

## LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2023.

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

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

Present: Councillor R.R. Thomas (Chair); Councillors W. Gilligan, E.J. Goodjohn, W.A. Hennessy, J. Lynch-Wilson, N. Marshallsea and J.M. Norman.

Co-Opted Members: L. Barrowclough (Parent Governor – Primary Sector), M. Price (Roman Catholic Church), A. Emmerson and R. Goodjohn (Vale Youth Forum), G. Scott (Welsh Medium Education), J. Clemett and T. Williams (Vale Youth Council).

Also present: Councillors R.M. Birch (Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language), C.P. Franks and E. Goodjohn.

### 320 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”.

### 321 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor H.M. Payne (Vice-Chair); Councillors A. Asbrey, R.E. Godfrey and E. Penn; and R. Morteo (Church in Wales).

### 322 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meetings held on 14<sup>th</sup> June and 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

### 323 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Dr. M. Price declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item No. 6 – Consultation on Proposal to Delivery a new Building for St. Richard Gwyn Catholic High School (Reference) – as he was a Foundation Governor at St. Richard Gwyn Catholic High School.

324 FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024/25 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Operational Manager for Accountancy.

Following the officer's presentation they agreed to chase up the Chair's request for information regarding out of county pupil placements and circulate the same to the Committee once received.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the Cabinet Reference and appended Financial Strategy 2024/25 report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and the report on the Council's Financial Strategy 2024/25, and to discussions at the meeting.

325 DRAFT CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25 AND INITIAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2024/25 TO 2028/29 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Finance Support Manager.

Following the officer's presentation, having fully considered the matter, Committee subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the Cabinet Reference and appended Draft Capital Strategy 2024/25 and Initial Capital Programme Proposals 2024/25 to 2028/29 report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and the report on the Council's Draft Capital Strategy 2024/25 and Initial Capital Programme Proposals 2024/25 to 2028/29, and to discussions at the meeting.

326 CONSULTATION ON PROPOSAL TO DELIVER A NEW BUILDING FOR ST. RICHARD GWYN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Operational Manager for Strategy and Resources.

Following the officer's presentation, Councillor Marshallsea welcomed the proposal and in particular that pupils could remain on the existing school site whilst the school was re-built.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language subsequently added that they commended the plan to expand the school to address its overcrowding and to meet demand for places.

The Chair subsequently echoed the previous comments and requested that Committee's welcoming of this proposal be included in the consultation.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the Cabinet Reference and appended Consultation on proposal to deliver a new building for St. Richard Gwyn Catholic High School report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and the report on the Consultation on the proposal to deliver a new building for St. Richard Gwyn Catholic High School, and to discussions at the meeting.

**327 DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT 2022/23 (REF) –**

The reference from Cabinet of 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 was presented by the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources.

Following the officer's presentation, in response to a query from the Chair, the Head of Standards and Provision advised that the long-term impacts of the pandemic were affecting attendance levels with some children finding returning to school difficult. The officer added that a significant amount of work was being undertaken to improve attendance including a promotional Miss School, Miss Out campaign and improvements to the way attendance was recorded by schools. The officer advised that whereas the Vale of Glamorgan had been ranked 14<sup>th</sup> across all Welsh Local Authorities on school attendance, this had since seen a significant rise to 6<sup>th</sup> place.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the Cabinet Reference and appended Draft Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Self-Assessment 2022/23 report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and the report on the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Self-Assessment 2022/23, and to discussions at the meeting.

## 328 ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORT: 2022/2023 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 was presented by the Safeguarding officer.

Following the officer's presentation, Councillor E.J. Goodjohn advised that the recording of instances of bullying was a positive step which would help to encourage school attendance.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the Cabinet Reference and appended Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report: 2022/23 be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and the Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report: 2022/23, and to discussions at the meeting.

## 329 QUARTER 1 REVENUE MONITORING 2023/24 (DLS) –

The report was presented by the Finance Support Manager.

The report advised Committee of the Quarter 1 (Q1) Revenue Monitoring position for 2023/24.

