



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee held on
Tuesday, 20 July 2021 at 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor M Powell (Chair)

Councillor G Thomas	Councillor S Bradwick
Councillor R Yeo	Councillor S. Rees-Owen
Councillor J Williams	Councillor T Williams
Councillor A Fox	Councillor H Boggis
Councillor S Evans	Councillor J Edwards

Officers in attendance:-

Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Mr I Christopher, Strategic Manager
Ms J Nicholls, Principal Scrutiny Officer
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mrs S Handy, Members Researcher & Scrutiny Officer
Mr A. Wilkins, Director of Legal Services

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor M. Norris, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

Others in attendance:

Mr J. Fish, Voting Parent / Governor Representative

1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee for the 2021-22 Municipal Year.

2 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

3 Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors J. Cullwick, J. James and G. Caple.

4 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 13th April 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

5 Consultation Links

The Chair referenced the consultation links, which were available through the 'RCT Scrutiny' website. Members were reminded that information is provided in respect of relevant consultations for consideration by the Committee, which are circulated on a monthly basis.

6 Finance and Performance Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22

The Principal Scrutiny Officer presented the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme 2021-22 to Members in order to seek Members' comments and approval on the draft Work Programme for the 2021/22 Municipal Year.

Members were reminded that the Scrutiny Work Programmes have a reduced number of meetings for this Municipal Year to allow for the work to be timetabled with the best use of resources available. This will allow for a more flexible approach to recognise the needs of emerging priorities and provides opportunity for Scrutiny Working Groups to be taken forward and training provided where requested.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Work Programme for the 2021-22 Municipal Year.

7 Report of the Director of Finance and Digital Services

The Service Director, Finance & Improvement Services presented the Council's Quarter 4 Performance Report (to 31st March 2021) to the Committee.

It was explained to Members that the Year End Report was presented to and approved by Cabinet on the 20th July 2021 and contains revenue and capital budget performance; Treasury Management prudential indicators; Organisational Health information including staff turnover, sickness and Council strategic risks; and Corporate Plan updates (including investment updates).

The Service Director, Finance & Improvement Services provided the Committee with an overview of the key information included within the report in respect of financial data, workforce data, strategic risks and year-end Corporate Plan Priority position statements.

Members made a number of observations and put questions to the Service Director.

The Voting Parent/Governor Representative referred the Committee to page 38 of the report and queried whether year-end underspends reported within individual service areas across Children's Services would be carried forward into 2021/22 to support on-going demand pressures. The Service Director advised Members that the individual service positions reported have been incorporated within the overall financial position of the Council at year-end. The Service Director added that with regard to the period April 2021 to March 2022, the 2021/22 budget setting process has taken account of changing demand

pressures to support on-going service delivery requirements.

Discussions ensued and the Chair referred the Committee to the Council's year-end revenue budget position of £0.204 Million overspend, noting that this was only a small percentage variance against a total revenue budget of approximately £508 Million, and congratulated the Council on this position during such a difficult financial year.

A further query was raised by Councillor S. Rees-Owen in respect of expenditure incurred and funded by the Council as a result of Storm Dennis and whether there were any plans for the Council to look to reclaim such monies. The Service Director advised that funding has been provided by the Council and Welsh Government as part of supporting recovery arrangements from Storm Dennis, with the Council also reclaiming via its insurance arrangements where appropriate. The Service Director went on to indicate that where detailed monitoring arrangements identify other Storm Dennis related expenditure incurred by the Council being eligible to be reclaimed, this will be actioned. Councillor S. Rees-Owen also queried whether there were any plans in place for any particular Committee to look at the impact of Climate Change and its effect on the Council's budget. The Service Director advised the Committee that the Council has set ambitious Climate Change aspirations, this being led by the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group, and through working with Services financial considerations will be a key element of the Council's medium term financial planning arrangements.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to endorse the Council's financial and operational performance position as at 31st March 2021 (Quarter 4).

8 Draft Tourism Strategy Update

The Director – Prosperity & Development presented the report to Members in order to set out the results of the public consultation exercise carried out on the draft Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Tourism Strategy. Members were informed that the report seeks the views of the Committee on the draft RCT Tourism Strategy as amended, ahead of the Strategy being reported to Cabinet for final approval.

