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## LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2020.

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

Present: Councillor S.J. Griffiths (Chairman); Councillor Ms. R.M. Birch (Vice—Chairman); Councillors N.P. Hodges, T.H. Jarvie, G.C Kemp, Mrs. J.M. Norman, A.C. Parker, Mrs. S.D. Perkes and N.C. Thomas.

Co-opted Members: Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church) and Mrs. J. Lynch-Wilson (Parent Governor – Primary Sector)

Also present: Councillor L. Burnett (Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration).

### 264 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor L.O. Rowlands and Mr. H. Gapper (Welsh Medium Education).

### 265 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.”

### 266 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2020 be approved as a correct record.

### 267 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

268 PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF YSGOL Y DERI TO MEET FUTURE DEMAND FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN (REF) -

Cabinet, on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2020 had authorised the Director of Learning and Skills to undertake a consultation on the proposal to meet future demand for special education in the Vale of Glamorgan by:

- Increasing the capacity of Ysgol Y Deri to accommodate an additional 150 pupils; and
- Constructing a new school building on the preferred site located in Cosmeston, Penarth for September 2023 which would operate as an additional site under the management of Ysgol Y Deri.

Cabinet had also resolved that the matter be referred to Committee for consideration as part of the proposed consultation exercise.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Project Manager presented the report and advised that the proposal would result in an additional 150 places at Ysgol Y Deri to meet increased demand for special education in the Vale of Glamorgan, and that a new building which would operate under the management of Ysgol y Deri would be constructed on a new school site in Cosmeston, Penarth to accommodate the increased capacity.

The Officer also advised that while the proposal saw a new school building being ready by September 2023, the intakes of 2021 and 2022 would see a net increase of 44 pupils at the school, and the report therefore outlined the temporary measures which would be required to ensure Ysgol Y Deri was able to meet projected demand during this intervening time.

The consultation, which was being conducted through a consultation document and in accordance with the School Organisation Code 2018, had been launched on November 6<sup>th</sup> and was due to close on December 20<sup>th</sup>. The Officer advised that of the 96 responses received to the consultation so far, 86 had been in favour of the proposal, one had offered no opinion on the proposal and eight had not been in favour. The main concerns raised had related to the impact of traffic and the location of the proposed new building, and the Officer stated that the Council would respond to these concerns as part of the consultation report, however it should be noted that the purpose of this consultation was to receive feedback on the educational impact of the proposal, and some of the concerns raised would need to be addressed via other statutory processes.

Following the presentation of the report, in response to a query from Councillor S.D. Perkes Officers advised they did not have to hand the exact number of Primary school aged pupils at Ysgol y Deri, however confirmed they would forward this information to Councillors following the meeting. The Head of Additional Learning Needs and Well-being acknowledged that within the growing Additional Learning Needs (ALN) sector, early years was where there was most pressure. Councillor N.C. Thomas noted that as the identification of pupils with ALN was improving, the

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need for such provision would continue to grow, and as such he welcomed the proposal.

With permission to speak, the Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration thanked Members for their comments and wished to praise the work that had been carried out by Officers in ensuring that every child in the Vale was able to be the best that they could be. The Cabinet Member highlighted that it was of concern that Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision would be so significantly oversubscribed within two years, and she was therefore delighted that the report had come before Committee and had been so well supported. The Head of Additional Learning Needs and Well-being echoed the Cabinet Member's appreciation, noting that while 44 additional pupils in a mainstream setting would not seem significant, it was not an increase that could be managed by Ysgol y Deri in its current form.

The Chairman expressed that the satellite school was badly needed and he was happy with the proposal, however he referred to the most recent meeting of the Full Council, wherein concerns had been raised regarding funding for the proposed new school in relation to funding allocated to Sully Primary School, and while he acknowledged that the current discussion related strictly to the educational impact of the proposal, he did appreciate the concerns raised and hoped there was a way in which the Directorate could move forward with the proposal while ensuring that Sully Primary was also well looked after. The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, with permission to speak, wished to clarify that there were plans and proposals for development and investment in Sully Primary School, and wanted to reassure Members that they were not being asked to make a choice regarding whether one school would receive funding or support over the other.