The table below sets out the Original Budget and Virement requests for approval by Directorate:

Directorate	Original Budget 2023/24	Virement Request 2023/24	Amended Budget 2023/24	Projected Outturn	Variance
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Learning and Skills	130,711	-33	130,678	130,678	0
Social Services	88,858	33	88,891	89,891	1,000
Environment and Housing	34,260	700	34,960	35,960	1,000
Corporate Resources	5,047	-667	4,380	4,380	0
Place	4,261	60	4,321	4,321	0
Policy	33,381	-93	33,288	31,288	-2,000
Use of Reserves	-2,096	0	-2,096	-2,096	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>294,422</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>294,422</b>	<b>294,422</b>	<b>0</b>
Public Sector Housing (HRA)	<b>10,672</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10,672</b>	<b>10,672</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>305,094</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>305,094</b>	<b>305,094</b>	<b>0</b>

The revenue position for 2023/24 continued to reflect challenging demand and inflationary pressures, with increasing demand in respect of Children's and Adults Social Care and significant increases in the cost of placements and care packages, Support for Additional Learning Needs continued to be an area of significant pressure within Learning and Skills. The Council was also experiencing continued inflationary pressures in respect of School Transport. Across the services inflationary pressures were also being experienced in respect of pay, most notably where market forces were being utilised and for the funding gap between provision for the 2023/24 pay award and the likely pay award for 2023/24.

Challenging savings and efficiency targets had been set out for 2023/24 included a target of £2.75m for schools and £4.628m Corporate savings. The progress against these savings targets were reflected in the Appendix B to the report and are summarised in the table below.

Directorate	Target	Projected	% Achieved	Mitigation	Mitigation Achieved %	Short fall	Short fall %
	£'000s	£'000s	%	£'000s	%	£'000s	£'000s
Policy	1,565	1,565	100	-	0	-	0%
Resources	582	308	53	73	47	1	0%
Neighbourhood and Housing	1,000	883	88	40	4	77	8%
Learning and Skills	564	405	72	-	0	159	28%
Social Services	681	681	100	-	0	-	0%
Place	265	133	50	-	0	132	50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,657</b>	<b>3,975</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>8%</b>

Projected transfers to and from reserves are set out in the table below:

As at	Balance 01/04/2023	Capital Funding	Planned Transfer (from) reserves	Planned Transfer to reserves	Unplanned Drawdown from Reserves	Estimated Balance 31/03/2024
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
General Fund	11,523	0	-496	0	0	11,027
Insurance	4,877	0	0	0	0	4,877
Service Reserves	22,521	-646	-6,426	42	-3,246	12,246
Risk and Smoothing Reserves	29,802	-4,404	-4,022	165	0	21,541
Capital	17,726	-14,885	-477	823		3,187
Schools	7,254	0	-6,500	0		754

Housing Revenue Account	16,486	-15,537	0	0		949
Total	110,190	-35,472	-17,921	1,030	-3,246	54,581

Following the officer's presentation, in response to a query from the Chair, the Finance Support Manager agreed to obtain information regarding levels of income received through out-of-county Additional Learning Needs placements.

In response to a subsequent query from the Chair, the Finance Support Manager advised that whilst schools had their own finance teams, finance officers from the Council's Education Department also assisted schools with developing their recovery plans. The Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources added that schools received a high level of support from both the Education and Corporate Finance Teams regarding budgets, as well as from external education professionals with a strong track record of financial management. The officer added that although work with the schools to mitigate the situation would continue, providing advice alone could not solve all of the financial problems faced by schools currently.

In response to a subsequent query from Dr. M. Price, Co-Opted Member for the Roman Catholic Church, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources advised that while it was legally possible to take over the management of the budgets of schools unable to balance their finances, this kind of step was impractical, and Vale of Glamorgan schools had not given the Council cause for concern to warrant such a sanction. The Officer added that schools were required to submit a budget recovery plan which could cover up to a five year period. Schools which were currently unable to meet this position would need to remain in monitoring until an appropriate course of action could be identified.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the position with regard to the Authority's 2023/24 Revenue Budget be noted.
- (2) T H A T the virements included as part of the report as set out in Table 1 be noted.

#### Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and to discussions at the meeting.

#### 330 CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MAY 2023 (DLS) –

The report was presented by the Finance Support Manager.

The report provided an update on the progress of the Capital Programme for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2023. Details by scheme were shown in Appendix 1.

Appendix 2 provided a summary of the position of the Capital Programme by Directorate from approval at Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March through to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2023, including any changes requested within the report.

The report set out any requested changes to the 2023/24 and future years' Capital Programme.

The report noted the current approved Programme of £125.813m, being the Council approved Programme of £103.968m plus slippage of £8.733m from 2022/23 and additions of £13.112m.

