

ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 FEBRUARY 2022

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

72 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Robson advised that he had to leave the meeting at 6.30pm

73 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Lay declared a personal interest as the Chair of Cardiff Bus.

Cllr Gavin Hill-John declared a personal interest as a Non-Executive Director of Cardiff Bus.

Cllr Gordon declared a personal interest as a trustee of Grassroots Youth Centre.

74 : CORPORATE PLAN & BUDGETARY PROPOSALS

The Chairperson advised that item provided Members with an opportunity to consider those items in the draft Corporate Plan and draft Budgetary Proposals that fall within the responsibility of the Committee. Cabinet will consider these on Thursday 24th February, prior to Council on 3 March 2022.

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

Corporate Overview

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

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make an opening statement. Members were provided with a presentation after which they were asked for any comments, observations and questions.

Members asked if the Citizen Engagement Strategy would include proposals on how to consult more effectively on budgetary proposals. The Cabinet Member stated it should, particularly with young people.

Members considered that more work could be done with schools regarding local democracy, especially the GCSE year groups, given that 16 year olds can now vote in Wales.

Members asked with reference to complex needs accommodation, support and care, how budgets can be planned and managed when demand in this area is so difficult to predict. Members were advised that there are multi disciplinary teams involved in this area, and there also funds available from the Welsh Government.

Members discussed the Contingency Fund, the fact that it has reduced by £1m and asked what consideration had been given to scrapping it altogether. The Cabinet Member explained that they look at this every year, there had been a better than anticipated settlement from Welsh Government but there was still a need to balance the budget. There were still risks/gaps so when considering the budget in the round and with prudent planning and financial resilience it was deemed sensible to keep it albeit reduce it. The scale of savings required had reduced from 5 years ago and there had been an increase in earmarked reserves last year so this had given confidence that the decision was good for this year and for the medium term.

Members asked if the budget would cope with the anticipated increase in fuel and energy prices and Brexit. Members were advised that officers had put a huge amount of work into making difficult and evidence based judgements, and the realignments of pressures had also been taken into account.

Members asked what process were in place to manage slippage etc in the Capital Programme. Members were advised that business cases had been strengthened and there was also the challenge of the Governance and Audit Committee.

Councillor Weaver's Portfolio

The Chairperson welcomed Helen Evans (Assistant Director – Housing and Communities) for this item. Members were referred to Point 54 of the scrutiny cover report, for the relevant sections of the Corporate Plan and advised that the only area of this portfolio that comes under this Committee is the Into Work service. There are no budgetary proposals for this area.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement. Members were asked for any comments, observations and questions.

Members raised the possibility of linking the Onsite Construction Academy with the Indoor Arena project, to provide work experience, apprenticeships and jobs. Members were pleased to note that this was in hand and that officers were looking for every opportunity to work with developers across the city. Members welcomed the news that a Social Value Officer was to be employed to boost this work, ensuring community benefits are maximised and that local people get local jobs.

Members noted that an additional £398,000 is allocated to Into Work services this year, via the Financial Resilience Mechanism, which gives comfort services can continue to be provided this year as the EU funding ceases following Brexit. Members highlighted that this information had not been included in the papers for scrutiny, and that scrutiny did not have the same appendices as Cabinet.

Education, Employment & Skills Portfolio

The Chairperson welcomed The Deputy Leader, Councillor Sarah Merry, Suzanne Scarlett – Performance Manager – Education and Helen Evans (Assistant Director – Housing & Communities) for this item. Members were referred to Point 55 of the

scrutiny cover report for the relevant sections of the Corporate Plan and Budgetary Proposals.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement. Members were asked for any comments, observations and questions.

Members were pleased to hear that the Welsh Government has not cut the Community Learning grant this year, albeit that a cut is expected in future years. Members noted the service, having prepared for a cut, will now be able to provide additional courses. Members also noted there is funding for digital learning courses to be expanded.

Members were pleased to note the additional four posts for this work and noted that these posts go across the Economic Development and Education directorates, working collaboratively and with partners, including Into Work services, to extend the reach of Cardiff Commitment into growth sectors such as Creative Industries, Advanced Materials Manufacturing, Financial Services and Construction, as well as providing for a wider range of students, including those with Additional Learning Needs and those Educated Other Than At School (EOTAS).

Housing & Communities Portfolio

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Lynda Thorne, Rebecca Hooper – Operational Manager, Neighbourhood Regeneration and Helen Evans (Assistant Director- Housing & Communities) for this item. Members were referred to Point 56 of the scrutiny cover report for the relevant sections of the Corporate Plan and Budgetary Proposals that fall within this portfolio.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement. Members were asked for any comments, observations and questions.

