

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

**(Multi-Location Meeting - Council Chamber, Port Talbot and
Microsoft Teams)**

Members Present:

19 October 2022

Vice Chairperson: Councillor C.James

Councillors: T.Bowen, C.Clement-Williams, C.Galsworthy,
J.Henton, R.G.Jones, C.Lewis, S.Paddison,
C.Phillips, S.Pursesey and A.J.Richards

Officers In Attendance K.Jones, A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, N.Pearce,
H.Jones, S.Rees, M.Shaw, R.Headon,
Ms.L.Willis, J.Woodman-Ralph and C.John

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors W.F.Griffiths, S.Harris, S.K.Hunt,
J.Hurley, N.Jenkins, S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn,
D.M.Peters and J.Hale

1. **Chairs Announcements**

There were none.

2. **Declarations of Interests**

There were none.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 28 July 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

4. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

Capital Budget Monitoring Report 2022/23 – As at end of September 2022

Members received information in relation to the delivery of the 2022/23 Capital Programme.

Members queried the budget lines with in the appendix 1 of the circulated report that are currently 0 expenditure. Members wanted reassurance around the spending of those monies. Members were particularly interested in having further information around the budget line in relation to the 'Regeneration: Valleys Task Force'. Officers informed members that they would gather information outside the meeting and speak with the relevant officers to provide a response to members.

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

Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 2022/2023 - As at end of September 2022

Members were provided with information in relation to the Council's projected revenue budget position.

The pay award for 2022/23 was discussed and members queried the impact the pay award may have on Schools. It was asked whether Schools would be able to cover the 1% due to the anticipated pay award being 5% and the Welsh government settlement only allowing for 4%. Officers clarified that the Council would allocate 4% to the pay award as this is what has been provided from Welsh Government. Officers highlighted that due to the pay award and the additional costings the schools maybe required to utilise reserves to fund surplus of 2 million. Officers were not aware of any schools that may result in a deficit due to this pay award, however Officers confirmed that they would gather an analysis and share with Members.

Members shared their concerns around a potential 2 million deficit and the use of their reserves. It was noted that the 1% additional cost in relation to some schools budget will certainly adversely affect those that have a larger budget as opposed to smaller schools. It was asked that information be provided on the impact that the 1% additional cost in relation to the pay award will affect primary and

secondary schools (in number) that are on recovery plans based on deficits going forward. It was also asked that this information be circulated to the committee and passed to the Chair of Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to consider.

Members queried the costings for the Free School Meal roll out for all reception children in Primary Schools. It was noted that the cost of food and energy costs have increased and asked whether there would be an impact on the budget along with Welsh Government reviewing the rate per meal to ensure funding is significant. Officers confirmed that they would gather figures and further information outside the meeting.

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

Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2027/2028

Members were update on the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2023/24 to 2027/28, based on current modelling assumptions in advance of formulating the detailed budget strategy proposals for 2023/24 during the autumn and winter, as detailed within the circulated report.

The Chief Executive informed members of the upcoming challenges and the uncertainty around the potential settlement when setting the budget.

Discussions took place around the transitioning of buildings for renewable energy. Members welcomed this approach due to the current circumstances around energy prices. The Chief Executive highlighted that there is clear direction in making efficient economic measures such as such as switching off lights in unused rooms within civic buildings. It was also noted that discussions are taking place around how many buildings would need to be retained within the portfolio. It was highlighted that there is roughly a 20% occupancy within the buildings currently and officers considering options in repurposing the buildings to ensure appropriate savings are being made.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Review

Members were informed of the proposed arrangements to review the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy.

Members highlighted the benefits of the previous Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Task and Finish group. Members welcomed the approach on re-establishing this Task and Finish Group to further support the Welsh Government in reaching targets to promote the Welsh language and the strategy.

It was asked how the group would be populated. It was noted that if Cabinet were minded to approve the recommendation the Head of Democratic Services would be delegated authority to arrange and facilitate the establishment of the Task and finish group.

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

5. **Forward Work Programme 2022/23**

That the Forward Work Programme be noted.

6. **Urgent Items**

There were none.

CHAIRPERSON