Members were advised that a RCT Tourism Strategy has been produced, which highlights key tourism related priorities and will be used to underpin all work and effort, ensuring a coordinated and integrated approach and that this is currently in draft format. The Director advised that the report sets out the results of the public consultation exercise carried out on the draft RCT Tourism Strategy, identifying that overall, respondents are supportive of the Strategy and its contents, and welcome the proposals. The draft RCT Tourism Strategy has been updated to incorporate some minor amendments (brought about from comments put forward during the consultation) and it is recommended in this report that the Committee endorses this Strategy document.

Discussions ensued and the Chair thanked the Director for providing such a detailed overview. The Chair raised a query in respect of motorhomes and asked what the plan is in respect of motorhomes that will be frequenting the County Borough. The Director advised that this is a relatively new issue for the department and that the key issue going forward will be to develop an action plan in respect of accommodation and emphasised that this is also a key topic nationally. The Chair then queried whether the department has conducted

research into what other areas on the continent are doing in respect of motorhomes. The Director emphasised that the team is still in the early stages of its research and the Strategic Manager confirmed that the team is currently looking at other areas of best practice in order to see how RCT can develop its offering.

Discussions continued and Councillor S. Rees-Owen queried what work will be done in our theatres to attract people back to the sector and also queried whether all the signs in our towns and villages have signposts at the boundary of each ward. In respect of signage, the Director advised Members that the team are currently looking at developing a unique signage strategy to showcase what RCT has on offer and that a workshop of officers will come together shortly to develop the strategy in more detail. In respect of RCT theatres, the Director confirmed that meetings are underway at a strategic level and that the importance of giving RCT residents the opportunities to use local attractions will be a key issue going forward. The Strategic Manager also advised that meetings have taken place with the Arts & Culture team and that both teams recognise the link between tourism and the arts and assured Members that this is an avenue that they are pursuing.

Councillor Bradwick also advised Members that the arts and theatres is an item on the forward work plan for the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee and he invited Councillor S. Rees-Owen to attend on that item. Councillor Bradwick also praised the work being done in the Dare Valley Country Park.

Councillor S. Evans queried whether it would be possible to have a comprehensive leaflet in respect of the history and culture on offer within the County Borough. The Director advised Members that the team recently secured heritage lottery fund money to do a full mapping and audit of historical sites within RCT and aligned with that is its 'living history' piece of research being undertaken where stories and legends are captured from older generations.

Discussions ensued and Councillor Boggis emphasised the importance of doing outside theatre work to encourage residents to go back into theatres when they do eventually open back up.

The Chair continued the discussion and queried whether the team could provide details of the percentage of tickets that are allocated to users who live within the Pontypridd area. He noted that people who live close to the area will not have an impact on the carbon footprint because they can walk to the Park. The Chair also echoed the comment by Councillor Boggis and noted the importance of events taking place outdoors within our communities. In respect of the Lido, the Director confirmed that the question will be sent on to the appropriate team to answer and the information will be supplied back to the Committee. In terms of performers being out on the street, the Director confirmed that this is still a challenge for the Authority whilst we are still in the pandemic but he assured Members that it is something that will be considered going forward. The Director also advised that there will be delivery plans and action plans coming out of the Tourism strategy, which could subsequently be shared with Members of the Committee in the future. The Director also confirmed that it may be possible in the future to conduct a Members survey where Elected Members are asked to provide ideas in respect of local tourism attractions or any recommendations that they may have for local food establishments etc., throughout the County Borough. The Strategic Manager also added that the team are currently working

on the updated visitor guide in RCT and that when it's ready the guide could be distributed to Members.

Discussions ensued and Councillor J. Williams noted her agreement with the Chair's comments in respect of the Lido. Councillor Fox also emphasised that the splashpad in Aberdare and other splashpads are all run by volunteers and commended the work done by local volunteer groups in the community. In respect of the Lido, Councillor Fox referenced the Visitor Book and noted that the Visitor Book demonstrates that visitors attend from all over the country.

A further point was raised by Councillor Thomas and he queried whether a manufacturing strategy will also come within the RCT Tourism strategy. The Director confirmed that the team is working collaboratively with colleagues across the Cardiff Capital Region on a site premises strategy, particularly focusing on the heads of the valleys. The Director confirmed that he would be happy to bring that piece of work forward to the Committee at a future date.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to approve the draft RCT Tourism Strategy prior to it being presented to the Cabinet.

9 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business to report.

10 Chair's Review and Close

The Chair thanked Members for attending the meeting and for contributing to such a constructive discussion. The Chair also reminded Members that the next meeting will be held on the 8th September 2021.

This meeting closed at 6.03 pm

**CLLR M. POWELL
CHAIR.**