU**

The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh, English or bilingually. We will ensure that we communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay.



**STRONGER  
FAIRER  
GREENER**



A breakdown of estimated Capital Financing Costs for the whole council are as follows for 2024/25:

General Fund Capital Financing Costs estimated for 2024/25 are £37 million. These costs are met from Welsh Government Grant and Council Tax as part of the Council's annual revenue budget process.

The above budget assumes that projects and expenditure deemed to pay for themselves from additional borrowing, do so. This is illustrated on Page 14 Annex 3 of the Capital Strategy. i.e Capital financing costs for such projects are deemed net neutral to the Capital financing budget as other identified revenue budgets are in place to meet these costs.

In addition to the £37m, the following capital financing costs are projected to be recovered from the following sources for 2024/25:

- £5.5m - Recoverable from Welsh Government Grant where there is a commitment from WG to provide a specific revenue grant over future years (Local Government Borrowing Initiative).
- £3.3m - Recoverable from Red Dragon Centre Income.
- £10.4m - Recoverable from identified revenue budgets (21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Financial Model) held to support the Council's previous and future investment in new schools as part of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme.
- £4.4m - Recoverable from Invest to Save / Invest to earn schemes, where it has been identified that capital expenditure will result in future financial and non-financial benefits, allowing any initial expenditure to be repaid from revenue budgets as a result of savings or additional income. These projects include Highway assets LED conversion; Property Energy measures retrofit, Radyr Weir and Lamby Way Solar Farm energy generation, Cemetery expansion, Core Office Strategy and buying vehicles instead of leasing where deemed more effective to do so.

#### Housing Revenue Account

In addition, Capital Financing Cost estimates for HRA for 2024/25 are £33m. These are to be met by rent payers and service charges.

#### Arena Multi Storey Car Park and Development

Capital Financing costs are expected to commence on completion of the development in 2026/27 estimated at £9m. These are assumed to have no impact on the Capital Financing Budget in 2024/25, as assumed to be recovered from developer and parking income and other mitigations in the short term, as identified in the Arena Funding Strategy considered by Cabinet in November 2023.

**Request: Written confirmation that the Mansion House gifting agreement, allows the Council to lease or dispose of the property.**

As confirmed at the meeting, the Council has an unencumbered freehold ownership of the building and as such there is no legal impediment or covenant that restricts the Council's ability to explore private sector investment.

**Request: Clarity on how the budget proposals, to reduce provision of park rangers will impact on Friends Groups**

As confirmed at the meeting, the Park Rangers service was awarded additional funding in 2019/20 and 2020/21 which enabled the service to be increased by 4 posts. The proposed saving will reduce this growth of 4 posts by 2 posts. The service currently has c16.5 FTE and this will now reduce to c14.5 FTE.

There will be a reduction of one post in the Community Park Rangers team, which currently consists of 9 FTE, and one post in the Urban Park Rangers team, which currently consists of c7.5 FTE. The Community Park Rangers team provides support to Friends Groups and as a result of the reduction of one post it is expected to result in a small reduction in volunteer hours of less than 10%.

**Request: a break-down of how the proposal to reduce opening and closing times, will affect each of the listed Libraries / Hubs in turn (albeit indicative, if still unknown).**

Please find attached a draft, indicative timetable that will reduce the opening hours in Hubs as laid out in the proposal by 15.5 hours in total. This is a draft and is subject to change following public consultation which will be carried out after a Council decision is made.

I hope that this letter captures the key points raised in your letter and thank you again for your support in the budget process this year.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely,



**Councillor / Y Cynghorydd Chris Weaver**  
**Aelod Cabinet dros Gyllid, Moderneiddio a Pherfformiad**  
**Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance**

cc Members of the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee  
Zack Hellard – Youth Council representative  
Group Leaders  
Chair, Governance & Audit Committee  
Cllr Merry, Cllr Thorne, Cllr Thomas, Cllr Bradbury, Cllr Goodway, Cllr Burke  
Chris Lee, Ian Allwood, Gill Brown  
Neil Hanratty, Jon Day, Jon Maidment  
Helen Evans, Rebecca Hooper  
Rita Rohman, Clair James  
Cabinet Support Office  
Chris Pyke  
Tim Gordon, Jeremy Rhys

Draft Proposed Amendment to Hub Opening/Closing times- Subject to Consultation Total proposed 15.5 hour reduction

