



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY 23RD JANUARY 2023 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor G. Johnston – Chair
Councillor B. Miles – Vice Chair

Councillors:

M. Adams, Mrs. E.M. Aldworth, C. Cuss, G. Enright, D. Ingram-Jones, C.P. Mann, A. McConnell, J. Taylor, A. Whitcombe, L. G. Whittle, and C. Wright.

Cabinet Members:

Councillors. N. George, and Mrs. E. Stenner.

Together with:

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), S. Richards (Head of Transformation), R. Roberts (Business Improvement Manager), R.H. Williams (Group Accountant Treasury and Capital), C. Forbes-Thomson (Scrutiny Manager), and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

Also in attendance: Councillors C. Morgan, and J. Pritchard, and B. Roberts (Audit Wales).

RECORDING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live-streamed and a recording would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here to View](#).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Councillors D. Preece, J. Reed, and C. Thomas.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 8TH NOVEMBER 2022

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 8th November 2022 be approved as a correct record and by way of a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee held on 8th November 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. MINUTES – 12TH DECEMBER 2022

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Special meeting held on 12th December 2022 be approved as a correct record and by way of a show of hands (and in noting there were 12 for, 0 against, and 1 abstention), this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Special Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee held on 12th December 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

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

6. POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Manager presented the report which outlined the reports planned for the period January 2023 to March 2023 and included all reports that were identified at the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday 8th November 2022. Members were asked to consider the Forward Work Programme, alongside the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, prior to publication on the Council's website.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme be published on the Council's website.

7. 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.

8. AUDIT WALES 'SPRINGING FORWARD – WORKFORCE' REPORT JULY 2022.

Cabinet Member Councillor N. George introduced the report to members which provided the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee with the Audit Wales report 'Springing Forward – Workforce' report, July 2022. Members were advised that Audit Wales had conducted a review to examine how Councils are strengthening their ability to transform, adapt and

maintain the delivery of services, including those delivered in partnership with key stakeholders and communities.

B. Roberts from Audit Wales referred Members to the overall findings in the Audit Wales report and noted that the content of the report had already been agreed by CCBC, with the management response included in the report at appendix 2.

A Member queried the age demographic when considering the workforce issues and risk factors and requested a breakdown of 'age groups' within the workforce, together with information on employees who may wish to exit the authority early. Members were advised that the age demographic is under constant review and were referred to the Directorate Performance Assessments that include the requested information on the 'age groups'. Members were informed that staff, over a certain age, who wish to leave the authority are advised by their managers if they are actively looking to leave the authority.

A Member sought clarification on the Council's monitoring arrangements in place to deliver workforce plans and sought clarification on the evaluation process of the mental health of staff who are working from home and expressed concern for the lack of experience gained by younger staff from more experienced staff in the workplace. Members were assured that managers monitored their staff and were advised that no staff members work 'full time' from home.

A Member requested an opinion from Audit Wales regarding the Council's inability to recruit staff to some positions within the authority. Members were advised that the situation was not unique to Caerphilly and there are issues with social care and public bodies, nationally. Members were referred to the Workforce Development Toolkit that CCBC has, in order to implement plans to fill vacancies and progress with succession plans. Members were also referred to the Workforce Capacity report by the Chief Executive, which was discussed in the September meeting. Digital Services had been experiencing difficulties recruiting staff, but with recent recruitment being more active on social media, together with the new agile working policies, more positive recruitment had taken place and Digital Services were now only 3 vacancies short of a full team. The Chair acknowledged the benefits of the new processes within the recruitment team.

Having considered the content of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be approved. By way of a roll call, this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to :

- 1) note the contents of the Audit Wales Springing Forward - Workforce report at Appendix 1
- 2) scrutinise the management response to the Springing Forward – Workforce report in Appendix 2

9. CAPITAL STRATEGY REPORT 2023/2024.

Cabinet Member Councillor Mrs. E. Stenner introduced the report submitted to Members prior to its presentation to Council on 23rd February 2023, in accordance with the Prudential Code that was introduced by the Local Government Act 2003. Members were advised that the report cross-referenced the report by the Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services on Revenue and Capital Budgets (the budget report), and the Treasury Management Annual Strategy, Capital Finance Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Report for 2023/2024.

A Member sought clarification on spending, and the measures that had been taken to ensure the capital programme was completed on schedule. Members were advised that regular budget monitoring meetings are held with Heads of Service to review expenditure against capital budgets. Members were also informed that in future, capital budget monitoring reports would cover a 3-year period, which would be more informative for members.

A Member also sought clarification on the purchase of council vehicles, and members were advised that the purchase of vehicles is capital expenditure, and the leasing of vehicles is revenue expenditure.

A Member queried whether there were any future plans for commercial activities by the Council. Members were advised that a Commercial Manager had recently been appointed and there were plans for commercial activities.

Having considered the content of the report, the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee noted the report prior to Council approval.

10. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL STRATEGY, CAPITAL FINANCE PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY FOR 2023/2024.

Cabinet Member Councillor Mrs. E. Stenner introduced the report, submitted to Members prior to its presentation to Council on 23rd February 2023.

A Member queried the large borrowing figures stated in the report, and sought clarification on this, referring to the amount of money currently in reserves. Members were advised that the Council was not currently borrowing, but that approval for borrowing in the future if needed, had been agreed by Council.

A Member sought clarification on whether Town and Community Councils could obtain loans that could be used as match funding. Members were advised that loans could be applied for from the PWLB and information would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

A Member queried whether there was any charge applicable for internal borrowing within the Council. Members were advised that the cost of internal borrowing is not assigned to particular departments for the General Fund.

A Member sought further clarification on borrowing at 5.7%, and the money available for long term investments. Members were advised that the Council was unlikely to borrow at 5.7% and is not currently borrowing. Members were also informed that the Council has currently invested £21 million in long- term investments at circa 4% return, and that our total return on investments for 2022/23 is expected to be £2.3 million. There are also no plans to pay off any loans at the present time.

Having considered the content of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be recommended to Council. By way of a roll call, (and in noting there were 12 for, 0 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

- 3.1.1 That the strategy be reviewed quarterly within the Treasury Management monitoring reports presented to Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee and any changes recommended be referred to Cabinet, in the first instance, and to

Council for a decision. The Authority will also prepare a half-yearly report on Treasury Management activities.

- 3.1.2 That the Prudential Indicators for Treasury Management be approved as per Appendix 5.
- 3.1.3 That the Prudential Indicators for Capital Financing be approved as per Appendices 6 and 7.
- 3.1.4 That Members adopt the MRP policy as set out in Appendix 8.
- 3.1.5 The continuation of the 2022/23 investment strategy and the lending to financial institutions and Corporates in accordance with the minimum credit rating criteria disclosed within this report.
- 3.1.6 That the Authority has approval to borrow £46.8m for the General Fund to support the 2023/24 capital programme and £45.0m for the HRA WHQS and Affordable Homes programme.
- 3.1.7 That the Authority continues to adopt the investment grade scale as a minimum credit rating criterion to assess the credit worthiness of suitable counterparties when placing investments.
- 3.1.8 That the Authority adopts the monetary and investment duration limits as set in Appendix 3 of the report.

The meeting closed at 6.27 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 21st February 2023, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR