



CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 5TH NOVEMBER 2024 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor G. Johnston - Chair
Councillor A. McConnell - Vice Chair

Councillors:

M. Adams, G. Enright, C. Forehead, J. Fussell, A. Gair, D. Harse, L. Jeremiah, J. Jones, S. Kent, C. Mann, M. Powell, C. Thomas, L. Whittle, W. Williams, and C. Wright

Cabinet Members:

Councillor J. Pritchard (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change), Councillor N. George (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Property and Highways), Councillor E. Stenner (Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance).

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Director for Education and Corporate Services), M. S. Williams (Director for Economy and Environment), S. Richards (Head of Transformation, Education Planning and Strategy and Place Shaping Programme Director), L. Lucas (Head of Customer and Digital Services), A. Dallimore (Regeneration Services Manager), L. Sykes (Deputy Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), C. Forbes-Thompson, (Scrutiny Manager), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) and A. Jones (Committee Services Officer).

Also in attendance: Cllr C. Gordon (Presiding Member), Mr T Buckle (Audit Wales),

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D. W. R. Preece

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 23RD SEPTEMBER 2024

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd September 2024 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal votes (and in noting there were 9 for, 0 against and 4 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present or agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd September 2024 (minute nos. 1 – 6) be approved as a correct record.

4. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE

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

5. CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report, which outlined details of the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period November until March 2025.

Members were asked to consider the FWP alongside the Cabinet work programme and suggest any changes prior to publication on the Council's website.

Members were informed that the meeting scheduled for 7th January 2025 had been cancelled but the Information Pack would be circulated to Members. The next planned meeting for the 18th February had five reports listed for that date so it was confirmed that a Special Scrutiny was being arranged for early February 2025 to accommodate the additional report and the date would be confirmed as soon as possible.

It was moved and seconded that the report recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal votes (and in noting there were 16 for, 0 against and 1 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority.

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

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. DIGITAL STRATEGY REVIEW – AUDIT WALES REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Property and Highways presented the Audit Wales Report, called the 'Digital Strategy Review – Caerphilly County Borough Council' which was issued in July 2024. Members were provided with an overview of the summary of the report. Members were advised that Audit Wales would present their report and answer any questions.

The Chair introduced Mr Buckle from Audit Wales and invited him to address the Committee.

Mr Buckle thanked the Chair and advised that the Cabinet Member had provided a summary of the report, so he focused on key points within the report. The report had been conducted for each of the 22 Local Authorities and those reports had been published on Audit Wales website along with a national summary report that was published in the Summer.

Members were informed that at the time of the review the Council did not have a strategic costed approach to digital that is informed by a wide range of evidence sources, including views from the full diversity of those affected and in the absence of this the Council was unable to demonstrate how it was monitoring the overall impact and value for money of its approach.

Members were referred to pages 7 to 9 of the report which provided the conclusions of the report. It was also noted the lessons learned from the Council from its response to the pandemic, to recognise the digital responses crucial at the time to maintaining service delivery. The Committee were directed to Appendix A, which provided detailed questions that were asked, and the audit criteria used to assess against those questions and the Councils response Form. Appendix B finally the recommendation set out on page 5 of the report.

The Chair thanked Mr Buckle and invited Members to ask questions.

A Member sought confirmation as to what was being done to monitor the Audit Reports to ensure the Council had followed up on the recommendations made. The Director reassured Members that every report was presented to Scrutiny Committee and Governance and Audit Committee. The recommendations from all Audit Wales reports are added to a rolling 6 monthly regulatory tracker monitored by Governance and Audit Committee to ensure that the Council delivered on the actions.

Members were directed to Appendix B the Councils response form which was provided at the time of the review and Members were advised that the Council had moved significantly towards delivering on the recommendation within the report.

The Member thanked the Director for his response and commented that there was no need to bring Audit Wales as these were very skilled people into these Meetings if no one acts on the recommendations in the reports. The Member also stated that they did not personally feel that Governance and Audit would hold anyone to account. The Member liked the process that was used in the past where Members were provided with a list under a traffic light system of red, amber, and green with red showing what was needed to be done, amber showing that it was being processed and green showing what was completed.

The Chair commented that over the years under Policy and Resources Committee and now Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee a number of these digital reports

had been presented to the Committees. The Council had made big strides going digital enabling Officers to do more work in their roles due to them being able to access laptops and iPad's.

The Director confirmed that Audit Wales attend Meetings to provide assurances. It was confirmed that the Council meet annually as a Cabinet body of Regulators and Corporate Management Team to assess the areas of the Councils business that all believe need some work done to them. Members were advised that like Audit Wales the Authority has very skilled and committed Officers and both Council and Audit Wales work together to ensure that the Organisation moves forward.

Members were reassured that the regulatory tracker ensures that any Auditor General for Wales requests and recommendations are taken seriously, and Officers ensure that they are delivered on. Members were referred to agenda papers sent to all Members for last week's Joint Scrutiny on self-assessment which included a section on the regulatory tracker and links were provided within the report.

Mr Buckle confirmed that Audit Wales would also monitor the implementation of recommendations and follow up and also review the organisations response form and stated that from Audit Wales perspective this demonstrated reasonable consideration to the report by the Council.

A Member commented that as a Governance and Audit Member they were pleased to confirm that Members were seeing improvements.

Following consideration of the report the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee:-

RESOLVED that: - Members of the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

1. Reviewed and noted the report presented by Audit Wales.
2. Noted that actions to address the recommendations for improvement would be monitored by Governance and Audit Committee through the 'Regulator Tracker.'