Location	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>Central Library Hub</b> – Current 53.5 hrs / week	9 – 6	9-6	9-6	10-7	9-6	9-5.30
Proposed 49 hrs / week, Loss of 4.5 hrs	9 - 5	10 - 6	9 - 5	10 - 7	9 - 5	9-5
<b>Penylan Library</b> – Current 54.5 hrs	9 – 7	9 - 6	9 – 6	9 - 6	9 - 6	9 -5.30
Proposed 50 / week, Loss of 4.5 hrs	9 – 7	9 - 5	10 – 6	9 - 5	10-6	9 - 5
<b>Rhydypennau Hub</b> – current 40.5 hrs	9 – 1 & 2 – 6	9 – 1 & 2 -7	closed	9 – 1 & 2 -6	9 – 1 & 2 – 6	9 – 1 & 2 -5.30
Proposed 40 / week loss of 0.5	9 - 5	10 - 6	N/A	10 - 6	9 - 5	9 - 5
<b>Whitchurch Hub</b> – Current 40.5 hrs	9 – 1 & 2 – 6	9 – 1 & 2 – 6	Closed	9 – 1 & 2 -7	9 – 1 & 2 – 6	9 – 1 & 2 – 5.30
Proposed 40 / week loss of 0.5	9 - 5	10 - 6	N/A	10 - 6	9 - 5	9 – 5
<b>Canton Library</b> – Current 40.5 hrs	9 – 1 & 2 – 6	9 – 1 & 2 – 6	9 – 1 & 2 -7	Closed	9 – 1 & 2 – 6	9 – 1 & 2 – 5.30
Proposed – 40 hrs / loss of 0.5	9 – 5	10 - 6	10 - 6	N/A	9 -5	9 - 5
<b>Rhiwbina Hub</b> Current 44.5 hrs	10 – 7	Closed	9 – 6	9 - 6	9 - 6	9 – 5.30
Proposed – 40 hrs / loss of 4.5	10 - 6	N/A	9 – 5	10 – 6	9 – 5	9 - 5
<b>Cathays Heritage Library</b> - 40.5 hrs	9 – 1 & 2 – 6	9 – 1 & 2 – 6	9 – 1 & 2 -7	9 – 1 & 2 – 6	Closed	9 – 1 & 2 – 5.30
Proposed 40 Hrs loss of 0.5	9 - 5	10 - 6	9 - 5	10 - 6	N/A	9 – 5



**Ref:** SharePoint/Scrutiny/Env/Correspondence 27.02.2024

**Date:** 28 February 2024



**Councillor Chris Weaver**

Dear Councillor Weaver,

**Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024.**

**DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25 & DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2024 - 2027**

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee, I would like to thank you, your Cabinet colleagues and officers for attending Committee to facilitate our consideration of the Draft Budget 2024/25 and the Draft Corporate Plan 2024-27.

The meeting initially considered the Corporate Overview and was followed by scrutiny of the draft budget proposals and sections of the draft Corporate Plan relevant to the terms of reference of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee. At the meeting Members had the opportunity to question the relevant Cabinet portfolio holders and supporting officers on their draft budget and Corporate Plan proposals for the coming year. Members agreed that I pass on the following observations to inform Cabinet discussion later this week. You will find our recommendations and requests, listed at the end of the letter.

### **Corporate Overview**

Members noted that it was positive that following the consultation exercise some of the proposed service changes were not now being taken forward.

Committee members also noted with concern comments made in the consultation that the Councils accounts have not been audited in the last two years. Officers reassured the members that this was possibly the case in England, however, not in Wales, although delays were acknowledged due to Audit Wales capacity/workload.

Members asked if sufficient funding has been allocated to support the delivery of the One Planet Cardiff Strategy. You recognised the challenge to meet net

zero by 2030, and commented that the issues to deliver net zero lie beyond the control of the Council, however the many issues are being addressed and the OPC action plan will be reviewed and there is a commitment to continue to deliver against the strategy.

The Committee asked how challenging had it been to set the budget this year compared to previous years? You and officers agreed that it had been very challenging although for different reasons than previous years i.e. the cost of living currently and the rate of inflation. The committee also asked about the use of general and earmarked reserves to help build the budget. Officers commented that these are constantly monitored and reviewed, however they play a relatively small part in balancing the budget, and that a risk based approach is taken to ensure ongoing financial resilience.

