

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 11th December, 2018.

Present: Councillor L. Burnett (Chairman); Councillor N.P. Hodges (Vice-Chairman);
Councillors: S.J. Griffiths, M.G.J. Morgan, Mrs. J.M. Norman, Mrs. R. Nugent-Finn
and Mrs. S.D. Perkes.

Co-Opted Members: Mrs. J. Lynch-Wilson (Parent Governor –Primary Sector).

573 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors Ms. R.M. Birch, B.T. Gray and Dr. C. Brown
(Parent Governor – Secondary Sector).

574 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 13th November,
2018 be approved as a correct record, subject to it being noted that Councillor Gray
had tendered his apologies for that meeting.

575 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

576 WORK OF THE VALE YOUTH FORUM –

Isaac Cramb and Cameron Edwards, Vale Youth Forum Representatives on the
Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, provided a verbal presentation to the
Committee on the work of the Vale Youth Forum. They commenced by advising that
the Forum consisted of many young people ranging from the ages of 11 to 25 years.
The aim of the Forum was to make life better for young people in the Vale and be a
voice for young people. Committee was informed that the Forum had recently
undertaken a tour of Parliament with the Secretary of State, Alun Cairns, and he had
been questioned on his role in office.

In referring to other work undertaken, reference was made to the project “the
provision of sanitary products to schools in the Vale” which the Forum considered to
be a priority and had sent an official letter to all schools raising awareness of the
issue and advising on progress that had been made to date.

The Youth Forum also provided a number of volunteering opportunities working with
a number of groups throughout the Vale of Glamorgan. There were Youth Action
Groups in Llantwit Major, Penarth and Barry. The Barry Action Group had placed
waste bins around Barry to make the area more aesthetically pleasing and there
had been official recognition of the Rights Ambassadors programme within the Youth

Service, with awareness raising of the Rights of the Child and a Welsh Charter having been developed. The Youth Forum had also undertaken a Make Your Mark Survey to over 4,000 young people to try to ascertain what the Forum should look like and represent.

The Committee, in thanking the representatives for their informative presentation, took the opportunity to ask what the Scrutiny Committee could do to support the work of the Youth Forum. In response the representatives asked whether the scheduling of Committee dates could be reviewed to be more in sync with meetings of the Forum in order that any comments made at Forum meetings could then be referred for consideration to the Scrutiny Committee. The Chairman advised that the timetable of Council meetings was set on an annual basis and suggested that the Forum may wish to dovetail their meetings to coincide with the Committee dates. The representatives thanked the Committee for the opportunity to make their presentation and also for the support received to date.

The Chairman commented that the voice of young people was important to be heard and referred to an example in recent years where young people had made representations in respect of the provision of school transport which had culminated in a reversal of a Cabinet decision. The Chairman also took the opportunity to advise that if they needed any information from the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer or indeed the Chairman to contact either direct their contact details being available on the Council's website and the agenda.

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Youth Forum representatives be congratulated on the work of the Forum and thanked for providing their presentation to the Committee.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the work of the Forum.

577 INITIAL REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS (2019/20 AND REVISED BUDGET 2018/19 (DLS) –

The initial revenue budget proposals for 2019/20 and the amended original budget for 2018/19 were submitted for the Committee's consideration. Committee was requested to consider the proposals including those relating to cost pressures and savings and forward any comments to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee as the lead Scrutiny Committee by 13th December, 2018.

Appendix 1 to the report set out the amended budget for 2018/19 together with the necessary adjustments to be made to the original budget. The following table (at paragraph 6 of the report) compared the amended budget with the projected outturn for 2018/19, with it being noted that the services were anticipating drawing down from reserves in the current year.

Directorate/Service	2018/19 Original Budget £'000	2018/19 Amended Budget £'000	2018/19 Projected Outturn £'000	Variance (+)Favourable (-) Adverse £'000
Learning and Skills				
Schools	84,458	84,458	84,458	0
Strategy, Culture, Community Learning & Resources	11,530	11,081	11,039	+42
Directors Office	232	232	205	+27
Achievement for All	4,650	4,650	5,013	-363
School Improvement	1,058	1,058	1,013	+45
Unplanned use of reserves to fund overspend	0	0	(107)	+107
Additional Saving to be Found	0	0	(142)	+142
Total	101,928	101,479	101,479	0

The Section 151 Officer advised that for the Directorate the forecast was showing an overspend of £142k after an anticipated use of reserves, however, the Directorate had been requested to look at ways of mitigating this position to deliver an outturn within budget at year end.

The Council's provisional settlement had been announced by Welsh Government (WG) on 9th October, 2018 and the Council was currently in the process of responding to the provisional settlement.

WG had advised the Council that its provisional SSA (Standard Spending Assessment) for 2018/19 was £226.748m. SSA represented WG's view of the relative resources needed to provide a standard level of service in each Local Authority in Wales and its primary use was to allocate RSG to these Authorities.

