

## **Minutes of the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee**

12 September 2024

Multi-Location Meeting - Council Chamber, Port Talbot & Microsoft Teams

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<b>Chairperson:</b>	<b>Councillor R.Phillips</b>
<b>Vice Chairperson:</b>	<b>Councillor D.Thomas</b>
<b>Councillors:</b>	N.Goldup-John, J.Henton, D.Keogh, C.Lewis, S.Rahaman, P.A.Rees, S.H.Reynolds, P.Rogers and B.Woolford
<b>Co-opted Voting Members:</b>	A. Amor and L.Newman
<b>Officers In Attendance</b>	A.Thomas, H.Lervy, A.Thomas, I.Guy, R.Crowhurst, C.Saunders, C.Morris, C.Davies, H.Jones, G.Powell, Z.Ashton, L.Clement-Jones, R. Miller, K.Windsor-Brown, J.Jones, S.Griffiths and P.Chivers
<b>Cabinet Invitees:</b>	Councillors J.Hurley, N.Jenkins and C.Phillips

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### **1. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Adam Amor, Item 4(c) – Personal, Family members are pupils at YGG Rhos Afan and Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur

Cllr. Alun Llewelyn Item, 4(d) – Personal, Governor at YGG Cwmllynfell

Cllr. Peter Rees, Item 4(f) – Personal, Chair of Governors at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2024 were approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

4. **TO CONSIDER ITEMS FROM THE CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

Members considered items from the Cabinet Forward Work Programme

(a) **Celtic Leisure**

The Director of Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning provided members with an overview of the report contained within the agenda pack.

Members asked for clarification regarding the statement made, that Trade Unions were of the opinion that insourcing was unaffordable.

The Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning confirmed that the statement was correct. The Trade Unions have indicated they would like to see the staff enhancements in option C but understand that insourcing is unaffordable.

Members asked for clarification that the decision to ask Celtic Leisure for an extension to the contract was made by Cabinet Members.

The Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning confirmed that the decision was made by Cabinet.

Members referred to page 18 of the report and the reference made to details of the working groups, members enquired if meeting minutes were available. Members enquired whether there has been any progress made in driving down costs and increasing income as previously discussed and agreed when the decision was made in 2022.

The Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture confirmed that notes were taken at the working group meetings. The working group have examined the insourcing costs by each individual budget line, during the review process some costs were changed. There is confidence that the figures are as accurate as possible.

Members referred to the penultimate paragraph on page 18 of the report, and asked for confirmation that in January 2024, cabinet members and officers met the trade union to officially inform them that leisure services would not be insourced in April 2025. It was noted that Council members were not informed of any changes at that time.

The Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning confirmed that information around the delay in insourcing Celtic Leisure was provided at the end of 2023; a meeting was held with Celtic Leisure staff and Trade Unions in January 2024.

Members referenced page 19 of the report and asked whether there had been any consideration to potential savings that could be realised by the co-location of services or sharing of resources in the insourcing model.

The Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture confirmed that savings are made when they are identified. Longer term opportunities for savings will not be realised in the short term. It was noted that none of the proposed options would affect this, and the negligible savings identified will not make a material difference.

Members referred to option 2 on page 21 and asked how resilience has been improved within the Celtic Leisure senior leadership team.

The Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture confirmed that the company position had improved, particularly from a trading perspective. There have been some changes at leadership and board level and members of the board possess the relevant skill set required for the efficient running of the business. The recruitment of a new Chief Executive Officer is planned.

Members asked for further detail of how an investment fund could drive growth. It was noted that poor staff morale could impact the capacity for growth.

The Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture advised members that it was expected that the new Chief Executive Officer would bring forward a report on how the investment fund could be utilised. The investment fund would be held by the council and released when there was a satisfactory business case going forward.

The Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning advised members that any business case for investment being brought forward, would need to satisfy members, and drive income streams or reduce costs. The aim is to make the business more sustainable, reduce the burden on taxpayers and ensure job security.

Members asked the Cabinet Member, if it was the intention for Celtic Leisure to present the business case to the scrutiny committee for transparency.

The Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism, and Well-being stated that no decision has been made yet. It is expected that there will be a greater amount of performance monitoring, within proposal options 2 & 3. The Chief Executive Officer would be expected to attend scrutiny committee.

The Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture confirmed that the intention was for tighter performance monitoring between the council and Celtic Leisure going forward.

The Chair asked what the potential increase in council tax, to all residents, would be if Celtic Leisure was insourced in the current financial climate.

The Director of Finance confirmed the potential increase in Council Tax would equate to 2% for all residents.

Members wished to ask questions on the private part of the report.

Members proposed and seconded 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.