With the proposal having been fully considered it was subsequently

**RECOMMENDED - T H A T** the Scrutiny Committee endorse the resolutions as contained in the reference from Cabinet dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November (Minute No. C358).

#### Reason for recommendation

To ensure that the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee was consulted on the proposal as part of the proposed consultation exercise.

#### **269 DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN (IMPROVEMENT PLAN PART 1) 2021-22 (REF) -**

Cabinet, on 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2020 had approved the draft Annual Delivery Plan 2021-22 and had resolved that the report be referred to all Scrutiny Committees as part of the programme of consultation.

The Annual Delivery Plan was the Improvement Plan (Part 1) for 2021-22 and was aligned to the Council's four Well-being Objectives. The Plan detailed the activities that would be undertaken in 2021-22 to deliver these objectives within the context of the current Covid-19 pandemic and the Council's Recovery Strategy. The

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commitments within the Annual Delivery Plan would be reflected in Annual Service Plans together with service improvement targets, which would detail how different Council services would contribute to the delivery of the four Well-being Objectives.

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation drew Members' attention to commitments and activities within the Committee's remit, highlighting in particular those listed under Well-being Objective 2, 'To Support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth', however also noting that activities under each of the four Well-being Objectives fell within the Committee's remit.

Members noted that the report was comprehensive, and having given their full consideration it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED - T H A T the Reference, relevant Cabinet Report and Draft Annual Delivery Plan be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

To ensure that the Scrutiny Committee had the opportunity to consider the draft Annual Delivery Plan and provide feedback as part of the programme of consultation.

#### 270 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE 2020/21 (DLS) -

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation presented the report which advised of the Council's progress at Quarter 2 (1st April to 30th September 2020) towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (2020/21) commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. Appendix A to the report summarised how the Council overall was performing against each of its Well-being Objectives, while Appendix B to the report provided a summary which was specific to the remit of the Committee.

The Officer advised that despite the ongoing challenges of responding to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Council had made positive progress in delivering its in-year commitments in relation to the Annual Delivery Plan (2020/21). This performance had contributed to an overall Amber status for the Plan at Quarter 2 (Q2).

Progress made against the 61 actions and 4 measures which were specifically within the remit of this Committee could be summarised as follows:

- GREEN: 39 actions (64%) and 2 measures (50%)
- AMBER: 9 actions (15%) and 0 measures (0%).
- RED: 13 actions (21%) and 2 measures (50%)

With regard to the 13 actions and 2 performance measures attributed a Red status during Q2, the Officer advised that all could be attributed to reasons relating to

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COVID-19. The Officer concluded by updating Members regarding the work that was being undertaken directly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members noted that the report had been very well covered and presented under the current pressures, and with there being no further comments or queries it was subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2020/21 commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives within the remit of the Committee be noted.
- (2) T H A T the remedial actions to be taken to address areas of underperformance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee be noted.
- (3) T H A T the progress being made through the Council's recovery strategy and Directorate Recovery Plans in response to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic be noted.

#### Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To ensure the Council clearly demonstrated the progress being made towards achieving its commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2020/21 aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.
- (2) To ensure the Council was effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to secure continuous improvement outlined in the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009 and reflecting the requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that it maximise its contribution to achieving the Well-being goals for Wales.
- (3) To ensure members maintain an oversight of the recovery issues impacting on the work of the Council and their respective Scrutiny Committees.

#### 271 INITIAL REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2021/22 (DLS) -

The Principal Accountant presented the report, the purpose of which was to submit for consultation the initial revenue budget proposals for 2021/22. The Council was required under statute to fix the level of council tax for 2021/22 by 11th March 2021 and in order to do so, would have to agree a balanced revenue budget by that date.