Members appreciated that 'back office' efficiencies are sought before service changes that impact delivery of front line services, however, the question was asked, how long this continues before frontline services are affected? You commented that this will differ across the Directorates, and that use of technology can support changes to that way services are delivered. However, if current budget trends continue, difficult and potentially damaging service change will need to be made.

A Member asked about the impact of 'mothballing' parts of building has had on insurance, e.g. the need to maintain the building at a certain temperature. Officers were confident that there were no issues that they were aware of, and that insurers had recently visited County Hall.

The Committee asked how the level of Council tax had been determined and whether a higher increase had been considered. You responded that local Councils will make decisions and choices based on their local circumstances and that the decision had been made recognising the cost of living impact for residents and the need to develop a balanced and resilient budget going forward.

## **Cllr Wild - Recycling & Neighbourhood Services**

Members raised concerns about the potential change to three weekly collection of residual waste for households with pets. Officers commented that some wood-based materials were able to be recycled, and that information on the website needed to be updated to ensure residents were able to make informed decisions and choices regarding the disposal of pet waste materials.

The Committee asked about RNSE4 and how the review of Street Cleansing vacant posts would impact on service delivery? Officer clarified that the £151,000 represented approximately 5 posts out of a service of circa 150 WTE (3.33%) and that by working 'smarter' there will be no impact to service delivery. Officers also noted the proposed shift changes at the Materials Recycling Facility, that currently operates a two shift system and the wish to modernise and move to a single shift that would enable management support during operating hours.

A member asked why there was no proposed increase to FPNs, for 'poor' behaviour, when charges for 'doing the right thing' i.e. bulky waste collections were being increased. Officers explained that FPN charges are determined by Welsh Government and that Cardiff is at the higher end of the charges, and with regard to bulky waste collections, the charges are set to provide residents with a viable and competitive alternative to a commercial company. Following this members asked if there was a danger that fly tipping would increase as a result of the increased charges. Officers commented that yes there is always a risk that fly tipping will increase however, there will always be those that disrespect their environment and that fly tipping is usually the result of private contractors, disposing of waste without a licence and not residents.

Members asked about RNSE1, review and restructure of recycling waste treatment, depot and restructure and the risk analyses being red/amber. Officers clarified that the recent 6 month of strike action has impacted on the delivery of this work and that a lot of work is going on to make the changes as

painless as possible, and that there was a need to change as the service has remained the same for a significant period.

In relation to RNSSC2 – Residual collections, why is this still being considered when the outcome of the consultation shows there is little public support.

Officers explained that segregated waste and three weekly collections are Welsh Government policy to meet their recycling target of 70%. Officers also reminded the committee that there is currently an historical fiscal penalty of circa £3m with the potential of an additional £1.9m if recycling targets continue not to be met. There were also comments that if the wording of the question in the consultation had been structured differently the response may have been more positive.

The Committee asked how much money does the Enforcement Team bring in? Officers replied approximately 15/20% of the cost of the service. It was acknowledged that there was also a balance between education and enforcement and that it was hoped the restructure would support changes going forward.

The Committee asked about the use of Agency staff, and officers commented that there would always need to be some on the books due to some seasonal services e.g. garden waste, however more were moving to permanent contracts and there was a wish to have more 'multi functional' staff to support digitising of some services.

Members asked about the deferral of the introduction of garden waste collection services. Officers advised that currently no decisions have been made and the work was ongoing with colleagues in the Vales of Glamorgan Council where charges were introduced 18 months ago. Based on their experience charges would be approximately £30-40, and with a 20% uptake of the service generate about £900k. Officers reiterated that the council can only statutorily charge for the collection of waste and not the disposal, however any green waste collected would contribute to the Council's overall recycling rates.

The Committee asked about sickness absence rates in the service are that have traditionally been comparatively high. Officers acknowledged that last year the rate was 22 FTE days per year and that the target going forward was 20 days. It was noted that the strike had had an impact on managing this and however there has been an impact on long term sickness absence.

Members also comments on the continued issues of the absence of a Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) in North Cardiff. Councillor Wild stated that he believes the city does not need a third HWRC, and commented that what is needed is a different model of recycling, repair and reuse centre, and that officers have already been tasked with finding a suitable site.

Members asked about the potential to charge more for a bulky waste 'quick' pick up service. Officers commented that the service has been impacted by the strike action and that the aim of the service is to pick up within 48 hours.

