

**Community, Finance and Strategic Leadership Scrutiny Committee
(Multi-Location Meeting - Council Chamber, Port Talbot & Microsoft
Teams)**

Members Present:

28 November 2024

Chairperson: Councillor P.Rogers

Vice Chairperson: Councillor C.Jordan

Councillors: J.Henton, J.Jones, S.Pursey, S.H.Reynolds,
A.J.Richards and S.Thomas

**Officers In
Attendance** T.Davies, C.Griffiths, S.Rees, N.Daniel,
H.Jones, A.James, L.McAndrew, C.Owen and
A.Thomas

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors S.K.Hunt and S.A.Knoyle

1. **Chair's Announcements**

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr S Reynolds – Item 4(d) – Personal

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meetings held on 5th September 2024 and 17th October 2024 were approved as true and accurate records.

4. **To consider items from the Cabinet Forward Work Programme**

The committee considered items selected from the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

(a) **Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2023-2024**

Members considered the report as circulated within the agenda pack.

The report is the final report on the 2020-2024 plan which sets out the how the authority is meeting the public sector equality duty. The covering report sets out a key number of deliverables achieved in 2023-2024.

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to Cabinet.

(b) **Strategic Risk Register**

Members considered the report as circulated within the agenda pack.

The Director of Strategy and Corporate Services outlined the changes that have been made to the strategic risk register. It is the intention to present an updated risk register on a six-monthly basis as opposed to annual consideration. There is now both an inherent risk score and a residual risk score. The matrix used for risk sets a maximum risk of 25 and the smallest risk rating of 2.

During the summer a risk appetite statement was put in place. This sets out how the authority position themselves on the risk contained within the strategic risk register. The statement is based upon the principles contained within the government's Orange Book of Management of Risk - Principles and Concepts. The strategic risk register will need to be aligned to the risk appetite statement.

It is noted that the target risk score is not yet completed. The rationale for this is there is an inherent risk score, which is based on the expertise of the officers responsible for those risks. Mitigating actions and controls are put in place and then the remaining risk is the residual risk. It is for the authority to determine if the residual level of risk is something that can be managed or if this needs to be reduced.

Members referred to SR06 and its reference to insufficient capital and revenue resources which could cause problems. It was suggested that this should also be listed under other items and other directorates. Officers confirmed that this item covers the Council's entire financial planning arrangements and is not directorate specific.

In relation to SR25, members queried the use of the word aspirations and if this was appropriate to use. A previous seminar indicated that there would be fines imposed if targets were not met. Members were also concerned that the targets would not be met. Officers confirmed that the Council did set a target of 2030 for climate change and decarbonisation. Officers noted the pressure on the budget and the impact that this was having on the ability to complete projects which contribute to the decarbonisation target.

It was noted that each directorate has its own risk register which sits underneath the overarching strategic risk register. Officers agreed that they would consider referencing the more specific directorate risks as part of the strategic risk register.

Members referred to SR23 and that it has been removed and is now included in SR01. It is recognised that the risk has moved from a risk that was owned by the Education Director and now sits under a risk owned by the Environment Director. The risk refers to buildings for learning and the impacts on that. Members queried if this risk had transferred ownership to fall under environment and not education. Officers confirmed that whilst the Headteachers of the school hold the autonomy over schools, all infrastructure works undertaken are carried out by the team within the environment department and environment carries the overall strategic risk. Therefore, it made sense to merge the risk. Officers confirmed that the budget still sits within the education budget, and the officers work with the property maintenance team to ensure that appropriate and prioritised works are carried out.

Following scrutiny, members noted the report.

(c) **Corporate Plan Annual Report 2023-2024**

Members considered the report as outlined within the agenda pack.

Members expressed their concern that some of the items indicated that they had increased or were colour coded green, yet there was no identified new measure outlined to measure progress against.

Officers advised that the information had been collated from information from the individual directorates and that they would go back and confirm. With regards to items identified green but where no

new measure was indicated, officers confirmed that this indicated progress only. However, they took members point on board with regards to this and would consider it for future reports.

Following scrutiny, members noted the report.

(d) **Third Sector Grants and Commissioning Arrangements**

Members considered the report as outlined within the agenda pack.

Members queried if the amount available, was the same as previous years or had decreased? Officers confirmed that the amount available was the same as the previous year. The authority is committed to increasing funding by the proposed increase in revenue grant for the following year. There was a 0% increase forecast in RSG, therefore there was the same amount of funding available. Last year the funding was under allocated, however officers confirmed that the full amount has been reinstated this year.

Member referred to the application forms, and the perceived change in criteria which suggests an exclusion to apply for 'core funding.' Members advised that discussion in the voluntary sector liaison committee indicated that the grant was looking to fund core activities that were unable to be funded from other areas.

There are currently six organisations that are currently committed to core funding, to the sum of £350,000 for next year as part of the three-year agreement. Officers confirmed that there is a proposal in the grant arrangements to cap at £25,000 to enable the funding to be distributed to more organisations. The criteria have been tidied up to ensure that projects are supported which support identified priority areas.

Members asked that the comments of the committee be noted in regards to this and ensuring that the funding is also available for core costs as well as project costs and that this is conveyed to Cabinet before any decision is taken.

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to Cabinet.

5. **To consider items from the Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme**

There were no items considered.

6. **Performance Monitoring**

Members considered performance monitoring items.

(a) **Strategy & Corporate Services - Delivery Plan & Half Yearly Monitoring**

Members considered the report as circulated within the agenda pack.

The Director outlined the importance of the three service areas in underpinning the Corporate Plan. It is important that the delivery plans are in place and for members to understand and see how teams are progressing in terms of delivering against those plans.

Members welcomed the details of the priorities and the narrative around these outlining the progress made against these and set out within the report. In terms of the presentation of the report, where specific performance measures are identified, they are presented as on track, however the target is not indicated within the report. Some of the narrative identifies the targets, and this makes it easier to see where something is on track. Some of the items are being presented as data, without a target, yet are being reported as on track. Members expressed their confusion at items being ragged green when it was just presenting data for monitoring purposes.

Officers noted the comments and took on board that there is work to be done in terms of presenting quantifiable and qualitative data in the monitoring reports.

Following scrutiny, members noted the report.

(b) **Corporate Plan 2024/2027 - Half Yearly Update 2024/2025**

Members considered the report as circulated within the agenda pack.

Members noted the same presentations points as expressed in the previous item.

Following scrutiny, members noted the report.

7. **Selection of items for future scrutiny**

There were no updates to the forward work programme.

The Forward Work Programme was noted.

8. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

CHAIRPERSON