Members were advised that the Council's provisional settlement had not yet been announced by Welsh Government and was expected on 22nd December, 2020 with the final settlement being due on 2nd March, 2021. Even though this crucial information had not been received, the budget setting and consultation process had to commence in order to meet statutory deadlines.

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The purpose of the report was to set out the cost pressures and savings for the Directorate, however it was noted there were no savings listed for service areas within the remit of this Committee. The report also set out the medium term financial plan which considered a number of scenarios which included a 1% increase or reduction in Aggregate External Finance (AEF), increases in Council Tax at the Welsh Average and at 4.9%, and a reduction in the Council Tax collection rate.

Cost pressures relating to the remit of the Committee were set out at Appendix 1 to the report and demonstrated a demand of £3.1m for 2021/22, and the Officer asked that Members review the listed cost pressures.

The Officer drew Members' attention to the significant draw down from the Directorate's reserves between now and 2024 as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, which was largely due to the roll-out of the School Investment Strategy, alongside the draw down to offset the projected overspend in Education for 2021 and the Library Fund.

Having fully considered the report it was subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the Initial Revenue Budget Proposals for 2021/22 be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

In order that Cabinet could consider the comments of Scrutiny Committees and other consultees before making a final proposal on the budget.

#### 272 INITIAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2021/22 TO 2025/26 (DLS) -

The Principal Accountant presented the report which submitted the Initial Capital Programme Proposals for the 2021/22 to 2025/26 to Committee for consultation.

The Initial Proposals for the Capital Programme between 2021/22 and 2025/26 for the Directorate were set out in Appendix 1 to the report. The Officer noted that these were dominated by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Programme Band B schemes, but that there was also some provision for £550k of asset renewal across the five year period with a £50k contingency.

A list of capital bids received for the Directorate were shown in Appendix 2 to the report and these included a temporary expansion of places at Ysgol y Deri and a renewal of roof coverings at Old Hall in Cowbridge.

In response to a query from Councillor A.C. Parker, the Officer advised that it was clear the works at Old Hall needed to be progressed and as such they were being built into plans for the next financial year, with an uplift of £15k having been requested to accommodate the works required. Councillor Parker advised that should the works be intended to go ahead next year then a Planning application would need to be submitted quickly, and the Officer advised this would be fed back

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to Officers in the Property team. The Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources assured the Councillor that due to the severity of works required, this matter was being prioritised.

There being no further comment from Members it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Initial Capital Programme Proposals for 2021/22 to 2025/26 be noted.

Reason for recommendation

In order to gain the view of the Scrutiny Committee.

273 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2020 (DLS) -

The Principal Accountant presented the report which advised Committee of the progress relating to revenue and capital expenditure for the period 1st April to 30th September 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.

With regard to revenue, the Officer advised that the forecast for the Directorate was an overspend of £250k, which was a slight reduction to that of the previous report due to favourable variances elsewhere in the service. The overspend would be funded by a draw down from reserves. The Officer advised that the main source of overspend had been School Transport, with the majority of this relating to ALN transport due to the complexity and potential volatility of these arrangements, particularly within the context of COVID-19.

The currently approved capital budget had been set at £57.392m, and Appendix 3 to the report detailed financial progress on the Capital Programme as at 30th September 2020, and Members were advised of changes which had been made to the Programme since the last report to Committee.

Councillor N.C. Thomas remarked that it was fortunate that the Council's reserves had been in such a robust position ahead of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and expressed that while he hoped for a good settlement from Welsh Government he acknowledged that they were also faced with similar financial problems.

Having fully considered the report it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the position with regard to the 2020/21 revenue and capital budgets be noted.

(2) T H A T the revised budget for 2020/21 be noted.

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Reasons for recommendations

- (1) In order that Members were aware of the projected revenue outturn for 2020/21.
- (2) In order that Members were aware of the revised budget for 2020/21.