



PWYLLGOR CRAFFU'R CABINET

10.00 AM DYDD LLUN, 21 MAWRTH 2022

O BELL DRWY MICROSOFT TEAMS

Rhaid gosod pob ffôn symudol ar y modd distaw ar gyfer parhad y cyfarfod

Rhan 1

1. Croeso a galw'r rhestr
2. Cyhoeddiad y Cadeirydd
3. Datganiadau o fuddiannau
4. Cofnodion y cyfarfod blaenorol (*Tudalennau 5 - 44*)
 - 24 Tachwedd 2021
 - 15 Rhagfyr 2021
 - 5 Ionawr 2022
 - 12 Ionawr 2022
 - 9 Chwefror 2022
 - 28 Chwefror 2022
5. Craffu Cyn Penderfynu
 - Dewis eitemau priodol o agenda'r Cabinet ar gyfer craffu cyn penderfynu (amgaeir adroddiadau ar gyfer yr Aelodau Craffu)
6. Eitemau brys
(Unrhyw eitemau brys (boed yn gyhoeddus neu wedi'u heithrio) yn ol disgrisiwn y Cadeirydd yn unol ag Adran 100B (4) (b) o Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol 1972.
7. Mynediad i gyfarfodydd
Yn unol â Rheoliad 4 (3) a (5) Offeryn Statudol 2001 Rhif 2290,

gellir gwahardd y cyhoedd ar gyfer yr eitem fusnes ganlynol a oedd yn debygol o gynnwys datgelu gwybodaeth eithriedig fel a ddiffinnir ym Mharagraff 14 Rhan 4 Atodlen 12A o Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol 1972.

Rhan 2

8. Craffu Eitem/Eitemau Preifat Cyn Penderfynu
- Dewis eitemau priodol o agenda'r Cabinet ar gyfer craffu cyn penderfynu (amgaeir adroddiadau ar gyfer yr Aelodau Craffu)
 - Dewis eitemau priodol o agenda'r Cabinet (Cyllid) ar gyfer craffu cyn penderfynu (amgaeir adroddiadau ar gyfer yr Aelodau Craffu)

K.Jones
Prif Weithredwr

Canolfan Ddinesig
Port Talbot

Dydd Mawrth, 15 Mawrth 2022

Aelodaeth y Pwyllgor:

Cadeirydd: S.Rahaman

Is-gadeirydd: S.E.Freeguard

Cynghorwyr: N.T.Hunt, S.K.Hunt, D.Keogh, C.James,
S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, R.Mizen,
S.Paddison, L.M.Purcell, S.H.Reynolds,
R.L.Taylor, A.N.Woolcock a/ac W.F.Griffiths

Nodiadau:

- (1) *Os yw aelodau'r pwyllgor neu'r rhai nad ydynt yn aelodau'r pwyllgor am gynnig eitemau perthnasol i'w cynnwys ar yr agenda cyn cyfarfodydd y dyfodol, rhaid iddynt roi gwybod i'r Prif Weithredwr/Cadeirydd 8 niwrnod cyn y cyfarfod.*

- (2) *Os yw'r rhai nad ydynt yn aelodau'r pwyllgor am fod yn bresennol ar gyfer eitem o ddiddordeb, mae'n rhaid rhoi rhybudd ymlaen llaw (erbyn 12 hanner dydd ar y diwrnod cyn y cyfarfod). Gall y rhai nad ydynt yn aelodau'r pwyllgor siarad ond nid oes ganddynt hawl i bleidleisio, cynnig nac eilio unrhyw gynnig.*
- (3) *Fel arfer, ar gyfer trefniadau cyn craffu, bydd y Cadeirydd yn argymhell eitemau gweithredol sydd ar ddod i'w trafod/herio. Mae hefyd yn agored i aelodau'r pwyllgor ofyn i eitemau gael eu trafod - er y gofynnir i'r aelodau ddewis a dethol yma o ran materion pwysig.*
- (4) *Gwahoddir aelodau perthnasol Bwrdd y Cabinet hefyd i fod yn bresennol yn y cyfarfod at ddibenion Craffu/Ymgynghori.*
- (5) *Gofynnir i aelodau'r Pwyllgor Craffu ddod â'u papurau ar gyfer Bwrdd y Cabinet i'r cyfarfod.*

Mae'r dudalen hon yn fwriadol wag

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

24 November 2021

Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.E.Freeguard

Councillors: N.T.Hunt, D.Keogh, S.Miller, R.Mizen,
S.Paddison, S.M.Penry, S.H.Reynolds,
R.L.Taylor, A.N.Woolcock and W.F.Griffiths

Officers In Attendance K.Jones, A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, N.Pearce,
H.Jones, M.Shaw, J.Woodman-Ralph and
C.Plowman

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors C.Clement-Williams, M.Harvey,
D.Jones, L.Jones, E.V.Latham, A.R.Lockyer,
P.A.Rees and P.D.Richards

1. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

The Committee scrutinised the following Cabinet items:

Short Term Service Resilience Framework

Members received the Short Term Service Resilience Framework which was set to minimise the risk of service disruption in the short term.

The Chief Executive explained how service demands had increased over recent months and how this had impacted the overall workforce.

It was noted that Welsh Government had reduced the alert level to Level Zero on 7th August 2021, which resulted in a lot more social mixing across various communities; by 24 October 2021 the number of cases locally had risen to 1037.6 cases per 100,000 population, with almost 1 in 3 people testing positive for Covid 19 at that time. Officers mentioned that the rates had reduced since then; at the time

of writing the report, the number of cases were at 653.8 cases per 100,000 population.

Despite the reduction in the number of cases, it was stated that the Coronavirus rates across the community remained very high, and the increase in community transmission has had a further impact on demands in services; for example the Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) Service had become busier and there were significant impacts across the health and social care system. Members were informed that service areas across the Council were continuing to operate under Covid risk assessments; this was affecting the way in which the Council was able to provide services, and the number of people available to provide those services. It was noted that a lot more individuals within the community were coming forward with various needs, as a result of living through 20 months of the pandemic.

Officers highlighted that some service areas had significant backlogs in their work that needed attention; this was due to setting some work aside in order to be able to deal with the priorities that Welsh Government had asked Councils to take on board.