The Council would receive from WG Revenue Support Grant of £110.163m and a share of the Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) of £41.76m. Together these figures constituted the Council's provisional Aggregate External Finance (AEF) of £151.923m. This represented a cash reduction of 0.7% (£1.037m) for 2019/20 after taking into account adjustments. This was a slightly smaller reduction than the 1% (£1.524m) projected in the MTFP, although it did not take into account inflation. Wales as a whole had seen a decrease of 0.3%.

There were also transfers into the RSG settlement for 2019/20 totalling £479k as follows:

- Teachers Pay Grant : £354k
- Free School Meals Grant : £125k.

The value of some grant funding to be made available to Councils on an all Wales level had been received from WG. Several grants including Flying Start, Families First, Out of School Childcare, St. David's Day Fund, Communities First Legacy, Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People at Risk of Offending and Communities for Work Plus would be merged into one Children and Communities grant. Only an all Wales grant figure had been received at this point, however, the funding appeared to be £1.2m (0.9%) lower than in 2018/19 and therefore the utilisation of the grant would need to be reviewed within the Council once the grant approval and full implication for the Council was received.

As part of these initial proposals, it had been necessary to revisit the cost pressures facing services in order to build up a complete and up to date picture of the financial position of the Council and an updated list for this Committee was shown in Appendix 3 to the report. Members were advised that these were not shown in any order of priority. The report highlighted that one of the larger new cost pressures facing the Council over the next two years was the increase in Teachers' Pension contributions which was due to increase from 16.48% to 23.6% from 1st September, 2019 and could cost the Council around £3.1m. No additional funding had been provided by WG for this cost pressure.

A savings target of 1% for Schools was included for future years, which was in line with the level for previous years. Further work was ongoing to identify future projects that would realise savings for the Council via the Reshaping Service Tranche 4 process.

With regard to the cost pressures, the Director of Learning and Skills advised that the department was currently undertaking a review of non-statutory services as most of the service areas were statutory services.

In response to a Member's request for further detail on the areas under review, the Director advised that the Council together with the other Local Authorities in the Central South Consortium were looking to reduce their funding by 2% per Council which for the Vale would equate to approximately £28k. The Catering Service was due to launch the new company early in the New Year which would mean and the Council would then not be subsidising the service. Adult Community Learning and the Arts Central service were also being reviewed however, the Director stated that most of the areas would be require feasibility work to be undertaken. For out of county provision there was a projected £400k overspend as a result of costs to meet the needs of individual complex cases. Members were also concerned about the impact on schools should funding not be made available by Central Government, which would have a significant cost pressure for the Council on school budgets.

In response to a query, the Section 151 Officer stated that although reserves could be utilised, caution was advised as the drawing on reserves could only be undertaken on a one off basis. Other options available were to Council Tax and identify further savings that could be made.

The Chairman drew Committee Members' attention to the cost savings as all were statutory services. She clarified that, if not funded, they would become savings which would have to be met by schools and the Directorate.

Having fully considered the report, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Scrutiny Committee recommend to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee

- (1) T H A T Cabinet be requested to consider carefully the impact for the service areas should it decide not to fund some of the cost pressures noted for the Directorate.
- (2) T H A T the Section 151 Officer and the Finance Team be thanked for all the hard work undertaken to date in preparing the proposals for consideration

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the impact in relation to the Council's statutory responsibilities and the full implications of decisions made in relation to cost pressures.
- (2) In recognition of the work undertaken by the Finance Department.

578 INITIAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2019/20 TO 2023/24 AND CAPITAL MONITORING 2018/19 (DLS) –

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the financial progress on the Capital Programme as at 30th September, 2018. With regard to specific schemes Committee was informed of the following.

Band B Whitmore and Pencoedre High School – It had been requested that the scheme be re-profiled in line with the 21st Century Schools Band B proposals it being noted that this would maximise the opportunity to draw down on the available Section 106 and utilise potential 21st Century Schools Band B funding for the scheme. Band B Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg – the same request being made as above.

Victorian Schools – It was noted that works were progressing on the following schools: Jenner Park Primary, Ysgol Sant Curig, Cogan Primary, Romilly Primary, Llangan Primary, Palmerston Primary, Barry Island Primary and Gladstone Primary. Additional works had been discovered once access had been erected which were not evident from the initial inspections from ground level. Additional work included structural repairs to loose masonry gable walls at roof level, additional stonework renewal, rebuilding chimneys and renewal of decayed or severely corroded roof trusses. This had increased the anticipated spend for 2018/19. It had therefore been requested to bring forward £100k from 2019/20 into the 2018/19 Capital Programme.

Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg Renew Sewage Pump – No tender bids had been submitted for this scheme therefore it would be retendered as part of Band B to make the contract more attractive

Y Bont Faen Flat Roof Renewal Phase 1 – This work was planned to be undertaken during the Spring with it being requested that £100k be carried forward into 2019/20.

Gwenfo Primary Extension – This work was now planned to commence over the Easter holidays 2019 with the request that £70k be carried forward into 2019/20.

