

No.

ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 19th January, 2021.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor Ms. B.E. Brooks (Chairman); Councillor Ms. S. Sivagnanam (Vice-Chairman); Councillors V.J. Bailey, Mrs. P. Drake, V.P. Driscoll, G. John, M.J.G. Morgan, A.R. Robertson, L.O. Rowlands and S.T. Wiliam.

Also Present: Councillors N. Moore (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), L. Burnett (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration), P.G. King (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Legal, Regulatory and Planning Services).

358 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chairman read the following statement:

“May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

359 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 15th December, 2020 be approved as a correct record.

360 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

361 CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEES – RESPONSE TO WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION (REF) –

Cabinet, on 21st December, 2020, had considered the report and referred it to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration, with any additional recommendations to be reported back to Cabinet in advance of submission to Welsh Government as an addendum, if necessary and appropriate.

The Head of Regeneration and Planning, in presenting the Council’s response, outlined that across Wales there would likely be four Regional Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs). These would be based on the City Deals or Growth areas foot prints. For the Vale of Glamorgan this meant the Cardiff Capital Region. Functions

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for the CJs covered four areas; economic wellbeing, transport, strategic planning and school improvement.

The Committee was advised that there were 44 questions in the consultation relating to the draft regulations, with a closing date of 4th January, 2021, although responses could be submitted past that date.

Some of the key points of the consultation included the following:

- Membership to include Council Leaders;
- CJs could co-opt other members, which could be voting or non-voting members;
- National Park members must also be a member when dealing with Strategic Development Plan functions;
- Voting would be on a 'One Member One Vote' basis, but once established CJs could adopt alternative voting procedures should they wish;
- Funding – CJs would be required to set a budget each financial year to include the amount required to exercise its functions, reserves and liabilities;
- CJs would have to appoint a Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer, Chief Governance Officer and Monitoring Officer;
- CJs would be accountable to their constituent Councils via the Leaders;
- CJs would have to set up an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with individual Council Scrutiny Committees able to scrutinise regional bodies as they do now;
- There was a requirement for CJs to meet for the first time by the end of September 2021

The Head of Regeneration and Planning outlined that there had been concern about the 'mandation' of regional structures or services and what outcomes could be achieved. Furthermore, there had been concern raised by some member Authorities that 'One Member One Vote' was not equitable given the different sizes of Authorities. In addition, there were concerns regarding the ability for CJs to meet by the end of September and also around funding.

Councillor Robertson stated that he did not agree with the proposals for Joint Committees as this would create another tier of bureaucracy which would cost money. He agreed with the comments contained in the response document that finance was a major issue and it would be difficult to have the Committees up and running by the Autumn.

Councillor John stated that he was not keen on the idea and shared Councillor Robertson's view that this would create another layer of government. He added that it would be better if these proposals were implemented after the 2022 elections, when there was likely to be a change in Elected Members.

Councillor Ms. Sivagnanam agreed with the sentiments of Councillor John but outlined that Wales needed to work more on a regional basis, so she agreed with the principle of more joint working.

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In reply to query from Councillor Robertson regarding public consultation, the Head of Regeneration and Planning stated that the consultation had been open to anyone. Publicity for the consultation was a matter for Welsh Government. There was a view among the Committee that more could have been done.

There being no further comments, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T in relation to the consultation regarding Corporate Joint Committees, Cabinet consider the views of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, which are:

- It would be better for the Corporate Joint Committees to be established after the 2022 local government elections, as there would likely be a change in Elected Members;
- There was a concern regarding public consultation and opportunities for members of the public to make their views known;
- Concern that Corporate Joint Committees could be seen as an extra layer of government;
- That the importance of regional working be stressed and highlighted.

Reason for recommendation

To allow Cabinet to consider the views of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

362 RESPONSE TO THE WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN) (WALES) REGULATIONS 2021 (REF) –

Cabinet, on 21st December, 2020, had considered the report and referred it to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration, with any additional recommendations to be reported back to Cabinet in advance of submission to Welsh Government as an addendum, if necessary and appropriate.

The Head of Regeneration and Planning presented the Council's response and advised that Welsh Government was seeking views on the procedure for Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) to be prepared across Wales by Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs). The proposals replaced the previous framework for preparing an SDP by a Strategic Planning Panel which had been the subject of a previous report and endorsement by the Council on 29th July, 2019 (Minute Number 215).

