

No.

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 13th July, 2023.

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

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor R.R. Thomas (Chair); Councillor H.M. Payne (Vice-Chair); Councillors A. Asbrey; W. Gilligan; E.J. Goodjohn; W.A. Hennessy; N.P. Hodges; J. Lynch-Wilson, J.M. Norman and E. Penn.

Co-Opted Members: L. Barrowclough (Parent Governor – Primary Sector), R. Morteo (Church in Wales) G. van der Burgt (Parent Governor – Secondary Sector) and R. Goodjohn (Vale Youth Forum).

Also present: Councillors R.M. Birch (Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language), L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

202 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

203 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors R. Godfrey and N. Marshallsea and Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church) and A. Emmerson (Vale Youth Forum)

204 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor W.A. Hennessy declared a personal interest in Agenda Items 5 and 6 Closure and Accounts and Capital Closure of Accounts, as the Council’s accounts would be discussed and as he is a Vale of Glamorgan Council tenant. As this was a personal and not a prejudicial interest, he did not withdraw from the meeting.

205 CURRICULUM FOR WALES: JOURNEY TO 2022 – SUMMER TERM 2023 UPDATE -

The presentation was led by the Central South Consortium’s Principal Improvement Partner, Area Lead for Humanities and Associate Advisor for

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Religious Education along with the Leader of Learning for Religion, Values and Ethics at Whitmore High School. The presentation informed Committee of the Consortium's work to support Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) teaching within schools and included input from the Humanities Lead at Y Bont Faen Primary School.

Following the presentation, in response to a query from the Vice-Chair, the Area Lead for Humanities advised that due to schools being transparent in their communication of changes to the curriculum around religion, values and ethics and the reasons behind such changes, feedback from parents had been positive. The Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language, with permission to speak, subsequently commended the development to the curriculum and the way in which it encouraged questioning and critical thinking skills amongst pupils.

In response to a query from Councillor Norman, the Area Lead for Humanities subsequently advised that they had not received any negative feedback regarding the broadening of the curriculum from representatives of non-Christian religions.

In response to a query from Councillor Penn, the Associate Advisor for Religious Education advised that rather than teachers presenting information on faiths and beliefs as facts, learners were encouraged to engage critically with the subject and question the sources of information. The officer further advised that non-religious philosophies were also covered within the new curriculum.

In response to a subsequent comment from Councillor Penn, the Associate Advisor for Religious Education advised that collective worship in schools was still legally required to be broadly Christian in character and therefore differed to the RVE academic subject.

Councillor Goodjohn and the Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language subsequently requested that Committee receive an update on how RVE in the new curriculum progressed in 12 months' time.

With no further comments or queries Committee thanked all guests and contributors to the presentation and subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T Officers and invited guests be thanked for their thorough and engaging update, that a further update in relation to the progress of new Religion, Values and Ethics curriculum be provided in 12 months time and that the presentation be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the content of the presentation and discussions at the meeting.

No.

206 WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS ANNUAL MONITORING
REPORT 2022-23 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 6th July, 2023 was presented by the Director of Corporate Resources.

Following the Director's presentation they advised in response to the Vice-Chair's queries that further detail would be provided to the Vice-Chair regarding Contact Centre response times in Welsh as compared to English, participation levels in Work Welsh training amongst Council staff, a breakdown of Welsh language learner figures by those who were Vale of Glamorgan residents and those who were Council staff and further information on the bronze, silver and gold standards of Welsh language provision.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the report and Appendices be endorsed.

Reason for recommendation

To allow the Council to meet its reporting duty to the Welsh Commissioner as part of the Welsh Language Standards.

207 CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS 2022/23 (DLS) –

The report was presented by the Operational Manager for Accountancy.

The purpose of the report was to inform Committee of the provisional financial position of the Council for the 2022/23 financial year.