**Resolved:** to suspend access to meetings

Members made a request that the Leader be included in recommendation (b) in addition to the Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism and Wellbeing & Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning.

The Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning confirmed that the Cabinet would be made aware of the request at an appropriate time.

Following scrutiny, members supported the recommendation outlined in the draft Cabinet report.

(b) **An overview of the School Based Counselling Service (SBCS) support for schools and staff wellbeing**

The Chair thanked officers for the report and for their hard work under difficult circumstances. The Chair referred to page 55 of the report and the number of missed sessions and asked what work was being undertaken with schools to reduce this figure.

Officers confirmed that due to the confidential nature of counselling, it was sometimes difficult to alert pupils to their session. There is a need to review school systems to ensure pupils attend appointments and work is ongoing in schools where non-attendance rates have increased. It was noted that some pupils using the service are very vulnerable and this affects their ability to attend.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

(c) **Welsh in Education Strategic Plan Annual Report**

The Head of Support Services and Transformation advised members that the annual report provided an overview of progress made during the first two years of the 10-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

The Chair complimented staff on their good work and made a request for members to share promotional material on social media channels and in their communities, when available.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

(d) **Childcare Rents in Schools**

The Head of Early Years, Inclusion and Participation provided members with an overview of the report contained within the agenda pack, and stated that no negative impacts have been identified during the pilot period. Awareness is held of wider issues within the childcare sector and there is a commitment to the sustainability of the sector as a whole.

Members thanked the officers for the efforts taken to ensure Councillors are fully understanding of the situation and the work they do in the wider sector under difficult circumstances.

Following scrutiny, members supported the recommendation outlined in the draft Cabinet report.

(e) **Strategic Schools Improvement (SSIP) Proposal to reorganise Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Provision at Cwmtawe Comprehensive School**

The Head of Support Services and Transformation advised members that the report contained in the agenda pack was the first of three reports that will come to scrutiny.

Members asked if the proposal would free up space at Cwmtawe and whether that could be utilised for ALN facilities at the current time and in the future.

The Head of Early Years, Inclusion and Participation advised members that a review of planned places across the authority had been undertaken, to identify need and where facilities would be best located. There are ongoing discussions taking place with schools. The outcome of this can be reported back to committee at a later date.

Following scrutiny, members supported the recommendation outlined in the draft Cabinet report.

(f) **Strategic Schools Improvement (SSIP) Proposal to reorganise Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Provision at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School**

Following scrutiny, members supported the recommendation outlined in the draft Cabinet report.

(g) **Draft Air Quality Action Plan**

The Head of Planning and Public Protection provided members with an overview of the report contained within the agenda pack.

Members enquired if the consultation was only for the consultees listed in the report and whether there would be any public consultation. Members referred to measure 26, and the mention of the deployment of electric buses as part of the decarbonisation plan. Members enquired whether it was planned for the whole fleet of buses to be electric or whether one electric bus would address the measure.

The Head of Planning and Public Protection confirmed that there will be an element of public consultation, however, because the report is of a technical nature there is a requirement to engage with the statutory bodies listed in the report. There will be publicity around the public consultation. The long-term aim is for the whole fleet to transition to electric but there are high costs, so this aim is not achievable in the short term. It was noted that the action plan is for a 5-year period and all proposed actions and measures will be reviewed and any required updates will be dealt with appropriately.

Officers confirmed that the project was not run by Environmental Health, but it was relevant to include it in the action plan. Another project in relation to hydrogen bus trials is ongoing, environmental health have no direct involvement, but information can be obtained as part of the action plan, and this will be monitored as a proposal as part of this action plan going forward.

Following scrutiny, members supported the recommendation outlined in the draft Cabinet report.

5. **TO CONSIDER ITEMS FROM THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

There were no items selected from the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.

6. **PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

There were no Performance Monitoring reports for consideration.

7. **SELECTION OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY**

Officers advised members of new items that had been added to the Cabinet Forward Work Programme and changes to the Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme; members were given the opportunity to request further items for consideration.

A discussion was held concerning the size of the agenda pack. Members noted that the new scrutiny model provided scrutiny with the ability to participate at an earlier stage, and officers could be assured that there was no expectation for scrutiny reports to be in as much details as cabinet reports.

The Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning acknowledged the size of the reports and thanked officers for the work involved.

Members noted the Forward Work Programme.

8. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

9. **ACCESS TO MEETINGS**

This item was considered under agenda item 4A.

10. **SCRUTINY OF PRIVATE ITEMS**

This item was considered under agenda item 4A.

(a) **Celtic Leisure - Appendix B and C (Exempt under paragraph 14)**

This item was considered under agenda item 4A.



**Councillor R.Phillips  
Chairperson**