

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

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

Members Present:

19 January 2023

Chairperson: Councillor P.Rogers

Vice Chairperson: Councillor C.James

Councillors: T.Bowen, C.Clement-Williams, C.Galsworthy,
J.Henton, R.G.Jones, C.Lewis, S.Paddison,
C.Phillips, R.Phillips, S.Pursey, S.H.Reynolds,
A.J.Richards and M.Spooner

**Officers In
Attendance** K.Jones, A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, N.Pearce,
C.Griffiths, H.Jones, A.Thomas, Ms.L.Willis,
C.Furlow-Harris, A.James, C.John and
J.Woodman-Ralph

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

Observers

1. **Chairs Announcements**

The Chair welcomed the Committee.

2. **Declarations of Interests**

There were none.

3. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following item on the Cabinet agenda:

2023/24 Budget Proposals for Consultation

Members were provided with information in relation to the sought approval to consult on the draft budget proposals for 2023/24 from Cabinet. It was noted that due to the timing of the provisional local government settlement, a short consultation would take place up until the 10th February 2023. Responses following the consultation would be reviewed prior to presenting a final budget for 2023/24 at Cabinet and Council on 1st and 2nd March respectively, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members queried officers in relation to the following points as detailed within the report:

- It was queried whether the 2.8 Million Renewable Energy Transition Fund was specifically for renewable energy or whether this fund would cover other areas. Officers explained that the proposal was to put aside 2.8 million as we need to reach a net zero target over the next 7 years. It was noted that if this proposal were to be accepted then members would receive further reports in relation to any utilisation of that fund.
- It was noted that within the risk register, waste delivery was marked as a high risk due to fuel inflation costs. Members asked what mitigating measures were being utilised to support this. Officers explained that fuel had decreased following this risk being highlighted therefore there is no proposal to amend waste delivery. Members asked that this risk be amended to reflect this within the risk register.
- Members discussed the impact of the pay award. Members required assurance around the proposal of the schools Pay award. It was noted that within this year's budget it was agreed that the gap of 4% would be paid. For the proposal detailed within next year's budget it was discussed that the full 5% would be provided through School reserves.
- Officers discussed the proposal around the saving costs of Cleaning within schools. It was noted that the proposal was to cut the subsidy for school cleaning as it was felt that this was a responsibility for the schools themselves to cover.
- It was noted that an analysis was being produced to provide detail around the schools that may have difficulty balancing budgets with upcoming budget pressures resulting in them

being in a potential deficit. Members asked that the analysis be circulated once completed.

- Members highlighted their frustration around the lateness of the consultation document being circulated in a timely manner. Officers apologised for any inconvenience however, explained that the document that would be presented to the public would be the main budget report that was attached. It was also noted that they would maximise public engagement to maximise consultation responses. It was clear during the discussion that members felt the importance of ensuring that the report was clear to ensure the public had a clear understanding of the outcomes of the budget proposals. Therefore officers also ensured that they would provide explanatory notes with the budget document when it is taken to consultation.
- Members also recognised within previous budget reports directorate codes were listed against each proposals to allow members to monitor and compare budget proposals. It was requested that these codes be included within the final document. Officers confirmed that this would be included within the future document.
- Members asked when they would receive the Celtic Leisure Business Plan, as this would help them in determining the budget proposals for leisure. Officers confirmed that it would be available for them to receive.
- Members queried the £30,000 that would be required to fund Gnoll Park. Officers explained that they had secured funding which would better the Gnoll Park and allow the park to gain a profit which would therefore not require a subsidy in future.
- Discussions took place around reserves and utilising reserves. It was noted that reserves would be used in instances where there had been a pressure, however, with forward planning it would be required to consider whether this pressure would be ongoing and if so would require further consideration of funding to prevent utilising reserves to cover ongoing costs.
- Members queried the proposal to increase fees and charges by 10%. Officers explained that this wouldn't necessarily mean that all fees and charges would increase by 10% it would be a capped at 10% for those fees and charges.

- Members queried the proposals around the review of the Buildings and asked whether this saving would be included within 2023/24. Officers explained that the review is ultimately trying to be cost effective while trying to ensure that the public service wasn't affected and to ensure this was still provided effectively. Therefore, consideration was being taken around the buildings themselves and future use of those buildings as well as the generic utility savings such as, turning off lights etc.
- It was requested that members, officers and report writers ensure that they refrain from utilising acronyms to ensure the public has an understanding of the discussion and any information that is provided within the consultation process.

Following scrutiny, the Committee were supportive of the recommendations to Cabinet.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Approval of strategic 'anchor projects

Members were informed of the Neath Port Talbot strategic 'anchor' projects to be funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which was subject to approval following Cabinet, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members received a power point presentation from officers providing further detail of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the strategic Anchor Projects.

Members commended officers for the work that had been achieved by officers in relation to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Following scrutiny, the committee were supportive of the recommendations to Cabinet.

CHAIRPERSON