The Council encountered significant revenue pressures during 2022/23, particular pressures were in respect of the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, inflationary pressures particularly in respect of contracts and pay pressures. The Council also continued to experience significant demand pressures for supporting Children's Services, Homelessness and pupils with Additional Learning Needs. Steps were taken to address the inability to commission care in Social Services with an additional fee uplift that was awarded in the last quarter of the financial year, the impact of this alongside other initiatives had seen a reduction in the waiting list for care.

The Council benefitted from a one off adjustment in how social care income was reflected in the accounts which enabled a transfer to reserves of £2m. The Council also received additional investment income as a result of investing its cash balances in year due to the increased bank rate and continued to benefit from utilising reserve balances to finance borrowing in the context of current rising interest rates, minimising borrowing costs for the Council.

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The Council continued to deliver a number of schemes during 2022/23 such as the Discretionary Cost of Living scheme, Winter Fuel Allowances and the Ukrainian Resettlement Scheme.

The year end revenue position was a breakeven position after net transfers from reserves of £17.029m, made up of £987k transferred from Council Fund, £953k from the Housing Revenue Account, £11.785m transferred into specific reserves from revenue and £15.554m transferred from specific reserves to provide one off funding for projects and £12.307m drawdown from reserves to fund the Capital Programme and for displacement required by capital grants. The Council Fund now stood at £11.523m as at 31st March, 2023.

A revenue savings target of £500k was set for 2022/23 and an outstanding balance for 2021/22 of £170k was also monitored throughout the year. Whilst some savings had been identified on from underspends in year such as vacant posts services had moved to identify these on a more sustainable basis for 2023/24.

Directorate	Revised Budget 2022/23 £000's	Outturn 2022/23 £000's	Transfer to/(from) reserves £000's	Favourable / (Adverse) Variance £000's
Learning and Skills	122,578	129,175	-6,548	-49
Social Services	80,742	78,091	1,511	1,140
Environment and Housing	31,674	31,376	1,185	-887
Corporate Resources	2,208	5,920	-2,263	-1,449
Place	4,088	4,323	-195	-40
Policy	33,764	28,364	1,638	3,762
Use of Reserves	-996	0	-987	-9
Council Tax Surplus	-1,500	-922	0	-578
Favourable Variance Transferred to Reserves	0	0	1,890	-1,890
Total	272,558	276,327	-3,769	0

After taking account of Directorate movements to and from reserves the revenue outturn showed a surplus of £1,890k which it was proposed be transferred to reserves to be utilised as follows:

- £200k transfer to Education Pressures and Improvements Reserve to provide additional support to schools in special measures.
- £850k to Education Pressures and Improvements Reserve to support ALN in mainstream schools.
- £20k to Neighbourhood Services Reserve for repairs in single use sports facilities.
- £350k to Neighbourhood Services Reserve for micro asphalt schemes to address the condition of roads within the Council area.

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- £150k to Neighbourhood Services Reserve to support the delivery of health and safety works in leisure centres.
- £200k to Reshaping Risk and Investment Reserve to provide additional support to Children and Young People.
- £120k to Neighbourhood Services Reserve to support the implementation of A48 Scheme to Improve Road Safety.

The Housing Revenue Account had a smaller than projected drawdown on the ringfenced reserve of £953k to reducing the level of its ringfenced reserve to £16.486m.

The level of Useable Reserves reduced in year although by less than had been projected. The Council undertook a reserve reallocation exercise in year and this was reflected in the outturn position.

As at	Balance 01/04/2022	Capital Funding	Planned Transfer (from) reserves	Planned Transfer to reserves	Re- allocation of Reserves	Estimated Balance 31/03/2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
General Fund	12,510	-	987	-	-	11,523
Insurance	4,529	-	-	348	-	4,877
Service Reserves	30,824	886	4,610	5,052	7,859	22,521
Risk and Smoothing Reserves	21,345	1,594	3,358	4,047	9,362	29,802
Capital	27,426	9,828	77	1,708	1,503	17,726
Schools	13,145	-	6,522	630	-	7,254
Housing Revenue Account	17,439	953	-	-	-	16,486
Total	127,218	-13,260	-15,554	11,785	0	110,189

Following the presentation of the report, in response to a query from the Chair the Operational Manager for Accountancy advised that current figures and projections for children placed outside of the Vale of Glamorgan county could be obtained and reported back to the Chair.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

No.