Members were informed that the Council had received funding for some very exciting projects within the County Borough, which Officers were supportive of taking forward; this meant that they needed to be considered in the Councils short term service resilience plans.

It was explained that the amount of people available to service the demand had diminished slightly over recent months; there were a number of reasons for this, which were set out in the circulated report. Officers mentioned that some service areas were experiencing challenges with recruiting people into vacancies; there was currently a lot of vacant jobs within the local economy, and some of those in the private sector had more benefits and/or better pay than those within the public sector.

In terms of the Councils current situation, it was noted that there was an increased demand, slightly less people to deal with the demand, and backlogs which required additional staff beyond the usual capacity levels; immediate steps needed to be taken to try and fill the outstanding vacancies, as well as bringing in additional capacity to ensure that the workforce was supported over the winter months. It was added that the Council was able to offer the various roles externally; with the hope that local people will apply.

Officers explained that there was a current underspend within the current cash limit that had previously been approved; the proposal set out to use £2million of the detailed underspend for the Service Resilience Framework in order to bring in additional staff.

It was highlighted that the recent All Member Seminar relating to service pressures was very informative, and brought Members up to date on the current pressures and what steps needed to be put in place in order to relieve some of those pressures.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by Cabinet.

Monthly Budget Monitoring Report 2021/2022

The Committee were provided with the Monthly Budget Monitoring Report for 2021/22.

The Chief Finance Officer provided an overview of the circulated report; currently Officers were predicting that by the end of March 2022, the Council will have an underspend of approximately £8.3million. It was noted that there were various reasons for this; one of the main points being that when the budget was set, there was a huge level of uncertainty in terms of the Covid 19 Hardship Fund. Therefore, it was noted that a great level of contingency was included into the budget; at this point in time, Officers predicted that this level of contingency wouldn't be needed. Officers explained that the Council was also collecting more council tax income than anticipated; there were also less people needing council tax support than originally forecast.

Members were informed that this underspend was not forecasted to be recurring, as it was anticipated that the vacant posts will be filled, and the Council will be able to start delivering some initiatives that had been put in place.

Officers were proposing not to use the £3.1million, which was originally planned, from general reserves; and were proposing to put £2million into the Service Resilience Framework and another £2million back into specific reserves.

A discussion took place in relation to sufficient levels of general reserves; the Audit Wales guidance suggested that a prudent level for general reserves would be 5% of the budget. Members noted that Neath Port Talbot Council's level was significantly higher than that in the guidance, and compared to other Councils across Wales;

concerns were expressed in relation to the balance between general reserves and the council tax levels which were set for the current financial year.

The circulated report detailed that cardboard and food waste were no longer incurring costs for disposal and were generating income instead, resulting in an anticipated reduction in the net costs of waste disposal; Members asked for further information on this and the shift in the service. The Director of Environment and Regeneration confirmed that the waste industry was very volatile; the price of cardboard, plastic, glass etc. changed very frequently. It was noted that the Council could go from a position of paying people to take materials, to a position of securing an income from those recyclables. Members were informed that there were pockets within the County Borough in which there was a lack of co-operation from some residents; the Council would be undertaking a pilot scheme in one of those areas, to try and encourage those residents to increase their recycling in order for the Council to achieve the targets set by Welsh Government. It was explained that last year the Council did not achieve the targets, however this year the targets were achieved; the Council exceeded the targets this year and were one of very few Authorities to make significant improvement in performance.

Members queried that if the Council was to fill all of the vacant posts, there would be a significant difference in the payroll position. Officers confirmed that there was currently around 200 vacancies within the Council, and if all of these posts were to be filled, it would have a considerable impact on the budget; this needed to be kept in mind for the future.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by Cabinet.

Capital Budget Monitoring 2021/22

Members received information in relation to the delivery of the 2021/22 Capital Programme.

Officers stated that the report set out a proposed budget of £82.4million which was £2.3million less than what was approved; the schedule of changes were detailed in appendix 2 of the circulated report. It was noted that the Council had incurred £30.6million of expenditure, which was 37% delivery of the capital programme; this was highlighted to be on track considering the delays in delivering projects and spending money.

The circulated report detailed that a budget of £2.584m had been included in 2021/22 for Margam Park Activity Investment; however, £2.336m has been re profiled into 2022/23 to reflect the profile of the works required. Members asked if Officers could clarify what was meant by 're profiled'; it was confirmed that the works were not able to proceed as planned, therefore the monies were being transferred into the next financial year.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by Cabinet.

CHAIRPERSON

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Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

15 December 2021

Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.E.Freeguard

Councillors: N.T.Hunt, S.K.Hunt, D.Keogh, S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, L.M.Purcell, S.M.Penry, S.H.Reynolds, R.L.Taylor and A.N.Woolcock

Officers In Attendance K.Jones, A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, N.Pearce, C.Griffiths, H.Jones, C.Furlow-Harris, S.Davies, P.Hinder, J.Woodman-Ralph and C.Davies

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors C.Clement-Williams, M.Harvey, D.Jones, L.Jones, E.V.Latham, A.R.Lockyer, P.D.Richards and A.Wingrave

1. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

The Committee scrutinised the following Cabinet Board items:

Capital Programme Governance

Members received information in relation to the terms of reference for the Capital Programme Steering Group and Members Surgeries, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members welcomed the new Protocol in relation to Capital Programme Management in order to address the findings of the Independent Governance Review.

Discussions took place around fair distribution of monies. It was noted that the authority do comprehensive surveys of all of the assets within the County Borough on a rolling programme basis. Following the surveys, officers will formulate the best use out of the funding to distribute fairly.

Members queried that there was reference to speed work on highways within the report and requested clarity on the responsibilities. It was noted that only the police can enforce the speed limit and provide speeding tickets. Officers within Neath Port Talbot can utilise evidenced based accidents to put mitigation measures in place to control speed limits.

Members queried whether the council have the resources to research and respond to Freedom of Information Act requests within the appropriate timescales. It was also asked whether the Freedom of information act applied to member's as well as the public. Officers confirmed that members are entitled to request and view any information of the council if they so wished. Requesting information through the Freedom of Information act would not be the best form of practice for member to gather information. In terms of public receiving information, it was noted that general information should be available on the website for public to access to prevent having numerous Freedom of information requests.