In terms of accessing services digitally, i.e. booking collection HWRC visits, it was noted that this digital interface may be difficult for the elderly. These concerns were noted and C2C staff were available to support those unable to access services digitally and work would be ongoing with the 'digital team' to make them as accessible as possible.

### **Cllr Wild - Climate Change**

Members asked about the potential to replicate Radyr Wier to provider more income/energy generation. Officers stated that this was not currently intended although more energy generation from solar farms is being explored.

Members also asked about the potential energy generation from the Severn Estuary and the work of the Western Gateway, Cllr Wild commented that this was in the early stages, following the recent appointment of a chair and the potential links to the Aberthaw Cardiff Capital Region site.

The committee asked if sufficient funding has been allocated to meet the significant challenges of delivering the One Planet Cardiff Strategy. It was noted that some of the projects e.g. coastal flood defence are Welsh Government funded. However there were challenges in relation to transport and the biggest challenge is in relation to the retrofit of schools and houses. It

was noted that UK council have the same concerns and that a Cabinet Report will be coming forward. Cllr Wild also noted the potential opportunities in relation to the workforce that would be required if funding was made available to undertake the retrofitting.

### **Cllr De'Ath - Transport & Strategic Planning**

The Committee asked if the target in relation to modal shift is achievable given the recent cuts to bus services. Officers responded that significant infrastructure is required to support the planned sustainable travel options i.e. Metro, CrossRail, bus priority routes, cycleways and parking zones, along with behaviour change by residents. It was also recognised that some bus services will always need to be subsidised as they have failed to attract passenger numbers that were travelling pre-pandemic. It is anticipated that bus corridors will assist in the improvement in running times and reliability. The proposed franchising of bus services was also noted as a positive as it would allow cross subsidisation of profitable and non profitable routes. The walking distance to access key bus corridors was noted as a concern by members for the elderly and disabled, and that this needed to be addressed. to 'tempt' people to use the services. It was also noted that an efficient, reliable, integrated transport system is essential to deliver this modal shift.

The issues raised by the committee in relation to parking included:

- Removal of free parking
- New parking charges/tariffs
- Visitor permits
- Enforcement
- Parking Machines

Officers responded that the risk rating of achieving some of the saving related to parking was in relation to the consultation process required to introduce charges and zones and the related Traffic Regulation Orders, and only part year savings being achieved.

The issue noted about a number of machines not working was explained as the transition from 3G to 4G systems which are being rolled out.

Members notes the availability of S106 planning gain monies and following the Joint T&F report reiterated the recommendation for visibility of how and where the monies are spent. Officers noted that developers will also deliver schools and roads as part of planning agreements.

No requests for additional information or formal recommendations were made.

Once again thank you once more for attending Committee and for considering our comments and observations.

Yours sincerely,



**Councillor Owen Jones**

**Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee**

Cc: *Members of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee*

*Cllr Caro Wild, Cabinet Member, Climate Change*

*Cllr Dan De'Ath, Cabinet Member Transport & Strategic Planning*

*Cllr Joel Williams, Chair of PRAP*

*Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources*

*Ian Allwood, Head of Finance*

*Neil Hanratty, Director, Economic Development*

*Andrew Gregory, Director, Planning, Transport & Environment*

*Matt Wakelam, Assistant Director, Street Scene*

*Claire Moggridge, Head of Transport*

*Simon Gilbert, Head of Planning*

*Cllr John Lancaster, Group Leader, Conservatives*

*Cllr Andrea Gibson, Group Leader, Common Ground*

*Cllr Rodney Berman, Group Leader, Liberal Democrats*

*Chris Pyke, OM Governance & Audit*

*Tim Gordon, Head of Communications & External Relations*

*Claire Deguara, Cabinet Business Manager*

Date: 29 February 2024

Councillor Huw Thomas, Leader  
Councillor Chris Weaver,  
Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation & Performance,  
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Dear Huw & Chris,

### **PRAP Scrutiny Committee: 28 February 2024: Corporate Plan 2024-27**

Thank you for facilitating scrutiny of the draft Corporate Plan 2024-27 yesterday. The Committee has asked that as Chair I pass on its observations captured at the Way Forward. Please place on record our appreciation of senior officers continued support for in-person scrutiny. On this occasion, please pass on our sincere thanks to Paul Orders, Chris Lee, Sarah McGill and Dylan Owen. Members made observations as follows:

#### **Co-production and collective conversations**

The Committee was pleased to play its pre-decision part in the journey of this important strategic document through to Full Council, alongside the budget proposals for 2024/25. We note you consider the Plan is ambitious but rooted in reality. We are particularly pleased that constructive informal discussion with the Scrutiny Performance Panel has resulted in 5/6 recommendations being accepted. Officers were most reassuring that all recommendations are clearly evidenced in the Plan.