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the report and the financial measures taken and proposed within be noted.
- (2) T H A T the allocation of overall Council surplus be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the content of the report on the outturn and the financial measures taken and proposed.
- (2) To inform Committee on the allocation of the 2022/23 surplus to support the delivery of schemes supporting key priorities identified by the Council.

208 CAPITAL CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS 2022/23 (DLS) –

The report was presented by the Operational Manager for Accountancy.

The purpose of the report was to inform Committee of the provisional financial position of the Council’s Capital Programme for the 2022/23 financial year.

The report provided detail on the closing of the Capital Programme for the period 1st April, 2022 to 31st March, 2023. Detailed by scheme, which were relevant to the Committee were shown in Appendix 1 to the report and a summary table is included below:

Directorate	Approved Programme 2022/23	Additions Approved Programme 2022/23	Adjusted Approved Programme 2022/23	Actual Spend 2022/23	Variance at Outturn 2022/23
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Learning & Skills	30,969	1,190	32,159	34,026	(1,867)
Social Services	1,082	16	1,098	767	331
Housing	21,320	0	21,320	22,369	(1,049)
Environment	21,204	121	21,325	17,696	3,629
Place	4,023	121	4,144	3,738	406
Corporate Resources	1,851	571	2,422	2,195	227
Total	80,449	2,019	82,468	80,791	1,677

Appendix 2 to the report provided a summary of the position of the Capital Programme by Directorate from approval at Council on 7th March, 2022 to 31st March, 2023, including any changes requested in the report.

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Several schemes totalling £2.019m were required to be added late in the Programme and the report noted the current adjusted Programme of £82.468m and capital expenditure during the year of £80.791m.

Despite capital schemes facing continued challenges due to a number of issues, including significant cost increases and shortages of resources, it was pleasing to note that the 2022/23 Capital Programme out turned at £80.791m and 98% of the programme was spent before the end of the financial year.

Due to the dedication, commitment and hard work across all Directorates, the report noted the current adjusted Programme of £82.468m and net slippage of £715k which required approval by Emergency Powers into the 2023/24 Capital Programme. A summary table detailing slippage is provided below:

Directorate	Adjusted Approved Programme 2022/23	Revised Outturn 2022/23	Variance 2022/23	Net Slippage requested 2022/23	Budget Adjustments/ Slippage not requested 2022/23
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Learning & Skills	32,159	34,026	(1,867)	2,146	(279)
Social Services	1,098	767	331	(329)	(2)
Housing	21,320	22,369	(1,049)	1,280	(231)
Environment	21,325	17,696	3,629	(3,206)	(423)
Place	4,144	3,738	406	(364)	(42)
Corporate Resources	2,422	2,195	227	(242)	15
City Deal	0	0	0	0	0
Total	82,468	80,791	1,677	(715)	(962)

For this Committee, the position regarding the budget was a variance of -£1.867m against an adjusted Programme of £32.124m. Outturn for this Scrutiny Committee was recorded at £33.991m and slippage of -£2.146m had been requested.

Following the presentation of the report, in response to a query from the Vice-Chair the Operational Manager for Accountancy advised that the safeguarding and security of external school boundaries referred to multiple schools, a list of which would be provided to the Vice-Chair.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED -

- (1) T H A T the year end capital position for financial year 2022/23 be noted.
- (2) T H A T the additional scheme budgets as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be noted.

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(3) T H A T the summary position of the changes in the Capital Programme by directorate from approval at Council on 7th March, 2022 to 31st March, 2023, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report be noted.

(4) T H A T the Emergency Powers approved in respect of the slippage as set out in Appendix 3 to the report be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the content of the report on the year end capital position for the financial year 2022/23.

(2) To inform Committee of the additional schemes added to the Approved Programme for 2022/23.

(3) To inform Committee of the changes to the Approved Capital Programme set on 7th March, 2022.

