

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

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

Members Present:

28 June 2023

Chairperson: **Councillor P.Rogers**

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

**Councillor
Apologies:** R.Jones and S.Reynolds

**Officers In
Attendance** A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, C.Griffiths, H.Jones,
S.Brennan, S.Curran, N.Daniel, S.Davies,
T.Davies, C.Furlow-Harris, S.Griffiths,
R.Headon, A.Hinder, C.Owen, A.Thomas,
L.Willis and P.Chivers

Officer Apologies: K.Jones

Cabinet Invitees: Cllr.W Griffiths, Cllr.J. Hale, Cllr.S.Harris,
Cllr.S.Hunt, Cllr.J Hurley, Cllr.S.Jones, Cllr.
S.Knoyle, Cllr.A Llewelyn and Cllr.C.Phillips

1. Chairs Announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including Mr Noelwyn Daniel, Director of Strategic and Corporate Services who had recently commenced in post.

It was confirmed that the committee would be scrutinising items 9, 12, 13, 14, 17 and 18 from the Cabinet Board Agenda.

2. Declarations of Interests

Cllr. P Rogers - Cabinet Agenda item 18 – personal non-prejudicial

Cllr. H. C Clarke – Cabinet Agenda item 17 – personal non-prejudicial

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meetings held on 25th April 2023, 10th May 2023, 17th May 2023, 24th May 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. **Report of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Task and Finish Group**

Members commented that the Task & Finish Group had been productive and produced interesting ideas, and expressed their interest in continuing to have a member involvement in the Welsh language going forward. The strategy should be a living document and subject to regular review, monitoring and updating to strengthen awareness and use of the language across our communities and in the work of the council. It was noted that the strategy was important across the whole of the council but particularly within Social Services. Members commented that it had been difficult for the authority, partners and community organisations to progress the previous strategy due to the disruption caused by the pandemic.

The Cabinet Scrutiny Committee agreed to commend the findings of the Task & Finish Group as well as the amended Welsh Language Promotion Strategy to Cabinet.

5. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

Council Tax Premiums – Long Term Empty Homes and Second Homes

Members asked that the current financial environment is taken into account when any decisions are made.

Members added there was a financial impact and income could be generated if the policy was implemented. Following consultation, a report will be brought back to committee before the final decision is made. Any decision will not be implemented until the financial year the year after next.

Following scrutiny the recommendations were supported to Cabinet.

Quarter 4 Performance Monitoring

Members requested further information on the average call handling waiting times. Officers confirmed that a detailed report concerning Customer Services and Performance was given at a members seminar earlier this year. As Customer Services is now part of People and Organisational Development a full review is planned and this will be the first task of the newly appointed Customer Services Manager and members will be involved in the review process. There are many factors that affect call handling performance, the current performance indicator target is 40 seconds which is a short amount of time when staff are completing other tasks. Members queried whether the call timing started following the recorded Welsh/English message or when the phone call was answered? Officers confirmed that the timing commenced following the recorded message. Members re-iterated their offer to be involved in the review process.

Members questioned why the mandatory safeguarding training completion rate was not higher. Officers will obtain further information from HR and this item will be added to the next Scrutiny meeting agenda.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

Revenue Outturn and Reserves Position Statement 2022 23

In relation to the home to school transport budget, members asked if any work had been carried out during the budget setting process in relation to the overspend and whether there were other innovative ways of providing this service. Officers confirmed a range of strategic reviews on transport were ongoing; the outcome of which will be reported to members as part of the budget setting process for this year. Officers are equally concerned regarding the overspend and pressures on the home to school budget. Members thanked staff for their hard work and the issues they had recently overcome.

Members were pleased that in relation to out of county placements, that young people are being educated closer to home and also commented that it was pleasing to see additional funding for the School Based Counselling Service.

Members asked for clarification on the movement of underspend to reserve pots and the reference in the report to 'capacity to support regeneration projects' and queried what the reserve might be used for. Officers confirmed that the funding could potentially be used for employing additional staff to assist in temporary pressures. There are various projects ongoing; these projects include Freeport, Wild Fox and the Global Centre of Rail Excellence so the funding could be used to provide support for these areas. There is also the possibility that it could be used for commissioning external advice in some of these areas if the expertise is not held internally. It was noted that in May the Cabinet approved the contribution of £200k towards the cost of the Freeport development so this reserve could be utilised if required.

Following scrutiny the report was noted

Welsh Language Standards Annual Report

Members requested more information on the appeal of the authority against the decision regarding Swansea Valley Schools. Officers confirmed there was no further update at the present time and will advise members when further information is known.

Members questioned the translation service that is used by staff and asked what could be offered to members. The Director of Strategic and Corporate Services confirmed that translation services would be reviewed to identify where services could be strengthened to improve and strengthen the use of the Welsh language and translation facilities in house.

Following scrutiny the report was noted

6. Forward Work Programme 2023-2024

This item was noted.

7. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

8. **Access to Meetings**

Resolved: to exclude the public for the following items pursuant to Regulation 4 (3) and (5) of Statutory Instrument 2001 No.2290 and the relevant exempt paragraphs of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972

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

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) (Exempt under Paragraph 14)
Following scrutiny the recommendations were supported to Cabinet.

Former Neath Leisure Centre at Dyfed Road, Neath (Exempt under Paragraph 14)
Following scrutiny the recommendations were supported to Cabinet.

CHAIRPERSON

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