Following Scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board

Quarter 2 (1st April 2021 – 30th September 2021) Cabinet Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Members received quarter 2 performance information for KPIs and compliments and complaints data within Cabinet's purview, as detailed within the circulated report.

The Chair highlighted that the Committee understood that a few of the Performance indicators were not meeting targets due to the pressures following the impact of Covid-19. Members highlighted their appreciation of the work that officers continue to do to achieve their targets.

Members highlighted that within the planning department, staff with high knowledge and experiencing had moved on from the authority. Resulting in a lack of resources within the department. Members asked what mitigating measures officers were putting in place to ensure that officer posts were filled, capturing knowledge and experience within the council. Officers highlighted that due to the high demand in delivery service they are currently securing a recruitment package.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee

Members were updated on the implementation of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee pursuant to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members continued to express their concerns in relation to the Corporate Joint Committees. It was mentioned that there had been correspondence between the scrutiny committee and the minister sharing the committee's concerns.

Members were pleased to see the work that was being done to establish a scrutiny format. However, they shared their concern in relation to previous joint committees where the scrutiny committee was considered at the final stages. It was noted that scrutiny had to be considered from the start to ensure that good governance is in place to hold those to account.

Discussions took place around the responsibilities of the functions of the Corporate Joint Committees. It was noted within the report Governance and Audit would be ultimately Pembrokeshire's responsibility, members queried the set up of this. It was noted that Pembrokeshire would have ultimate control in terms of officer responsibility however, the scrutiny committee of Governance and Audit would have representation of all authorities including Neath Port Talbot.

Following Scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board

CHAIRPERSON

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Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

5 January 2022

Chairperson: **Councillor S.Rahaman**

Vice Chairperson: **Councillor S.E.Freeguard**

Councillors: N.T.Hunt, S.K.Hunt, D.Keogh, C.James, S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, R.Mizen, S.Paddison, L.M.Purcell, S.H.Reynolds, R.L.Taylor, A.N.Woolcock and W.F.Griffiths

Officers In Attendance: K.Jones, A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, N.Pearce, C.Griffiths, H.Jones, F.Clay-Poole, A.James, N.Blackmore, J.Woodman-Ralph and C.Plowman

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors C.Clement-Williams, M.Harvey, D.Jones, L.Jones, E.V.Latham, A.R.Lockyer, P.A.Rees, P.D.Richards and A.Wingrave

1. Declarations of Interests

The following Member made a declaration of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

Cllr M Harvey

Re: Draft Budget for Consultation 2022-23 as Appendix 1 makes reference to CCTV and he is employed by South Wales Police.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meetings held on the 1 September 2021, 22 September 2021 and 17 November 2021 were approved, subject to the following comments on the minutes dated 1 September 2021:

During the scrutiny of the agenda item relating to the 'Management of Risk and Liabilities of disused Mine and Quarry Tips within the Authority and the future management of Coal Tip Safety', Members noted concern that although the responsibility for the maintenance of Coal Tips rests within the ownership of the County Borough and Welsh Government, the exploitation of the coal/minerals remained with the UK Government.

3. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

The Committee scrutinised the following Cabinet Board items:

Corporate Plan 2022-2027 - Recover, Reset, Renew

Members received a report which was seeking approval to consult on an updated Corporate Plan for the period 2022-2027.

The Chief Executive stated that the report captured the Councils response to the pandemic, and set out the impacts on communities and the local economy; the impacts had changed the context of the way in which the Council needed to plan going forward. It was noted that the Council had a statutory duty to produce these plans and had to consider, as part of this work, whether the previous wellbeing objectives remained appropriate or if they needed to be changed; it had been concluded that the wellbeing objectives needed to be amended in light of the change of context. Another part of this work which was highlighted included looking forward to identify various factors that would have an effect in the future such as climate change, financial settlements and the Welsh Governments own programme for Government.

It was noted that the circulated report also summarised the initial recovery actions that the Council had taken; actions against recovery had proceeded as and when they could, dependant on the situation of the pandemic. One of the pieces of work Officers mentioned that they had completed was setting out the priorities for the next phase, which had been split into four new wellbeing objectives:

1. Best start in life for all children and young people;
2. Building thriving and sustainable communities by drawing on the strengths seen in communities during the pandemic;
3. Give a greater priority to the work carried out around local environment, culture and heritage;

4. Renew and intensify work in order to create good quality, green jobs in the area, and to help local people equip themselves with the skills and confidence to take up that employment.

Officers stated that all of this work will need to be underpinned by a significant organisational change programme within the Council; when developing the Corporate Plan, Officers had liaised with Members regarding the sorts of changes to the culture and ways of working that will need to be introduced. It was mentioned that at the heart of this change was being one Council; over the course of the pandemic, many departments across the Council had come together as a team, and silos between departments had been broken down. The Chief Executive added that this was going to be a really important part of the way the Council progresses forward.

One element that hadn't been completed yet was noted to be working out the measures in relation to the new wellbeing objectives; there was some work to be completed over the coming weeks to ensure that the Council could demonstrate the difference these will make. It was highlighted that Officers will be interested in any views the public may have about the ways in which the Council could measure success as part of the consultation. The Committee was informed that after the Election, there will be an opportunity for the new administration to undertake a further review of the Council's priorities and policies, which will be reflected in an updated Corporate Plan and medium term financial plan for the period beyond that.

Members made reference to the outcomes of the Let's Talk campaign, and stated that the level of responses varied, especially in the valley areas; Officers were asked to comment on this. The Chief Executive reassured Members that the effort that was put into the consultation in all parts of the County Borough was consistent. It was noted that this consultation relied quite a large extent on the electronic, digital means of consultation due to the pandemic, which more than likely affected the response rate; had it not been for the fact that there was a second and third wave when undertaking this work, Officers would have planned to go out into the community and meet face to face with communities in order to obtain more responses. It was highlighted that a lot of work was carried out to try and gather views of children and young people; this was completed largely through the programmes that were being held over the school holidays.