8. 2024/25 CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (PERIOD 5)

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance presented the report which informed Members of the projected Capital Expenditure for the 2024/25 financial year and advised Members of the project slippage.

The report provided details of actual and projected capital expenditure based on information available as of 31st August 2024 (period 5) of the 2024/25 financial year. Members were asked to note the contents of the report and asked to endorse the recommendations.

A Member referred to point 5.6 within the report and sought confirmation on how much is the income stream total for the year. The Director confirmed that Officers were in the process of finalising the new deal but was not able to provide figures due to commercial confidentiality and the formal signing of the documents. In addition, Members were informed that fees and charges were currently being reviewed for community clubs as well across the board in terms of sport and leisure which would also improve the position. Once the agreement has been signed Members could be updated outside of the meeting.

A Member sought clarification on 5.7 of the report referred to the ISG Liquidation and if CCBC has paid any money to them prior to them closing and if so, how much and what steps were being taken to recoup the money. In relation to tender process the Member was under the impression that there was a robust scrutiny for financial accounts undertaken to ensure companies were viable and sustainable and queried whether anything unusual happened in this instance. It was confirmed that the Council has no contractual relationship with ISG, and no money had been paid to them. Officers confirmed that the Contractor for the facility was Alliance Leisure off the All Wales Leisure Framework and that ISG were their Subcontractor prior to them going into liquidation. All site works had been done independently via Alliance Leisure using a specialist groundworks contractor. There will be a delay of four to five months to the New Health and Wellbeing Centre in Caerphilly whilst a new sub-contractor is found by Alliance Leisure.

In relation to the query on tender process Officers confirmed that the procurement for this project was done through a pre-established framework and that all the checks and balances for the contract with Alliance Leisure were completed. Officers in the Council undertook checks and balances as soon as they were made aware that there were problems in the marketplace and within the supply chain and acted very quickly to secure the Councils position. Members were assured that all checks and balances were done as part of the tender process and would continue to do them through contract management and contract monitoring throughout the duration of the contract. There was continued discussions with Alliance Leisure on this project and all due diligence was being done and would continue to be done.

Confirmation was sought on whether the 3G pitch had lasted the time that it should have. It was confirmed that the pitch at the Sporting of Excellence would be in its 11th year next year and that this was the typical life for a pitch with the level of use.

A Member sought clarification on the Underspend for Education. Officers advised that Capital expenditure in Schools can be challenging as in some instances it was limited to work being undertaken during School holidays or boiler replacements required which would be deemed as slippage on the project, works are carried out within a timely manner with approval of Schools during School holidays. It was confirmed that a breakdown would be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

Members were provided with a verbal update by the Director and advised that there would be an additional recommendation on this report when it is presented to Cabinet and referred to the development of a 3G pitch at Risca Comprehensive School and that the project was fully funded through Welsh Government Community Focus School Grant. There had been delays due to unforeseen circumstances which would go on longer than the end of the financial year. Welsh Government were unable to confirm if the £400,000 would be available for early 2025/2026. Cabinet would be asked to set aside a contingency sum of £400,000 to allow the project to be funded until the funds are received from Welsh Government.

A Member requested that a breakdown be circulated in relation to the Community and Leisure columns within the report. Officers confirmed the information would be circulated to Members.

The Chair thanked Officers and noted the update.

Following Consideration of the report It was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal votes (and in noting there were 15 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that: -

1. The Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.
2. The Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee endorsed a recommendation to Cabinet to approve an allocation of £0.450m from Capital Contingency Funding for the replacement 3G rugby pitch at the Centre for Sporting Excellence.

9. 2024/25 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (PERIOD 5)

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Property and Highways presented the report to inform Members of projected revenue expenditure for the Directorate of Corporate Services and Miscellaneous Finance for the 2024/25 financial year as at the 31st August 2024.

The report summarised the most recent budget monitoring projections for 2024/25 based on the financial information available as at the 31st August 2024.

The attached appendices outlined more detailed budget monitoring figures and provided commentary on the more significant variations against budget.

A Member sought clarification on whether there was a period 4 report that would need to be compared as well. It was confirmed that monitoring takes place every month with reports to Scrutiny and Cabinet for periods 3, 5, 7, 9 and Outturn.

The Chair confirmed there were no further questions.

Following consideration of the report the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report and the detailed budget monitoring pages that followed in respect of Corporate Services Directorate and Miscellaneous Finance.

10. 2024/25 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (PERIOD 5)

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change presented the report to inform members of the projected revenue expenditure for the Regeneration and Planning Services division for the 2024/25 financial year as at the 31st August 2024

The report summarised the most recent budget monitoring projections for 2024/25 based on the financial information available as at the 31st August 2024 and provided commentary on the more significant variations against budget.

The attached appendices outlined more detailed budget monitoring figures and the savings delivery BRAG.

The Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee were requested to note the contents of the report and the detailed budget monitoring pages that followed in respect of the Regeneration and Planning Services Division.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions.

A Member referred to the Winding House engines would continue to run by volunteers on a monthly basis and queried whether this would mean that the public would be able to

visit. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance confirmed that as a local Ward Member and volunteer herself she would be present on the last Saturday of every month and that the engines would run at 12:00PM and invited everyone to attend and confirmed that refreshments would be provided.

There were no further questions, and the Chair moved to the recommendations within the report.

Following consideration of the report the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report and the detailed budget monitoring pages that follow in respect of the Regeneration and Planning Services Division.

The meeting closed at 18:20 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 18th February 2025.

CHAIR