



ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 9TH FEBRUARY 2021 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies - Chair
Councillor A. Hussey - Vice Chair

Councillors:

M.A. Adams, A. Collis, M. Evans, A. Gair, S. Kent, Mrs A. Leonard, B. Owen, D.W.R. Preece,
J.E. Roberts, A. Whitcombe

Cabinet Members:

N. George (Cabinet Member for Waste & Public Protection), L. Phipps (Cabinet Member for
Housing and Property), J. Ridgewell (Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure), R.
Whiting (Cabinet Member for Learning & Achievement),

Together with:

M.S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director – Communities), S. Harris (Head of Financial
Services & S151 Officer), D. Roberts (Principal Group Accountant), R. Hartshorn (Head of
Public Protection, Community & Leisure Services), J. Reynolds (Sports & Leisure Facilities
Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

G. Jones (Wales Audit Office – Audit Lead)

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed and would be
available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). Members
were advised that voting on decisions would take place via Microsoft Forms.

CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chair extended his best wishes to Councillor Colin Elsbury for a speedy recovery
following his recent illness.

The Chair also expressed his deepest condolences to Councillor John Roberts on the recent
loss of his partner Menna Battle and conveyed the thoughts and sympathies of the
Committee to the family at this sad time.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Elsbury, J. Gale and J. Scriven.

It was also noted that Councillor T.J. Williams had attempted to join the meeting but was having connection difficulties and was not in attendance.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 27TH OCTOBER 2020

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2020 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 11 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee held on 27th October 2020 (minute nos. 1 – 7) be approved as a correct record.

4. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

5. ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Cath Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager) presented the report, which outlined details of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period February 2021 to May 2021.

Members noted the details of the reports scheduled for forthcoming meetings and it was moved and seconded that the report recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 11 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers be published on the Council's website.

Officers also highlighted that the Wellbeing Objective update report scheduled for 22nd June 2021 might be moved to a later date. The Scrutiny Manager confirmed that the report date would be realigned on a future version of the Forward Work Programme if required.

6. CABINET REPORTS

There had been no requests for any of the Cabinet reports to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

7. WALES AUDIT OFFICE FOLLOW UP REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SPORT & LEISURE STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Achievement introduced the report, which advised Scrutiny of the findings of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) report (dated April 2020) following a follow up review undertaken in October 2019 of the development of the Council's Sport & Active Recreation Strategy (SARS), and also provided the WAO with an opportunity to verbally present their findings to the Scrutiny Committee.

Members were reminded that in 2016 the WAO conducted a review of the Council's Sport & Leisure Strategy, which identified a number of areas that the Council needed to consider in order to develop a broader, more holistic approach to the delivery of sport and active recreation. In November 2018, Cabinet approved the Sport & Active Recreation Strategy 2019-2029, and in October 2019 the WAO conducted a follow up review that asked the question "Can the Council demonstrate that it has taken effective action to address our proposal for improvement issued in 2016?" The WAO follow up report was issued in April 2020 and concluded that overall the Council had taken effective action to develop and agree a holistic vision for its sport and leisure services, but now needed to take some further important steps to deliver on its strategic ambition.

The Scrutiny Committee were therefore asked to consider the outcome of the WAO follow up review and the approach adopted by the Authority. They were also advised that a further update on the SARS would be presented to Scrutiny Committee later in the year and that updates would also be provided as part of the Wellbeing Objective updates reported annually.

The Chair welcomed Gareth Jones from the WAO to the meeting, who was in attendance to present a number of key perspectives and findings in relation to the review.

Members were advised that the WAO undertook their follow-up review in October 2019 and the report was prepared in the early part of 2020. However, due to the changing situation around the Covid-19 pandemic, this meeting was the earliest opportunity to present the WAO findings to Scrutiny Committee.