The Committee was informed that once it was apparent that there were low numbers of responses from some of the valley communities, focus groups were organised to try and obtain qualitative information in order to gain some insight into some of the issues in those communities; 30 in depth interviews were completed to ensure that representation was received across the five valley areas, some as focus groups and others as one to one interviews. It was added that the Chief Executive also went out into valley communities to talk with Local Members; the messages brought back from those visits were consistent with what had been gathered from the consultation feedback.

Reference was made to consultation fatigue which was becoming more talked about. The Strategic Communications Officer explained that the Let's Talk campaign tried to demonstrate that the Council was acting on and had listened to what individuals had expressed; this work also will give these individuals the chance to comment on whether the plans capture the relevant points in order to achieve the wellbeing objectives.

The important question moving forward from this consultation was why more responses were received from some parts of the County Borough than others; this will be an ongoing piece of work for the Council, and an element would could be improved on in future with the help of the Local Area Coordinators, Local Members and the Neighbourhood Management Teams. It was added that Officers also needed to consider new and additional ways of engagement in order to obtain a more consistent and higher level of participation.

Members stated that many of the issues raised were not directly related to Covid 19 impacts or recovery, but show deep-seated concerns about services and the condition of towns, villages and communities; it was therefore asked if the recovery plan will reflect the longer term need for regeneration and front line services across the County Borough. It was explained that the Councils Corporate Plan had to be constructed in accordance with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act legislation; in terms of long term intent, one part of the sustainable development principle requires Councils to look 30 years ahead to try and determine how the actions and decisions made today will affect future generations. In constructing the Corporate Plan, Officers tried to be very specific for the next 12 months of work; this will provide Officers with democratic cover for what needed to be completed whilst moving from one administration

to the next. Moving on from the next 12 months, it was noted that Officers sought to look at what would be deliverable within a five year period, whilst leaving it broad and flexible enough for an incoming administration to be able to provide their own views and inputs; and again similarly, with looking forward to 20 years' time and setting a vision around the four wellbeing objectives over this period of time. It was added that the Corporate Plan was intended for future use, beyond the pandemic, and looking at the longer term ambitions.

It was highlighted that a lot of the elements within the Corporate Plan linked in with the Local Development Plan (LDP), which was nearing the start of the process of being consulted on in terms of its review; Members asked if there could be a tie in between what was trying to be achieved through the revised Corporate Plan and the LDP process. The Chief Executive stated that the LDP should be a representation of what the Councils overarching plans were for its community; therefore would expect, as the LDP review was taken forward, that these new objectives that the Council will be considering were reflected in that process. It was noted that as the LDP develops, there may be some new evidence coming through the process, which could be used to reflect into an updated Corporate Plan; the two plans over a period of time will keep being updated and reflected on to keep pace with new evidence and issues as they arise.

Following on from this, the Director of Environment and Regeneration stated that the Council was at a critical point in the process of developing its spatial aspirations for the growth and protection of the County Borough; the LDP was a spatial plan, but there were also topic based policies within that plan, and the Council was about to embark on a consultation period with its communities. Members were reminded to encourage their constituents and partner organisation to engage with Planning Policy colleagues during this exercise; it was important that they do so at this early stage, so that issues affecting their communities could be identified, and then the topic and spatial based policies can be developed to try and tackle those issues. The Committee was informed that the LDP was used on a day to day basis to determine the Councils growth aspirations and planning applications that were submitted. The importance of the LDP was reiterated, and it was added that it dovetailed into all the other plans that the Authority was required to deliver.

Concerns were raised in regards to a statistic detailed in the circulated report, which highlighted that 84% of children entered

nursery without the appropriate literacy, language and communication skills to access the curriculum; this would imply that a very large majority of families who had young children require this specific input. Members highlighted that this statistic linked to a number of aspirations of the best start in life for all children and young people wellbeing objective; and based on the statistic, it was asked if the Council had the capacity to be able to achieve those aspirations.

The Committee was informed that a Head of Early Years, Inclusion and Partnership post had recently been created in order to bring together the resources and partners to try and help further with this area of work. The statistic detailed in the report wasn't new to Officers, however a different way of presenting figures had been adopted. Members were reassured that a plan was being developed in order to tackle the areas of concern, and that it was an ambition of the Council to work towards this in order to improve. It was noted that some children enter the education system with various difficulties due to the socioeconomic makeup of Neath Port Talbot; there was a significant amount of pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), and also some which were unidentified.

Officers confirmed that they had spoken about the detail of the plan to partners, who were on board with the priority around early years; this will bring together the experts within the third sector, the health board and other partners in order to establish a coherent plan. It was highlighted that the work around this will hopefully improve the situation so that when pupils to enter the education system, they will be better prepared to learn and will make the same or improved progress, and at the end of the education system they will leave with better outcomes.

Members acknowledged that the lack of bus services affecting residents' ability to access employment and leisure activities was referred to at various points throughout the circulated report. Detailed within the Corporate Plan, it stated that there was ambition to develop a plan to create new transport hubs that improve connections between the places where people live and the places where people work, learn and enjoy their leisure time; as well as develop community based transport schemes to support access to work. Officers were asked to expand on these two proposals.

It was highlighted that there were a lot of public transport routes that were delivered by the private sector; if those public transport routes were not profitable, then following the reduction in subsidies that the

Welsh Government would have given them, the transport providers would withdraw those routes. Officers added that there was very little the Authority could do about this unless Council money was used to subsidize those routes, and it would be difficult to determine which routes should be focused on, in terms of the prioritisation of the very limited funding packages. The Director of Environment and Regeneration explained that the Plan focused on and contained potential proposals that the Council had some form of control over, and how the Council needed to respond to the way in which transport was changing. The Committee was informed that community transport was becoming more important, particular in the valley communities; the Council was running a few pilot schemes operational within the County Borough to try and expand the opportunity that community transport provides within the valley communities. It was confirmed that Officers will be reviewing the effectiveness of those pilot schemes going forward.