It was important to note that many areas were continuing to experience an increase in costs associated with the delivery of schemes. Tenders were being received over the current allocated budgets and officers were reporting the requirement to re-negotiate submitted tenders.

Schemes would be closely monitored over the coming months and it was anticipated that slippage requests would be requested in future reports.

Officers would continue to work with project managers and sponsors to ensure value for money and that all possible funding opportunities were identified and fully explored.

Having fully considered the matter, Committee subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress made on delivering the 2023/24 Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee in Appendix 1 to the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the use of Delegated Authority within the remit of the Committee, as set out in paragraph 2.4 of the report, be noted.
- (3) T H A T the use of Emergency Powers within the remit of the Committee, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.
- (4) T H A T the changes to the 2023/24 and future years' Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee, as set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report, be noted.

#### Reason for recommendations

- (1-4) Having regard to the contents of the report and to discussions at the meeting.

### 331 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE 2023/24 (DLS) –

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

The performance report presented the Council's progress at Quarter 1 (Q1) (1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2023) towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (2023/24) commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

3 Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives were attributed a Green performance status at Q1 to reflect the good progress made to date in meeting the Council's Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2023/24. 1 Corporate Well-being Objective (Well-being Objective 3) was attributed an Amber performance status at Q1.

90% (447 out of 494) of planned activities outlined in the Council's Annual Delivery Plan had been attributed a Green performance rating reflecting the positive progress made during the quarter, 1% (4) of activities had been attributed an Amber status and 9% (43) of planned activities were attributed a Red status.

Of the 173 performance measures aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, data was reported for 43 measures where a performance status was applicable. 51% (22) measures were attributed a Green performance Status, 12% (5) Amber status and 37% (16), Red status. A performance status was not applicable for 129 measures with 27 of these relating to measures establishing baseline performance for 2023/24, 92 measures were reported annually and for 10 measures no update no data was available.

In relation to the planned activities within the remit of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, 96% (129 out of 135) were attributed a Green performance status, 1% (2) were attributed an Amber performance status and the final 3% (4) were attributed a Red status. Of the 11 measures reported, 46% (5) were attributed a Green performance status, 18% (2) were attributed an Amber status and 36% (4) were attributed Red status.

This quarter, the areas for improvement outlined in the presentation had been revised to reflect an overview of service plan specific improvement areas aligned to the Annual Delivery Plan, emerging areas of development and activity, and emerging areas of concern specific to each Scrutiny Committee's remit across all 4 well-being objectives. This reflected the changes requested by Elected Members on performance monitoring and aligned with the 13 Principles – Effective Scrutiny Action Plan. This approach would enable Members to focus on upcoming priority areas and areas where further probing should be considered, alongside progress against the Annual Delivery Plan commitments.

The report sought Elected Members' consideration of Q1 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 the Head of Standards and Provision and the Head of Strategy, Learning and Resources highlighted the new school facility Derw Newydd in Barry and the Youth Service working towards a Welsh Government Gold Quality Standard where very few local authorities achieved the Silver Award, as positive examples of service development.

In response to subsequent queries from Councillor Marshallsea, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources advised that the Council was implementing schemes such as the loaning of tablets to those who were digitally excluded, the expansion of the Makerspaces project, as well as running events across all Vale of Glamorgan libraries, in order to increase their use. The Officer added that, with regards to free events at libraries, options were currently being looked into regarding flexibility of booking systems to accommodate any cancellations, and encouraging participants who had booked for events to turn up on the day.

In response to a query from Councillor Norman, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources advised that whilst the model for school libraries had changed in favour of smaller reading spaces, there were strong partnerships between schools and libraries including peripatetic librarians going into schools. The Officer added that schools encouraged reading for pleasure both at school and at home through for example, reading clubs and book awards.

In response to a query from the Chair, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources advised that the performance indicator 'Building the Linguistic Skills of the Division' listed in the report as a performance exception, was measured by the levels of engagement and enrollment in learning Welsh. The Officer further advised that the level of skill required would be that in order to meet and greet people in Welsh, rather than a level of fluency. They added that levels of progress among learners could be reported on later in the year.

Mr. G. Scott, Co-Opted Member for Welsh Medium Education added that the level of skill required was difficult to quantify, and that it was more important to show respect, awareness and a willing attitude towards the Welsh language.

With no further questions or comments, Committee subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Q1 performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 commitments as aligned to the Council's 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.

#### Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and to discussions at the meeting.