#### **Outstanding targets**

Members noted that a number of 2024/25 targets in this draft Plan are not set at this point because they require 2023/24 outturn data. We heard that 37 of over 180 KPI's either have no target, no in-year data, or data is still awaited. Members felt this made it difficult to fully consider the Plan and have noted your suggestion that the Committee re-visits Corporate Plan targets mid-year, alongside mid-year performance 2024/25. One such target is that for *the percentage of learners with ALN attending Cardiff-maintained specialist placements*. We note the Corporate Director's view that this is a demand led service with significant volatility and you would not want to set a target, however reform is underway in this area, together with a need for further data development.



### **Capturing Citizen voices.**

Members explored how the Council proposes to capture young people's voices and were pleased you consider this is fundamental. We note you seek to strengthen citizen voices across the whole Corporate Plan in response to the Audit Wales report recommendation that KPI targets are informed by citizen satisfaction.

### **Corporate Plan Audience & Staff Engagement**

The Committee followed up a Performance Panel observation that there are a variety of audiences for the Corporate Plan, including Cabinet, Scrutiny, Directorate management teams, and indeed all Council staff. We note the Chief Executive's comment that the priorities and steps within the Plan must align with Directorate Delivery Plans *and* staff Personal Performance and Development Reviews. Given that it is considered an important document for all staff, Members asked how staff voices had been heard in its development. We consider this is a gap that needs to be closed. We have noted that you are about to re-launch the staff engagement programme and the Plan will be a central feature. Therefore, the Committee will monitor progress on this at Mid-year 2024/25.

### **Recruitment and Retention**

Given current austerity challenges, we note you are pleased with how diversity in the workforce is growing, particularly at senior management levels.

### **WBO5 – A Capital City that Works for Wales.**

The Committee observed there is little mention of economic disparity across the city in the Corporate Plan, and in fact KPI's are limited in measuring the economic progress we are trying to achieve. Officers advised that some KPI's for this Well-being objective are broad proxies for wider health, there is a new KPI measuring the number of co-working spaces, throughout the Plan there are many references to inequalities, and a new Regeneration Strategy is listed in WBO4 Safe, confident and empowered communities.

### **Living Wage City**

Finally, we endorse the Council's efforts to re-enforce Cardiff as a Living Wage City. We were pleased to hear that the Council offers SME support for accreditation both

directly and through a number of partnership agencies, whilst also seeking to accredit potential large employers and often particular sectors.

**Recommendations following this scrutiny:**

To summarise, the Committee makes 1 formal recommendation as set out below. As part of the response to this letter I would be grateful if you could state whether the recommendation is accepted, partially accepted or not accepted and summarise the Cabinet’s response. If the recommendation is accepted or partially accepted, I would also be grateful if you could identify the responsible officer and provide an action date. This will ensure that progress can be monitored as part of the approach agreed by Cabinet.

<b>Recommendation</b>	Accepted, Partially Accepted or Not Accepted	Cabinet Response	Responsible Officer	Action Date
We consider there is a gap in facilitating staff voices in developing the Corporate Plan. We <b>recommend</b> you address closing this gap and the Committee will monitor progress on this at Mid-year 2024/25.				

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, thank you for your co-operation on this important document, and for your ongoing collaboration and policy engagement with Scrutiny. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR JOEL WILLIAMS  
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

CC Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee  
Leaders of Opposition Parties – John Lancaster, Rodney Berman &  
Andrea Gibson  
Paul Orders, Chief Executive  
Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources  
Sarah McGill, Corporate Director, People & Communities  
Gareth Newell, Partnership & Community Engagement Manager  
Dylan Owen, Policy & Improvement Manager  
Mr Gavin McArthur, Chair, Governance & Audit Committee  
Chris Pyke, OM Governance & Audit  
Tim Gordon, Head of Communications & External Relations  
Jeremy Rhys, Assistant Head of Communications and External Affairs  
Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services  
Claire Deguara, Cabinet Business Manager  
Debi Said, Cabinet Support Officer  
Alison Taylor, Cabinet Support Officer  
Andrea Redmond, Committees Support Officer