In regards to the longer term ambition of transport hubs, it was stated that the Council was potentially looking to deliver a hub of activity in the future within the valley communities; this could consist of various elements, such as hybrid workspaces and community facilities within the hub to allow for people to come together and share experiences, knowledge and social activities. Further to this, it was noted that community transport car sharing schemes could be established from the community hubs, to allow people to get to and from work, as well as to and from retail and leisure activities. Officers concluded that the various elements detailed within the Plan could potentially diversify the transport opportunities within the County Borough, rather than relying solely on the public transport networks which had been diminishing over time.

A discussion took place in regards to the number of responses to the Let's Talk Campaign. Members expressed that although the feedback in the responses were useful, there was a vast array of residents who did not provide their feedback. It was suggested that a caveat be included with the data and information from the consultation for clarification purposes. The Chief Executive agreed to look into the way in which the circulated report had been worded and ensure that the report made this clear. Members were reassured that it was a standard practice to include this sort of detail in the breakdown of data; Officers did not rely on isolated data sets, and instead would seek to triangulate the data which would include checking with Elected Members, using data Officers had gathered themselves

which would feed into the overall picture, and using the feedback from the public.

Reference was made to the 'resetting relationships with our residents' element in the circulated report, and how the Council had encapsulated the way in which it planned to reset and renew relationships with residents. Members queried how the points were going to be made a reality, and expressed the need for further resources in order to achieve the aspirations. It was highlighted that the following needed to be considered in more detail in the future; getting best price for land sales, applying for a larger amount of funding e.g. Levelling Up Fund, and the setting of council tax to be kept as low as possible.

In regards to land, Members were reassured that the Council was selling owned land at the price that the land was worth; whilst taking into account what constrains there were on all of its land parcels. It was added that when selling land, Officers utilised the independent advice of the district valuer to ensure that land was not sold below market value.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration explained that the prospectus and the call for bids for the Levelling Up Fund were issued with very restricted timescales in place, and it was a very strict process in terms of consultation and endorsement; Officers had to secure a significant amount of information in order to put in the bids. It was confirmed that the Council did submit bids, however due to current issues with resources, there weren't any 'oven ready' projects that could be submitted; this was made public at the time. The Committee was informed that Officers had met with Government Officials in relation to the Levelling Up Fund to try and obtain feedback, and had specifically asked for details regarding the bids that were successful in order to learn from them; unfortunately, UK Officials will not share information from those successful bids. Officers were mindful that there was a second tranche of this funding being released in the spring, and the Teams had started looking at projects; additional money (£200,000) had been received in order to build on the capacity within the Teams, however it would take some time to find people suitable for the job and train them to a standard in which they were able to deliver projects. It was noted that the extra monies will help to build a Team that was fit for purpose in the future, and sustainable going forward; which will also maximise opportunity to secure successful outcomes for any funding opportunities.

A discussion took place regarding the new wellbeing objective 'best start in life', and the links to the Flying Start programme. Members queried the value for money of this programme, based on the worrying statistic that was highlighted earlier in the meeting. Officers were not aware of any value for money studies into the Flying Start programme across Wales; however, the schools which received children from the Flying Start programme spoke highly of it, in terms of the support that the young people and their families received. It was stated that not all children who required support lived in the Flying Start catchment areas, and not all children who lived in Flying Start catchments areas required support; in discussions around 'best start in life', it was reported that some families were actually receiving too much support and on the other side there were families who needed that support. Officers mentioned that part of the strategic planning referred to in earlier discussions, was to ensure that partners come together to help those who needed support, regardless of if they lived in Flying Start areas or not, and to ensure that those who needed support knew how to find it; one of the issues identified was that there were a lot of support networks between various sectors, however there wasn't clear pathways in accessing it.

Following on from the discussion above, the need to educate and help the family unit was stressed. It was highlighted that the years of austerity had significantly impacted the early years function; there used to be very good connections and links between partners which helped children and their families. The Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning reiterated the points that Members had made; in nearly all cases, the needs of a child was best met when the family unit understood the work and supported the child. It was added that one of the reasons for establishing the new post of Head of Early Years, Inclusion and Partnership, was to make sure that strategic plans were in place and the resources available were utilised to their best effect.

It was asked if there was a set way to deliver on some of the aspirations detailed within the Corporate Plan, in order to move forward with achieving them; reference was also made to the current difficulties with recruitment and how this could have an effect on delivering the aspirations. The Chief Executive confirmed that Officers had prioritised within the plan; the four wellbeing priorities being the main focus going forward. It was noted that the circulated plan contained a number of bullet points which set out the areas of

work which Officers believed could be progressed in the first 12 months.

In terms of performance, it was noted that there were other mechanisms in place for demonstrating where the Council was performing well, where it was doing ok and where it was struggling; these will come through in the performance monitoring reports and the annual report, and Officers will consider how the Council was performing when updating the plans. It was added that if the Council was failing in a particular area, there would be an opportunity to build this into the plan in the next period; and then Officers will need to identify resources to deliver on the work.

The Committee was informed that some of the areas of work were long term objectives which will not be completed within the first three years; these were the projects that Officers will be working towards over the next 20 years. It was highlighted that there will be an important piece of work to carry out in order to determine the difference the Council makes and the position the Council was in, in terms of progression.

The Chief Executive highlighted that the Corporate Plan was yet to include the measures; by the time the report was brought back to Committee, there will be a baseline measure included. It was noted that scrutiny committees had an important role to play in this; there will be an opportunity in the next administration to look at how the Council and its partners, collectively, were making an impact on these important areas.

Members raised that communities weren't only recovering from the pandemic, but from years of austerity prior to it. It was stated that this should be reflected in the Corporate Plan.

The following formal amendment to the recommendation contained within the circulated report was proposed and seconded:

Having had due regard to the Integrated Impact Assessment it is recommended that Cabinet approve the draft Corporate Plan 2022-2027 and the Strategic Change Programme (contained in the annexe) be published for a 4 week consultation period (5th January 2022 – 1st February 2022.) subject to the plan including a reference to the impacts of the years of austerity and the pandemic.

It was determined that the Committee were in support of the amendment to be considered by Cabinet.

Draft Budget for Consultation 2022-23

The Committee received a report which was seeking approval to consult on the draft budget proposals for 2022/23.