The WAO determined that the Council had undertaken a very clear public and stakeholder engagement and consultation process around the Sports and Active Recreation Strategy, including regular reports to Scrutiny Committee about the process, changes and outcomes surrounding the Strategy. Mr Jones highlighted the three key intended outcomes of the Strategy, namely Better Health, Healthier and Prosperous Communities, and Securing a more efficient and financially sustainable future offer. He emphasised the ongoing engagement with Scrutiny Members and explained that the key focus should now be on the second part of the Strategy and what now needs to happen around the Strategy delivery plan, priorities and timescales. The WAO has recognised that implementation of the Strategy is linked to other key Council strategies, including the 21st Century Schools programme and Caerphilly Place Shaping agenda, and it is acknowledged that the SARS is an overarching document that will include robust business cases for change and will need to include effective options for appraisal.

The WAO has recognised the ambition of the Strategy and acknowledged that it is difficult to gauge what success will look like at the end of the Strategy. Performance assessments will

therefore be a key part of monitoring and will help the Council to reflect on the progress made, Members were referred to Sections 31-32 of the WAO report, which highlighted that measures in the Directorate Performance Assessments are not fully aligned with the SARS objectives and therefore work is needed to further develop this area.

In conclusion, Members were advised that a number of activities have been undertaken in relation to the SARS since the WAO review was undertaken, and that Sections 23-24 of the WAO report emphasise the importance of keeping the delivery approach under regular review and ensuring that this is carried out in a sustainably efficient, coherent and transparent way. Members were advised that since the publication of the WAO follow-up review and emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a major change to the way that people undertake sport and recreation and it is vital that the SARS delivery approach is kept under regular review in light of these changes.

Mark S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director of Communities) referred to the delay in bringing the report to Scrutiny Committee in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, and explained that as much of the information is now out of date, a further update will be brought to the Scrutiny Committee in Summer 2021, which will also outline the change of recreation habits and the effect of lockdown, and will highlight the investments made around the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy in the last 12 months.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked Officers and the WAO for the comprehensive and well-written report. Members were pleased to see the progress made in respect of the Strategy to date and welcomed the opportunity for a further update on leisure activities since the pandemic. One Member referred to the high-level aspirations in the Strategy and asked if it would be possible to focus on the strategic aspects of the SARS in the next report. Officers confirmed that the report in the summer would update Members on the work carried out to date and look to the future in respect of the Strategy.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and one vote given verbally (and in noting there were 12 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The outcome of the WAO follow up review and the approach adopted by the Authority be noted;
- (ii) It be arranged for Officers to prepare suitable update report(s) to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with its Forward Work Programme.

The Chair thanked Mr Jones for his attendance and in-depth presentation.

8. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2020/21

Steve Harris (Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer) presented the report, which informed Members of the most recent budget monitoring position for 2020/2021 for Communities Directorate Service Divisions, including Regeneration & Planning Division, Infrastructure Services Division, Public Protection Division and Community & Leisure Services Division.

The report summarised the most recent budget monitoring projections for 2020/2021 based on the latest available financial information, and the attached appendices outlined more detailed budget monitoring figures for each of these Council Fund Service Divisions. It was

noted that the report includes projections for the Regeneration & Planning Division which falls outside the remit of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee.

Members noted the present budget monitoring position as set out in Table 1 of the report, with an overall Directorate over spend of £407k, but exclusive of ring-fenced budgets this overspend is increased to £906k. The projected overspend is overall less than that reported previously, primarily due to the changing position regarding the impact of Covid-19 on services and the additional funding being received from WG in relation to Covid-19. Appendices 1a to 1d provided more detail on the budget variation projections for each Service Division and the reasons for individual department underspends and overspends were set out in the report.

It was explained that the report does not capture the ongoing costs directly attributable to Covid-19, as these are dealt with separately and are subject to grant claims that are submitted to Welsh Government on a monthly basis. The Council is also submitting claims to WG for income losses arising from the pandemic, and the income received from WG is reflected in the budget monitoring report, along with projections of the income that is likely to be received. Officers are currently working on updated projections based on information available at Month 9 of the 2020/21 financial year. Whilst there are changes across a number of budgets, the overall net projected overspend is £875k, which is slightly lower than the £906k overspend report for Month 7.

Members expressed their thanks to Mr Harris and all staff involved in the preparation of the report, and having considered the report, the Scrutiny Committee noted its contents.

The meeting closed at 6.01 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March 2021.

CHAIR