

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

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

Members Present:

13 December 2023

Chairperson: Councillor P.Rogers

Vice Chairperson: Councillor C.Jordan

Councillors: T.Bowen, C.Clement-Williams, C.Galsworthy,
J.Henton, J.Jones, S.Paddison, S.Pursey and
S.H.Reynolds

**Officers In
Attendance** K.Jones, A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, N.Pearce,
C.Griffiths, H.Jones, N.Daniel, B.Griffiths,
N.Blackmore, S.Davies, T.Davies, C.Frey-
Davies, C.Furlow-Harris, D.Griffiths,
Chele.Howard, C.Saunders, H.Short, A.Thomas
and K.Warren

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors W.F.Griffiths, J.Hale, S.Harris,
S.K.Hunt, J.Hurley, N.Jenkins, S.Jones,
S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn and C.Phillips

1. **Chairs Announcements**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Declarations of Interests**

Cllr T Bowen Item 4 (Cabinet Board Agenda Item 7)
Personal – Family member works at The Gnoll

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

Quarter 2 - Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24

Members considered the report as circulated within the agenda pack.

Officers advised that there was a projected overspend of £3.4m as at the end of September. The Council have continued to try and drive that down so that overspend is minimised and reserve balances are protected as far as possible.

Officers have considered every specific reserve and have determined if they are still required and if they can be repurposed. Through this exercise the Council have managed to repurpose £7.899 million of specific reserves. The intention is to prime three longer transformation initiatives using those reserves.

Member queried on page 27 in relation to Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning, based on costs to date the overspend of £132k. Members queried what additional funding is being referred to in the report in relation to covering this overspend. Officers confirmed that when budgets were set a 4% pay allowance was set and an additional 2% pay award that allowances that fall over 4%. These budgets will be used to allocate the costs back to service directorates and schools to ensure that pay awards are fully funded.

Members queried who was commissioned to review the Home to School Transport and what was the cost of this. Officers confirmed that Edge Public Consulting were commissioned, and it cost £900,000 over three years. Officers confirmed that a report outlining the detail of this work has been brought to Cabinet previously.

In relation to Social Services strategies coming forward, the Director confirmed that more detail would be presented to Cabinet in the New Year.

With regards to Income Generation, page 33, officers confirmed that £1.5m revenue reserves has been repurposed to fund longer term investment proposals. There is a need to repurpose revenue reserves to deliver longer term transformation proposals while still maintaining, within capital programme, an annual income generation budget to support it.

The red item indicated on Page 42 which refers to the saving in Gnoll Country Park is unable to be delivered due to the proposed work which is being carried out through the levelling up fund. Therefore, the saving is unable to be delivered during this financial year.

Officers confirmed that with regards to events at The Gnoll, this will go through an appropriate procurement process to ensure that the Council has best value for money on these events. It is hoped that the work that is being carried out will encourage visitors to the Gnoll.

Members raised general concerns about the level of scrutiny that can be given to items when the papers for agendas are very lengthy. Whilst members acknowledged that papers were published within the legal timeframe, members were concerned by the number of items on an agenda. The Chief Executive reminded members of the ongoing scrutiny review. It was suggested that, until this review is concluded, more meetings are set up to ensure that all business will still be conducted but with shorter agendas.

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to Cabinet.

Treasury Management Mid Year Review - 2023/24

Members considered the report as circulated within the agenda pack.

Members noted there were a number of acronyms throughout the report. Members asked if officers could explain the acronyms in subsequent reports. Further, if training could be provided around financial items.

Officers advised that the training element could be considered at the member development programme which falls under the remit of the Democratic Services Committee.

Officers further advised that there is a statutory requirement for members to be adequately trained in treasury management. Officers will arrange this training in due course. Further, general training will also be arranged as required.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring

Members considered the report as circulated within the agenda pack.

Members noted the decline in Welsh speakers and a decline in the number of employees who report as learners and an increase in the number of employees who don't want to say. Members queried the underlying cause of this. Members also queried the decline in starters and increase in long term leavers and if this was related to the first point.

Officers advised that Council have approved the Welsh Promotional Strategy which identifies an action plan to increase the use of Welsh language within the authority.

With regards to leavers, the data is the comparison of the same six month period the previous year, and it only shows an increase in 36 leavers.

Members queried if there has been an increase in minor data breaches? Officers confirmed that the authority records anything that is an actual data breach or anything that could result in a data breach. Detailed training is provided in relation to data protection and it is an ongoing programme for employees.

The breaches recorded are low level breaches. It was confirmed that the Breach Panel, which considers serious breaches, has only met once during the past year.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

5. **Forward Work Programme 2023/24**

The Forward Work Programme was noted.

6. **Urgent Items**

There were none.

7. **Access to Meetings**

Resolved: to exclude the public for the following item(s) pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the relevant exempt paragraphs of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

8. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s**

Commissioning of a Regional Parent Peer Advocacy and Support Service (Exempt under Paragraph 14)

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to Cabinet.

Local Bus Tendering - De Minimis Subsidy Award (Exempt under Paragraph 14)

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to Cabinet.

Pontardawe Arts Centre (Exempt under Paragraph 14)

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to Cabinet.

Funding to Enhance the Homelessness and Strategic Housing Function (Exempt under Paragraph 14)

Following scrutiny, the amended recommendation provided by officers at the meeting, was supported to Cabinet.

Adult Services Strategic Investment (Exempt under Paragraph 14)

Following scrutiny, the amended recommendation provided by officers at the meeting, was supported to Cabinet.

CHAIRPERSON