The Chief Executive informed Members of this year's scrutiny process for the consultation on the budget. It was noted that typically, this report would be brought to Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, before then being taken to each individual scrutiny committee, so that scrutiny members could scrutinise the budget proposals in relation to their portfolio; this was particularly important when it was proposed to either raise new income, make cuts in costs or make cuts to services. However, it was highlighted that the budget was very different this year as there were no proposed cuts to services; due to this reason, Officers were not intending to present the budget report to each scrutiny committee, unless scrutiny members request this be done.

An overview of the proposals contained within the circulated report was provided to the Committee; final decisions on the budget will be requested at the meeting on 28 February 2022, once feedback had been obtained from the consultation process.

Reference was made to the current budget for 2021/22, which was at £316.246m; 75% of this was funded from Welsh Government, and 25% from Council Tax collection. The report provided detail as to how that money was being spent.

In regards to the Local Government settlement for next year; on 21 December 2021, Welsh Government announced a 9.4% increase in funding for Local Government in Wales, totalling at £437m. It was noted that Neath Port Talbot (NPT) Councils share of this was £20.78m, which equated to 8.8%. Officers mentioned that the Council usually ranked towards the top of the Welsh Governments ranking system, however this time NPT was ranked 18th out of 22 Authorities in Wales; the reason for this was despite the fact that the number of pupils with free school meals and benefit claimants within the County Borough increased, the levels increased at less of a rate than the vast majority of other Councils in Wales, which meant that NPT obtained a proportionately less share of the funding.

Officers highlighted the amount of money that was available for next year; Council Tax at current levels, and Welsh Government funding of £258m, will provide the Council with £338m to spend. Members were provided with information regarding what needed to be spent next

year; this year's budget position was £319m, adding to this would be unavoidable service costs of inflation, social care levy, and the increase in the national living wage, which would increase costs by £8.7m. Appendix one of the circulated report also detailed the services pressures which had been identified, which would provide costs of £8.7m. Officers were proposing that the contingency budget be reduced by £965m, which provided an unallocated amount of £2.2m; it was suggested that the £2.2m be retained to balance any fluctuations of the medium term financial strategy period. It was added that as a consequence of that settlement, it was not being proposed to increase the Council Tax levels for next year; Officers were seeking to consult on a 0% Council Tax raise.

In terms of the medium term financial strategy, it was stated that the Welsh Government settlement included indicative allocations of 3.5% for 2023/24, and 2.4% for the following year; one of the reasons for proposing to retain £2.2m of this year's funding (as detailed above) was to mitigate the impact of those lower settlements in the following year.

Included within the circulated report was a policy around general reserves. It was noted that the Council had an 8.8% settlement, despite having gone through years of austerity; this allowed Officers to be able to set the strategy in relation to general reserves due to a healthier financial position. Members were informed that there was no prescribed minimum or maximum level of reserves, and it was for the Chief Finance Officer to make recommendations to Members on these levels. Officers were proposing to work towards a general reserve level of 4%, which would be approximately £13.5m, as well as looking to reduce the current reserve balance over the period of the medium term financial strategy, and support investment which can drive down revenue costs or generate income.

A discussion took place in regards to the one off investments to support Covid 19 recovery. Officers were proposing to invest some of the specific reserves into delivering specific short term measures, which will help start the delivery of the Corporate Plan; £700,000 towards the best start in life objective, £1.2m into thriving and sustainable communities objective, and £200,000 into the objective around heritage and culture. Officers were proposing to use the £2.8m from the insurance reserve to fund this, which would leave £700,000 unallocated; it was important to note that individual projects

to be delivered, would be subject to approval of the individual Cabinet Boards.

One of the recommendations within the circulated report was to repurpose the current ER/VR reserve into an organisational development reserve. It was noted that this was being proposed in order to help with investing in the Councils workforce; the report detailed the types of initiatives that would be delivered over a three year period, and would require £1.5m of this reserve to fund.

The circulated report suggested that indicative funding in 2023/24 and 2024/25 will be lower levels at 3.5% and 2.4% respectively; Members asked if they were to compare these against the 8.8% for 2022/23. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that this statement was correct.

Members made reference to the level of reserves at 31 March 2021, which was approximately £20m; it was asked what the projected level of reserves was for 31 March 2022. It was confirmed that the level of reserves was again expected to be approximately £20m.

It was queried over what period of time the reserves would be reduced incrementally to 4%. It was noted that the incremental reduction would be delivered over the period of the new medium term financial strategy, which would be the 2022/23 to 2026/27 period.

A further discussion took place relating to the one off investments to support Covid 19 recovery. Members highlighted that the funding from this will come from repurposing the current insurance reserve (£2.8m), therefore it will not require any use of the general reserves to stand up these initiatives. Members stated there could be an opportunity to reduce Council Tax by 1%, using some of the reserves to fund it; it was queried whether this could be done. The Committee was informed that the Chief Finance Officer had a statutory duty to look after the best interests of current and future Council Tax payers; the advice detailed in the circulated report was framed around those statutory responsibilities. As previously mentioned, the settlement for the next two years was not expected to be significant and the ongoing effect of the pandemic was unknown; the Welsh Government Hardship Fund was also concluding at the end of March 2022, and last year the Council claimed back £24m from that fund. It was added that the Chief Finance Officer had also built in a budget pressure of £2.5m; Officers were not proposing a 1% reduction in Council Tax due to these reasons.

It was emphasised that the circulated report did not provide information on the actual budget structure or proposed departmental spend; there was a need to have further discussions on what the Authority does to prioritise Council spend. Members stated that Chairs of Scrutiny Committees should consider holding the usual individual budget scrutiny meetings.

In regards to the consultation, it was queried that if the feedback showed that a significant amount of residents asked for a reduction in Council Tax, how would Officers consider and manage this; following on from earlier discussions that had taken place in regards to this matter. It was stated that when the budget goes out for consultation, there will likely be people wanting a reduction in Council Tax; it was recognised that NPT had the third highest band D council taxing in Wales. However, it was noted that 80% of residents in NPT paid less than a band D; a recent survey showed that the average amount of Council Tax paid in NPT was the 16th lowest in Wales. The Chief Finance Officer highlighted that when comparing meaningfully, comparisons were completed on an average. Members were informed that Officers will consider the consultation responses, and if there was significant weight, they will need to consider what would be affordable and make recommendations as to how it would be funded; this will mean reductions in services and cuts. It was added that reducing Council Tax at this point in time will also put a burden on the new administration.