Members noted Capital Programme Line 31 - £250,00 for neighbourhood, district, and local centre regeneration - would be spent on projects in Tudor Street, Cowbridge Road East, and then projects in Adamsdown and Roath, including Broadway, Clifton Street and City Road, with the proposed District and Local Centre Strategy used to identify further priorities. Members were interested to understand how lessons learnt from earlier projects, such as unexpected costs arising when improving shop frontages on older properties, have been built into these proposed projects, and noted that future costings now include contingency for these and that other lessons arising will be assimilated into future plans, to ensure regeneration projects constantly improve. Members sought clarification regarding savings line HAC E4 and noted the digital efficiencies arise from the provision of self-scan stations in each hub, meaning some staff were able to take voluntary redundancy, and that hybrid mail efficiencies arise from Willcox House and County Hall mailrooms aligning more efficiently in their use of hybrid mail.

Leader's Portfolio

The Chairperson welcomed The Leader, Councillor Huw Thomas, Neil Hanratty (Director of Economic Development) and Jon Day (Operational Manager – Tourism & Investment) for this item. Members were referred to Point 57 of the scrutiny cover report, for the sections that fall within this portfolio, namely City Deal and regional partnerships.

The Chairperson invited The Leader to make a statement. Members were asked for any comments, observations and questions.

Members asked if there was any update on the shared prosperity funding and were advised that pre-guidance information had only been released 2 weeks ago, more information was expected in a month or so. Members also asked when the CJC's would be up and running and were advised that a budget had already been set and the business of delivery could carry on in the meantime.

Culture & Leisure Portfolio

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Peter Bradbury, Cabinet Member – Culture & Leisure, Jon Maidment (Operational Manager – Parks and Harbour Authority) and Steve Morris (Operational Manager – Sport, Leisure & Development) and Neil Hanratty (Director of Economic Development) for this item. Members were referred to Point 58 of the scrutiny cover report for the sections that fall within this portfolio.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement. Members were asked for any comments, observations and questions.

Members were advised that Appendix G2 contains confidential information and any Member wishing to ask a question on the information in G2, should indicate and the Chairperson would ask the Committee to go into closed session.

Members noted that some FRM money was being used for lighting in Parks but asked how the ongoing energy costs and maintenance costs would be captured. Members were advised that a business case would be developed around each investment which would involve ongoing costs. Solar would be used where practicable.

Members noted that there was no target set against tourism indicators and asked if we were yet at a stage post Covid where there should be target against this. Members were advised that venues were starting to ramp up visitor numbers but they were not yet back to pre Covid levels. It is the ambition this year to achieve those numbers but no target has been set. The BBC 6 Music Festival will help with the visitor numbers.

Members wished to thank the service area for all their hard work during Storm Eunice.

Members asked what was happening with regards to providing event/venue information to visitors, such as information provided at Hotels etc. Officers advised that in terms of marketing and promotion of events, most activity has shifted online, there are still touch points with some places offering leaflets.

Members referred to the 5 new youth inclusion officers asking if these would be working for Cardiff Council or Sport Cardiff. Officers advised that they would be working for the Council, carrying our work in the southern arc of the city; they would be sports development officers but offering a street based response to local needs,

with links to Cardiff Youth Service, Sport Cardiff, Play Services etc. they would work flexible hours to respond to need.

Members asked about the new community safety park rangers. Officers advised that there would be 4 park ranger posts, one based in the urban park rangers team and the others in the community park rangers team.

Investment & Development Portfolio

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Russell Goodway, Cabinet Member – Investment & Development, Jon Day (Operational Manager – Tourism & Investment) and Neil Hanratty (Director of Economic Development) for this item. Members were referred to Point 59 of the scrutiny cover report for the sections that fall within this portfolio.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement. Members were asked for any comments, observations and questions.

Members referred to the new City Centre Stewards and asked for more information. Officers explained that this was an outcome of the Recovery Strategy that went to Cabinet last month, to create capacity in the City Centre Management Team; the posts would work for the Council but work across Council teams and FOR Cardiff. The intention was to recruit 3 members of staff to build on the success of the work undertaken during the pandemic when having people on the street had been very well received.

Members asked if there was going to be policy growth in the Business Investment Team. Officers advised that the Economic Development team was going to be restructured after 10 years of cuts. There would be a priority focus on replacement of European Funds, so there was a need for capacity with Policy background to determine funding streams from UK Government and others, writing business plans and carrying out the application process for any funding that is identified, including private sector and promoting Cardiff as an Inward Investment location.

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.

75 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

76 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9th March 2022 at 4.30pm

The meeting terminated at 6.25 pm

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