(4) To advise Committee of the approved slippage in the Emergency Powers in the 2022/23 Capital Programme.

209 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE 2022/23 (DLS) -

The report was presented by the Head of Standards and Provision.

The purpose of the report was to present Quarter 4 (Q4) performance results for the period 1st April, 2022 to 31st March, 2023 in delivering the 2022/23 Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The performance report presented progress at Q4 (1st April, 2022 to 31st March, 2023) towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan (2022/23) commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The appended presentation to the report was intended to provide Members with an overview of end of year performance earlier in the calendar year. This was ahead of the more detailed Self-Assessment 2022/23. This would be reported to Cabinet and Full Council prior to publication in November 2023.

All 4 Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives were attributed a Green performance status at Q4 to reflect the good progress made to date in meeting the Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2022/23.

90% (343 out of 380) of planned activities outlined in the Annual Delivery Plan had been attributed a Green performance rating reflecting the positive progress made during the quarter, and 10% (37) of planned activities were attributed a Red status.

No.

Of the 128 performance measures aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, data was reported for 56 measures where a performance status was applicable. 70% (39) measures were attributed a Green performance Status, 7% (4), Amber status and 23% (13), Red status. A performance status was not applicable for 72 measures with 50 of these relating to measures establishing baseline performance for 2022/23, and for 22 measures no update no data was available.

In relation to the planned activities within the remit of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, 92% (66 out of 72) were attributed a Green performance status and the final 8% (7) were attributed a Red status. Of the 8 measures reported, 63% (5) were attributed a Green performance status and 37% (3) were attributed Red status.

For ease of reference, performance exceptions aligned to the Scrutiny Committee's remit highlighted the current status of Red performing actions identified in previous quarters to show direction of travel at end of year. This would enable Members to quickly gauge whether proposed remedial actions had been undertaken in year to progress these actions. This approach of reporting exceptions reflected the changes requested by Elected Members on performance monitoring of the Annual Delivery Plan.

The report sought Elected Members' consideration of Q4 performance results and the proposed remedial actions to address areas of identified underperformance. Upon consideration, the Scrutiny Committee was recommended to refer their views and any recommendations to Cabinet for their consideration.

Following the presentation of the report, in response to queries from the Vice-Chair the Head of Standards and Provision advised the following:

- Derw Newydd was a provision which had replaced the previous Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) with a shift away from negative perceptions of poor pupil behaviour and towards pupils' needs and wellbeing, and a therapeutic approach to supporting pupils.
- School attendance was an important issue for Committee to focus on and a report on the matter would be presented to Committee in September/October 2023.
- A large amount of work around improving school attendance was being carried out by schools, with support from the Council's Inclusion Team.
- Reasons for poor attendance at Pencoedre High School, as the Vale of Glamorgan school facing the greatest challenges, were being considered, including those around the quality of lessons taught.
- A level of post-Covid related fear of being out in the community among residents as well as a rise in families taking term time holidays, had also had an impact on school attendance.
- Unlike other Local Authorities such as Cardiff, the Council provided school transport for children in specialist provisions who lived within three miles of the school, many of whom would not attend school without the transport service.

No.

In response to a comment from Councillor Lynch-Wilson, the Head of Standards and Provision advised that attendance was generally lower in secondary schools than in primary schools, and that secondary-aged pupils requiring less transport to school by their parents could contribute to this. Councillor Hodges subsequently highlighted the makerspaces within libraries, and queried whether the makerspace at Barry Library was now operational.

With no further comments or queries, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Quarter 4 performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Wellbeing 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, and the following comments be referred to Cabinet for their consideration:

- As school attendance is such an important issue, further detail regarding the reasons why poor attendance has been documented, particularly in relation to secondary schools, could be considered ahead of a report on school attendance being presented to Committee in September/October 2023.
- That further clarity be provided in relation to Service Plan Action SL/A018, with particular reference to Barry Library and whether completion refers to completed planning or implementation of the makerspace.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the content of the report and discussions at the meeting and to ensure Committee's views are considered by Cabinet.