A discussion took place in relation to the Councils current recruitment issues. It was highlighted that Officers were in the process of putting in a recruitment task force to try and deal with the fact that there was various vacancies that needed filling; staff were working hard to ensure that those vacancies were filled and the Councils services could continue.

Reference was made to the percentage of the current budget which was allocated to the Social Services, Health and Housing Directorate (28%) and the Environment Directorate (13%). Members expressed that if the Council was in a position to make investments in these areas and enhance certain aspects, it would be greatly appreciated by the public; following Members comments, it was asked if the percentages were ring fenced or could they be realigned. It was noted that the figures were ring fenced, as in they were the current budget for those services; in the spring time, Officers will be looking at a new medium term financial strategy which will consider rebasing

the current budgets, linking to the Corporate Plan and trying to ensure that resources were aligned with the set out priorities. It was concluded that there was a possibility of realigning, however it needed to be aligned with the priorities set by the Cabinet.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet.

CHAIRPERSON

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Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

12 January 2022

Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.E.Freeguard

Councillors: N.T.Hunt, D.Keogh, C.James, S.A.Knoyle, S.Miller, R.Mizen, S.Paddison, S.H.Reynolds, R.L.Taylor, A.N.Woolcock and W.F.Griffiths

Officers In Attendance K.Jones, A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, C.Griffiths, M.Roberts, C.Owen, C.Furlow-Harris, S.Davies, N.Blackmore, J.Woodman-Ralph and C.Davies

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors D.Jones, L.Jones, A.R.Lockyer, P.A.Rees and P.D.Richards

1. **Welcome and Roll Call**

Cllr S. Rahaman welcomed all to the meeting and a roll call was completed.

2. **Chairs Announcements**

No announcements were made.

3. **Declarations of Interests**

The following Members made a declaration of interest at the start of the meeting.

Councillor S. Freeguard	Re: Agenda Item 10, Third Sector Grant Funding, Additional application for Funding, as she is a board member of Age Connect. Cllr Freeguard felt her interest was
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prejudicial and left the meeting for that item only.

Councillor D. Jones

Re: Agenda Item 10, Third Sector Grant Funding, Additional application for Funding, as she is a board member of Age Connect. Cllr Jones felt her interest was prejudicial and left the meeting for that item only.

4. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

The Committee scrutinised the following Cabinet Board items:

Neath Port Talbot Cyber Security Strategy

Members were provided with an overview of the Neath Port Talbot Council's Cyber Security Strategy, as detailed within the circulated report.

Discussions took place around the security of emails and the prevention of malicious emails. It was noted that there are protocols in place within IT services to help protect services from any malicious emails.

Following Scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board

Audit Wales - Audit of Neath Port Talbot Council's assessment of 2020-21 performance

Members commended officers on the feedback from Audit Wales in relation to Neath Port Talbot Council Meeting their Legal obligations.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

Third Sector Grant Funding – Additional application for funding

Members received information in relation to an application that was received for a third sector grant funding after the official closing date.

Members queried the reasoning of the late application and asked for reassurance that a precedence wouldn't be set for future late

applications. Officers, confirmed that it was an administrative issue and that it wouldn't set any precedence issues going forward.

Following Scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board

5. **Forward Work Programme 2021/22**

The Forward Work Programme was noted.

CHAIRPERSON

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Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

9 February 2022

Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.E.Freeguard

Councillors: N.T.Hunt, C.James, S.A.Knoyle, R.Mizen, S.Paddison, L.M.Purcell, S.H.Reynolds, R.L.Taylor, A.N.Woolcock and W.F.Griffiths

Officers In Attendance K.Jones, A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, N.Pearce, C.Griffiths, H.Jones, L.Beynon, J.Woodman-Ralph and C.Plowman

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors M.Harvey, D.Jones, L.Jones, E.V.Latham, A.R.Lockyer, P.A.Rees and P.D.Richards

1. Pre-decision Scrutiny

The Committee scrutinised the following Cabinet item:

Housing (Wales) Act 2014 – Consideration of the Neath Port Talbot Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

Members were provided with a report seeking to agree the findings of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) (2022) and authorise the submission of the GTAA Report to the Welsh Ministers for approval.

It was explained that part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 placed a duty on Local Authorities to undertake a new GTAA every five years; where the assessment identified a need for mobile home pitches, the Council would need to make provision to address the identified need.

Officers highlighted that the study was undertaken in-house, using Welsh Government guidance; colleagues from various services were involved in producing the GTAA, including Social Services, Housing, Planning Policy, Estates, Vulnerable Learner Services and Local

Area Coordinators. It was noted that the study identified that there was no need for pitches in the next five years (2021 to 2026), however there was a need for 10 pitches in the longer term (2027 to 2036).

The Committee was informed that if the circulated report was approved by Cabinet, Officers will submit the assessment to Welsh Government for review; once Welsh Government had approved the report, the Council will need to meet any needs that were identified.

It was asked why there was currently no provision for the Gypsy and Traveller communities in the valley areas. Officers confirmed that Neath Port Talbot currently had three public sites, which were all situated along the coastal corridor of the County Borough; there was also one private site in Margam. When undertaking the survey, the need for public sites was recognised, and additional pitches would be looked into if it was identified as a requirement; Officers would need to wait for Welsh Government to approve the study, before progressing with this work. Members were informed that potential sites and pitches would form part of the candidate site process for the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP); in regards to where they would be situated, it was mentioned that Officers would need to look into this in more detail. It was added that the Gypsy and Traveller communities often prefer to live together, which had been identified from the household formation of existing sites; Officers would also explore the detail of their findings from the interviews that had been undertaken.

A discussion took place in regards to transiting; if there was no need identified for a transit site, it was queried where these communities would go. It was stated that although no need for transit sites had been identified currently, Future Wales: the national plan 2040, stated that Gypsy and Traveller accommodation should be assessed at the regional level; this will now be a requirement as part of the Corporate Joint Committee. Officers mentioned that the Corporate Joint Committee, will have a Sub-Committee who will appoint a Team to produce a Strategic Development Plan around this; it was important to look at a wider geographical area than the Local Authority when trying to identify new transit sites, as this will provide a better understanding of where the most sustainable location would be for these sites.

