

South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

(Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

16 January 2024

Chairperson: Councillor R.Sparks

Vice Chairperson: Councillor T.Bowen

Councillors: R.Davies, S.Purseley, D.Howlett, M.John, M.Tierney, E.Schiavone and P.Black

Officers In Attendance S.Aldred-Jones, K.Tillman and A.Thomas

1. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November 2023, were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. **Quarterly Budget Monitoring**

Members considered the report as circulated within the agenda pack.

The officer went through the report. The officer highlighted points in relation to the Joint Committee and the various sub-committees. Officers advised that the projected underspend for 2024-2025 is just over £295,000. The total underspend overall is 385,000. This

provides a surplus of over £680,000 which can be used to offset the budget for future years, to reduce the levy.

Officers advised that there had been little financial activity during quarter 2.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

5. **Draft Budget 2024/2025**

Members considered the report as circulated within the agenda pack.

The officer outlined the three funding options that are being considered by Joint Committee. Due to the financial challenges being faced by the constituent authorities, it is recommended that the continuity budget minus 10% be endorsed by the Joint Committee.

Members expressed their concern at the level of current reserves and suggested that it would be more beneficial for local authorities to utilise the reserves to offset the budget given the current financial hardships that all authorities are facing. Officers acknowledged that the CJC is still currently in its infancy and by retaining a good level of reserves this will allow the CJC to progress its work next year.

The officer advised members that it is prudent to have a minimum reserve of £200,000.

Members questioned the value for money if the 'do minimum' option is agreed. It is acknowledged that in order for the CJC to achieve its agreed objectives, a budget of £2m is required. However, this is the second budget that is proposed to be set at the 'do minimum' level. Members were concerned that, with the financial position of the local authorities unlikely to improve in the near future, and if the CJC keeps setting do minimum budgets, then very little will be achieved other than the statutory minimum. Members queried what the proposed funding looked like for future years.

Members suggested that the CJC should have been given further reduction options, perhaps 15% for members to consider.

Option 1 in the report outlined the optimal budget position and what could be achieved through this. Whilst members understood the financial difficulties facing local authorities at this current time,

members were keen to understand the pathway that the CJC has in place to be able to progress the objectives of the CJC in future years.

Members agreed that the Chair of the scrutiny should write a letter to the Chair of the CJC expressing the views of the scrutiny committee in relation to the draft budget. This should include increasing the reduction option suggested,

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

6. **Forward Work Programme 2023-2024**

The Forward Work Programme was noted.

7. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

CHAIRPERSON