



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2022-2027 COMMITTEE**  
Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee held on Monday,  
10 October 2022 at 5.00 pm.

**County Borough Councillors - Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee Members in attendance:-**

Councillor J Edwards (Chair)

Councillor J Brencher	Councillor S Evans
Councillor G Hughes	Councillor C Middle
Councillor S Morgans	Councillor G L Warren
Councillor K Webb	Councillor G E Williams

**Co-Opted Members in attendance:-**

Mr L Patterson, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative  
Mr M Veale, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

**Officers in attendance:-**

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services & Communications

Mr P Griffiths, Service Director Finance and Improvement Services

**10 Declarations of Interest**

None received

**11 Consultation Links**

The Principal Scrutiny Officer advised members of the consultations that were open and available for Members to provide feedback to should they wish. She also advised if Members wished to receive further information on them to contact the Scrutiny Team.

**12 Minutes**

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and 20<sup>th</sup> July were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting

**13 Council Performance Report - Quarter 1 (2022/23)**

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communication presented the report to Members which provided Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the council's financial and operational performance for Quarter 1 (to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022)

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services then highlighted key points throughout the report. He advised Members that the Q1 Revenue Budget position is projecting a £10.45m overspend, which was significantly higher than in previous years. He added that the projection took into account estimated increased for services such as Social Care Services, additional inflationary cost pressures such as home to school transport and less take up of services such as Leisure as residents continue to recover from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and into the UK cost of living crisis.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services continued that Capital investment as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022 is £13.842m, with a number of schemes being re-profiled during the quarter to reflect changes in costs and updated delivery timescales and also new external grant funding approvals received during quarter 1 being incorporated into the programme. The Service Director continued through the report and upon conclusion, welcomed Members questions and observations.

A Member referred to the loss of staff in Community Services and asked what the reported reasons for them leaving were. Another member also sought clarification on how replacing the staff would look given the budget savings required.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services advised that staff had left due to ill health and retirement, or simply had chosen to leave the organisation. He confirmed that HR procedures are in place when a member of staff leaves which includes exit interviews so lessons can be learned. He continued that the Council are continually looking at more efficient ways of working including digital transformation and working from home procedures. He acknowledged that this was more difficult in settings such as schools due to the numbers of teachers and the very nature of their work so generally the teachers are replaced. He reassured Members that the Council has excellent workforce planning arrangements in place with continuous engagement with apprentices, graduates, schools and universities with a "grow our own" approach in place. He added that where necessary, agency arrangements could also be utilised. He acknowledged however that with the budget gap the Council do have challenges ahead, but they are engaging closely with Welsh Government, WLGA and other Local Authorities. He continued that the finance teams are also working with each budget holder to identify any potential in year budget savings for each directorate together with a review of fees and charges.

A Member noted there is a steering group which reports on the recruitment and retention of staff and asked if the Committee can receive an overview from the group on their work. She asked how the Authority could better support care staff who were under a lot of pressure and in receipt of a low wage.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services agreed for an update from the Steering Group to Members. He continued that the Authority are committed to paying a fair wage to staff and this was reflected in the Real Living Wage Policy. Staff are also appropriately trained, supported and ensured they felt part of a team throughout their employment.

A Member raised concern at the loss of income generation and asked how the Authority are encouraging greater use of our facilities to therefore increase income in areas such as Leisure. The Service Director Finance and

Improvement Services advised that a renewed marketing campaign had been launched around Leisure facilities to increase uptake such as introductory offers and rehabilitation programmes to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. We are seeing memberships rising, so we should see an improved position in to Quarter 2. The economic outlook in terms of residents paying council tax, The Authority ensures we provide notice as early as possible and continue to engage with residents, particularly those that experience hardship and ensure they are aware of support services available to them. It was also hoped that the Cost of Living payments and the Local Cost of Living payments authorised by Cabinet to support families with school age children in RCT to support them through the winter period.