Ty Deri – The future use of Ty Deri had been agreed on 19th March, 2018. The original budget of £555k was split into two phases, £305k in 2018/19 and £250k in 2019/20. There had been a variation under the existing contract to instruct the contractor to complete Phases 1 and 2 in order to accommodate pupils ready for the new term. By using Emergency Powers, the scheme had been increased in 2018/19 by £417k, £212k had been funded by the Council Building reserve and £205k had been brought forward from the 2019/20 Capital Programme. £45k had previously been brought forward in May 2018 from 2019/20. The project would be completed in 2018/19.

The Welsh Government (WG) had announced the provisional 2019/20 General Capital Funding on 9th October, 2018. The 2019/20 Capital Settlement was a flat lined capital settlement which for the Vale of Glamorgan Council equated to General Capital Funding of £5.489m which was made up of £2.077m General Capital Grant and £3.412m Supported Borrowing. The General Capital Funding for 2018/19 was £5.505m therefore there was a reduction of £16k between years.

The Section 151 Officer stated that for the Directorate the Capital Programme for the service area referred in the main to the 21st Century Schools programme.

The Committee, although acknowledging the significant investment that had been made in Vale schools to date, having fully considered the report subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T Cabinet be requested to consider that if there was any additional funding forthcoming for asset renewals in schools, that the aspects of dignity and privacy for pupils be considered.

(2) T H A T the report be noted.

Reasons for decisions

(1) The Committee although recognising the significant amount of investment placed and proposed for schools in the Vale considered that following the Task and Finish Review on the provision of sanitary products in schools, that the area of dignity and privacy for pupils needed to be further addressed.

(2) Having regard to the contents contained therein.

579 QUARTER 2 (2018-19) PERFORMANCE REPORT: AN ASPIRATIONAL AND CULTURALLY VIBRANT VALE (DLS) –

The report outlined that an overall Green RAG status had been attributed to the Well-being Outcome 3: An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale to reflect the good progress made towards achieving improved outcomes for residents and customers during the quarter. It was noted that at Quarter 2, 64 (97%) of the 66 Corporate Plan actions attributed to this Well-being Outcome were on track to be delivered giving an overall Green performance status for actions. Of the 42 performance measures aligned to this Well-being outcome, 40 were annual measures (school academic data) consequently these would be reported at the end of the year. In relation to the two measures where a RAG status was applicable, one missed target by within 10% (Amber status) and one missed target by more than 10% (Red status).

In relation to the Objective “Raising overall standards of achievement”, 95% (18) of actions were on track for delivery giving an overall Green performance status. 98% (46) of actions were attributed a Green performance status in relation to the Objective “Valuing culture and diversity” reflecting the excellent progress made at Quarter 2.

A RAG status was not applicable to any of the 30 measures aligned to the Objective “Raising overall standards of achievement” as they all related to school academic data which would be reported at the end of the year. Two Performance Indicators related to the Objective “Valuing culture and diversity” and one was attributed an Amber status and one a Red performance status. These related to the number of visits to public libraries during the year per 1,000 population (CPM/051) which was slightly below the target of 2485.5 with a performance of 2410.2 resulting in an Amber performance status, and the speed of response on the Welsh language line (CPM/072), which increased significantly to 171 seconds compared to 50 seconds last year in the same quarter. Efforts were ongoing to recruit replacement Welsh speaking staff to improve performance, however performance on this line exceeded performance on the main English language line which was 254 seconds for the period. A detailed report outlining the progress for the quarter towards achieving Well-being Outcome 3 was provided at Appendix A to the report.

The Corporate Plan Summary Report, which was available on the Council's website, provided an overview of overall progress against the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and how it contributed to the national Well-being Goals.

During consideration of the report the Chairman in referring to page 2 of the attached document AC2, the Corporate Plan Action “to secure improved outcomes for groups of learners at risk of underachievement, such as those entitled to free school meals. noted that the direction of travel was going down. The Director of Learning and Skills advised that at a recent meeting with the Auditor General, the Department was advised that they would also be looking at Local Authorities and what they were doing to achieve equality under e-FSM and FSM. The Chairman also considered that it would be important for the Committee to look into the matter further, in particular with regard to assessing the impact and use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant and suggested that the item be added to the work programme for a future meeting to receive a report.

The Director of Learning and Skills further stated that the matter was also a focus for the Council under its Corporate priorities and indeed the Central South Consortium who had outlined it in their Business Plan. The Head of Achievement for All in conclusion commented that following an Estyn visit, the positive impact of an increase in school attendance within the Vale was noted as a positive trend and the figure was above the Welsh Government line.

Having fully considered the report, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Committee consider a future report in respect of issues in relation to e-FSM and FSM having particular regard to Key Stage 4 where the gap had widened, the impact and use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant and that this be added to the Committee's work programme.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents contained therein.
- (2) In order to scrutinise the impact of the Pupil Deprivation Grant and the widening of the gap between e-FSM and FSM.