The Committee was advised that the Council had been generally supportive of the principle of preparing an SDP, but there were a number of issues and areas of concern highlighted in the Council's response attached at Appendix A to the Cabinet report. Some of the key concerns included:

- The SDP regulations should largely mirror the key stages and preparatory work of the Local Development Plan (LDP) regulations. It was felt that Welsh

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Government had under-estimated the complexity associated with undertaking development planning and timescales;

- Welsh Government considered 4 years to be a reasonable time to develop a plan. The Council considered this to be a 'naïve' assumption which did not reflect the 15 years to develop LDPs in Wales;
- In terms of governance, the consultation relied on the CJC proposals without giving guidance;
- There was an under-estimation around the amount of time that would be needed to establish working relationships between SDP teams and Local Authorities;
- For any SDP for the Cardiff Capital Region, this would not be adopted before most if not all LDP (version two) had been prepared;
- This was a 'huge missed opportunity' given the regions willingness to start and SDP 18 months ago;
- Significant resources were required to produce an SDP.

There was a consensus among the Committee that the proposals were too ambitious and agreement that Welsh Government had missed an opportunity 18 months ago when there was agreement on a regional basis to begin the production of an SDP.

Councillor Robertson highlighted that some Councils would have a major issue with 'One Vote One Member' and he reiterated a concern raised during 2019 about developments being pushed onto the Vale of Glamorgan.

It was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Council's response to the Welsh Government consultation on the Town and Country Planning (Strategic Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2021, attached at Appendix A to the Cabinet report, be supported.

Reason for recommendation

To outlined support to the Council's response.

363 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 30TH NOVEMBER 2020 (DEH) –

The report advised the Scrutiny Committee of the progress relating to revenue and capital expenditure for the period 1st April to 30th November, 2020.

The revenue position for 2020/21 was challenging with additional pressure for the service both operationally and financially as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This had impacted both as a result of incurring additional expenditure but also from a loss of income. Funding had been provided by Welsh Government to cover some of the issues.

The report outlined that Neighbourhood Services and Transport was currently projected to have an adverse variance of £750k against the 2020/21 budget.

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Funding for budget pressures of £1.25m had been provided as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process, however, there remained considerable pressure on the budget.

Building Services – The Building Maintenance service was currently running at a significant deficit due to the decrease in level of work being undertaken as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Building Cleaning – It was anticipated that the income for Building Cleaning would not decrease to the same level as Building Maintenance as client budgets would be charged their annual sum agreed as part of the Service Level Agreement even though some buildings may not have been fully operational through the Covid-19 pandemic.

Regeneration – Income receipts within this Division remained below target due to the pandemic, but loss of income claims submitted to the Welsh Government during quarters 1 and 2 have greatly assisted the position.

Development Management – Despite early concerns, planning fees and building regulation fees had been largely unaffected by the pandemic and income levels were broadly in line with profiled targets. This had likely been assisted, in the case of planning fees, by the Welsh Government's announcement of an increase in planning application fee rates as of 1st August, 2020. Hence, at this point it was forecasted for a breakeven budget this year.

An efficiency target for this Committee this year had been set at £83k. Attached at Appendix 1 to the report was a statement detailing all efficiency targets for 2020/21 and it was anticipated that this would be achieved in full by year end.

The report indicated that the capital budget had been set at £23.675m this financial year and update on projects was provided at Appendix 2.

Councillor Robertson queried what was the expected total financial cost to the Council from the Covid-19 pandemic. In reply, the Principal Accountant advised that the Council had been able to claim money from Welsh Government for costs incurred and loss of income. The Committee noted that the total amount claimed from Welsh Government to cover the costs/loss of income as a result of Covid-19 was currently £48,892m.

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the position with regard to the 2020/21 revenue and capital budgets be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

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364 3RD QUARTER SCRUTINY DECISION TRACKING OF
RECOMMENDATIONS AND UPDATED WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE
2020/21 (MD) –

The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer presented the report to update Members on progress on the Scrutiny Committee's historical recommendations and to confirm the Committee's updated Forward Work Programme for 2020/21.

It was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the status of the actions listed as completed in Appendices A, B, C and D to the report be agreed.
- (2) T H A T the status of the actions listed as ongoing in Appendices A, C and D to the report be agreed.
- (3) T H A T the updated Forward Work Programme Schedule attached at Appendix D to the report be approved and uploaded to the Council's website.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1&2) To maintain effective tracking of the Committee's recommendations.
- (3) For information.