Members highlighted an error on page 43 of the circulated report; in paragraph 4.3.3 it refers to Gypsy and Traveller as an ethic group rather than an ethnic group.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by Cabinet.

CHAIRPERSON

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Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

28 February 2022

Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Councillors: N.T.Hunt, S.K.Hunt, D.Keogh, C.James, S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, S.Paddison, S.H.Reynolds, R.L.Taylor and A.N.Woolcock

Officers In Attendance K.Jones, A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, N.Pearce, C.Griffiths, H.Jones, C.Furlow-Harris, N.Blackmore, J.Woodman-Ralph and C.Davies

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors C.Clement-Williams, M.Harvey, D.Jones, L.Jones, E.V.Latham, A.R.Lockyer, P.A.Rees and P.D.Richards

1. **Declarations of Interests**

The following Member made a declaration of interest at the start of the meeting.

Councillor M.Harvey	Re: Agenda Items 5,6,7 and 9 within the Cabinet papers as he works for South Wales Police but felt his interest was not prejudicial.
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2. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

The Committee scrutinised the following urgent Cabinet item:

Revenue Budget 2022/23

Members Considered the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council's 2022/23 revenue budget including investments in services, investments from reserves and proposed council tax levels, as detailed within the circulated report.

Discussions took place around the proposal to freeze Neath Port Talbot Council Tax for 2022/23. It was highlighted that Neath Port Talbot have the third highest council tax in Wales. Within the Consultation it was noted that there was a high percentage of responses in favour of the freeze. However, it was queried that there was not an option within the consultation to reduce Council Tax and members felt that this may also have had a good response. Members highlighted that further in the report pack there was an urgent item in relation to setting up a hardship fund utilising monies from the underspend. Members queried whether that money could be utilised to cover the additional money to propose a reduction in council tax. The Section 151 officer explained that he is duty bound to provide a prudent, affordable and sustainable proposals for the Cabinet and Council to consider and within his professional role he felt that a freeze was the most affordable and sustainable option for members to consider. Members asked Cabinet to reconsider the level of council tax going to Cabinet and Council and to provide an alternative proposal showing a cut in Council Tax.

Members queried that if 3.1 million were to be moved out of general reserves would there be 17 million remaining. Officers confirmed that there would be 17 Million remaining in general reserves.

It was also highlighted that the charge for pest control had decreased to a charge of £40.

Members discussed the potential for any unexpected issues arising in future, following the result of the pandemic. Therefore, felt that it was important to ensure that we can provide the public with an affordable council tax rate along with ensuring the council has sustainable reserves.

Members asked cabinet to consider prior to the decision on Council Tax being taken at Council tomorrow, would they consider reducing Council Tax rather than a freeze currently included in the recommendations at today's meeting. As a result some members abstained from the vote that followed.

Following scrutiny, the recommendations detailed within the report were supported to Cabinet.

Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2024/25

Members received the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme for 2022/23 to 2024/25. The Capital Strategy sets out the Capital Programme planning process, governance and financial sustainability considerations, as detailed within the circulated report.

Discussions took place around the costings of the work completed on Margam Castle's stone work. It was noted that the work was approved as part of last year's capital programme.

Members also discussed prudential borrowing. It was noted that interest rates are low currently. It was noted that the Section 151 officer would provide further details on prudential borrowing outside the meeting.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by Cabinet.

Monthly Budget Monitoring Report 2021/22 – As at end of December 2021

Members received an update on the Council's projected budget position based on information available as at 31st December 2021.

Members were advised that the urgent Item that is due to be discussed at today's meeting was connected to this report.

Members queried whether the 2.3 million pound underspend could be utilised to reduce council tax. The section 151 officer explained that the underspend would be considered by Cabinet.

It was highlighted that if Cabinet opted to agree with the Hardship Fund, then the council had utilised the underspend to support people in difficult times.

Members queried the underspend in Additional Learning needs. It was noted that funding as received and therefore weren't required to use core funding resulting in an underspend. The money has been put in to reserves to support the following year as funding isn't guaranteed to be received for the following year

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by Cabinet.

Capital Budget Monitoring 2021/22

Members were provided with information in relation to the delivery of the 2021/22 Capital Programme.

Members queried the grant received to support coal tip safety. It was asked whether this grant was adequate. Officers highlighted that they were pleased to receive a grant and it was providing support for the high risk coal tips. It was noted that the amount of money to support all coal tips would be a huge cost and would be very unlikely to be received from the government.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by Cabinet.

Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy

Officers highlighted the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2022/23, as detailed within the circulated report.

Reassurance was sought in relation to treasury management and the link to the current national situation in Europe. It was noted that all our investments are with UK banks or UK authorities and officers reassured members that there weren't any risks from the emerging situations.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by Cabinet.

3. Urgent Items

Because of the need to deal with the matter contained in Minute No. 12 below, the Chairperson agreed this could be raised at today's meeting as an urgent item pursuant to Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Reason:

Due to time element.

4. Pre-decision scrutiny

The Committee scrutinised the following urgent Cabinet item:

Proposal to Create a Targeted Hardship Relief Scheme

Members were informed of the request for further advice as to how the remaining underspend for 2021/22 can be utilised to develop a range of measures to support those who are hardest hit by the cost of living crisis, as detailed in the circulated report.

It was noted that following publication of the latest revenue budget monitoring report which contains details of a further £2.3m underspend (after reserve transfers) the Cabinet had requested further advice in relation to how this underspend can be used to support those residents of the County Borough who are currently hardest hit by the cost of living crisis.

Members commended the report and the reasoning for having a hardship fund. It was queried what type of criteria would be set. It was noted that it was just to set the money aside for the scheme to be developed and the criteria would be set at a future meeting. Members were concerned about supporting the report without the criteria however, understood the principal of the hardship fund and potential criteria.

Discussions took place around the lateness of the report. The Cabinet Member for finance explained that the report was late due to the late notification of the amount of underspend following a recent meeting.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by Cabinet.

CHAIRPERSON

Mae'r dudalen hon yn fwriadol wag