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Fy Nghyf / My Ref: [CE:0047808]  
Dyddiad / Date: 29 February 2024

Cllr Joel Williams  
Chairperson, Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee  
Cardiff Council  
County Hall  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Annwyl / Dear Joel,

**Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee 28th February 2024**

Thank you for your letters dated 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and the useful comments raised in relation to the 2024/25 Budget and Corporate Plan. I can assure you that Cabinet was able to reflect on the points raised prior to our meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

Responses to requests and recommendations in respect of the Corporate Plan are included below:

Thank you for your consideration of the Corporate Plan and the Committee's ongoing commitment to supporting the Council's Planning and Delivery Framework. A number of issues were rehearsed, and we would welcome the opportunity to return to these at future meetings of the Committee and the Scrutiny Performance Panel. The Committee's consideration of both the Mid-Year and End-of Year Self-Assessment of Performance represents excellent opportunities for doing so.

The Committee made one formal recommendation regarding staff engagement. I agree with the committee over the importance of making sure staff are valued and that their voices are heard. As the Chief Executive outlined with the committee, this is a piece of work which is currently in development, and the new programme of staff engagement will commence early in the next financial year.

**Recommendations - Corporate Plan**

Recommendation	Accepted, Partially Accepted, Not Accepted	Cabinet Response	Responsible Officer	Action Date
We consider there is a gap in facilitating staff voices in developing the Corporate Plan. We recommend you address closing this gap and the Committee will monitor progress on this at Mid-year 2024/25.	Accepted	Refreshed Staff Engagement Programme to Commence in Q1 2024/25.	Chief Executive	Commence Q1 2024/25

**GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI**  
Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

**WORKING FOR CARDIFF, WORKING FOR YOU**  
The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh, English or bilingually. We will ensure that we communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay.



Responses to requests and recommendations in respect of the 2024/25 Budget are included below:

**Request: We note the Education directorate assess a school' property estate need in an operational discussion with the school. We request more information and clarity on this process, how needs are identified and allocated to the Capital Programme.**

I have asked Education officers to provide the Committee with a note that sets out how asset renewal allocations are prioritised.

**Request: Clarity on the impact of the proposed Shopmobility saving**

The Shopmobility project was a third sector project which was based in the city centre of Cardiff and assisted people with limited mobility to shop and use the other facilities in the city centre. The project was closed prior to 2020 due to the enhanced accessibility for disabled people in the city centre, and the post was there for no longer needed.

Contained within your letter, you set out some important points regarding schools in deficit and Pentwyn Leisure Centre. I would like to point out that the total number of schools currently in deficit is 38, and the Shared Prosperity Funding contribution to Pentwyn Leisure Centre is £1.0 million.

### **Recommendations - Budget**

Please see response to the Committee's recommendations in the table below

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Accepted, Partially Accepted, Not Accepted</b>	<b>Cabinet Response</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Action Date</b>
We recommend that the Council actively invests in improved communication to ensure members of the public understand that investment in large projects, such as the Arena development, is funded from the Capital budget, thereby improving understanding of the rationale for Council decision making.	Partially Accepted	Within available resources, we will look at ways to build on information that is currently already available in the Council's financial strategy documents to see how this can be simplified for a wider audience.	Chris Lee	July 2024 (Budget Update Report)

I hope that this letter captures all the points raised in your letter and thank you again for your support in the budget process.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely,



**Cynghorydd / Councillor Huw Thomas**  
**Arweinydd / Leader**  
**Cyngor Caerdydd / Cardiff Council**



**Councillor / Y Cynghorydd Chris Weaver**  
**Aelod Cabinet dros Gyllid, Moderneiddio a Pherfformiad**  
**Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance**

**Cc:**

Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee  
Leaders of Opposition Parties – John Lancaster, Rodney Berman & Andrea Gibson  
Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources  
Sarah McGill, Corporate Director, People & Communities  
Ian Allwood, Head of Finance  
Anil Hirani, Operational Manager, Capital, Corporate & Treasury  
Gareth Newell, Partnership & Community Engagement Manager  
Mr Gavin McArthur, Chair, Governance & Audit Committee  
Chris Pyke, OM Governance & Audit  
Tim Gordon, Head of Communications & External Relations  
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Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services  
Rita Roman, PA to Chris Lee  
Alison Taylor, Cabinet Support Officer  
Claire Deguara, Cabinet Business Manager  
Andrea Redmond, Committees Support Officer