A Member referred to the accommodation needs in the Borough and was concerned that the homelessness figures doubled. He asked if the Committee could receive some further information in this area.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services advised that Accommodation for most vulnerable is included in the Strategic Risk Register. A Cross council and strategic approach is adopted and work is currently ongoing with external partners to look at the pressures on the service. He advised that further updates will come through as individual action plan. The Service Director Democratic Services and Communication advised that this matter would be referred to the Communities Committee

A Member asked if there was a more detailed Strategic Risk Register in place that is regularly scrutinised. The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services confirmed that there is one in place which is reported to the Governance and Audit Committee.

The Chair referred to underspend in ALN service and asked what impact this has on the service. The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services advised that the current underspend is as a result of the ALN Act 2018 which came in to being in September 2021, following this, the Education Directorate undertook a review of the resource requirements which resulted in a restructure and additional posts created. Some difficulties have been experienced in recruiting to all posts so work is currently ongoing and the positions will be recruited throughout the year.

A member referred to the sickness absence and turnover of staff and asked what impact this has on our communities, and if there is there anything else members should be aware of.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services responded that one of the knock-on effects of the Councils Revenue Budget position is the need to undertake staff cover arrangements which include overtime, casual staff and agency members of staff. He added that whilst putting these measures in place does put financial pressure on the Council, it does ensure frontline services don't see a dilution or deterioration of service.

A Member referred to earlier comments around the Council "growing our own" employees and appreciated the need to create the culture of learning but asked if we in turn run the risk of looking through the one lense and missing out on opportunities if we are only looking inwards.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services advised that this is something that the Recruitment and Retention Steering Group can provide

further information to Members on which can include internally, what benchmarking is undertaken and what learning and Development opportunities are available to colleagues.

Following conclusion of Members questions the Chairperson thanked the Service Director for his report and clarifications to Members. She added that she would like to see further updates and reports to Committee in addition to the earlier mentioned further information requested such as the work of the Recruitment and Retention Steering Group and the Homelessness and Accommodation in the Borough to the Community Scrutiny Committee

**RESOLVED:**

1. Members scrutinised the Council's financial and operational performance position as at 30th June 2022 (Quarter 1).
2. Considered matters contained in the report in line with the Terms of Reference of the Committee to be scrutinised in greater depth

**14 Council Progress Update - Audit Wales: Springing Forward Reports (Strategic Asset Management and Workforce Planning)**

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communication presented the report to Members to provide the Committee with the latest Audit Wales reports in respect of the Council's services and to provide the opportunity for Members to review the progress made to date by the Council in implementing the recommendations.

In 2021/22, Audit Wales conducted an examination of each Council's overall arrangements and approach to transforming, adapting and maintaining the delivery of services. The review focussed on how the Council is approaching this in relation to Strategic management of its assets and the Strategic management of its workforce

For Members information, there were no matters highlighted by the Governance and Audit Committee at the 7th September 2022 meeting for referral back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services continued through the detail of the report which detailed the one recommendation from Audit Wales. "The Council needs to ensure the sustainable development principle is driving and shaping its approach to all its assets. For example, the Council should develop a longer-term approach to its assets; and the Council will need to fully integrate its workforce and digital strategies with its longer-term plans for its assets. He referred Members to Appendix 1a which sets out how the Council is undertaking the actions that will address this recommendation.

A Member asked which Committee the Corporate Asset Management plan is reported to. The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services advised that it is reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee periodically as it is refreshed. As it contains confidential information, it is reported as an exempt item for pre-scrutiny.

A Member stated that the Management of the Councils assets could be reviewed, particularly in relation to hybrid working of staff and how this is being managed in relation to isolation and staff wellbeing. Another Member added to this and stressed the importance of staying connected with staff, particularly those that run the risk of being isolated when working from home and ensuring their wellbeing is prioritised

The Service Director responded that we would expect to see principles such as best use of assets in town centres running through the Corporate Asset Management Plan to support the regeneration of our town centres. With reference to the Wellbeing of staff he reassured Members that there is ongoing engagement of staff such as surveys on home and office working as well as local engagements within teams also undertaken. The shared use of buildings between service areas is undertaken with regular feedback with staff to ensure it continues to provide best use of the council's assets and staff resource.

A Member asked if the Authority will review the Community profile to ensure the equitable distribution of assets, and if child poverty levels for example will be taken into consideration when reviewing this so we can best support assets for the communities that need it most.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services advised that the Councils approach in the management of their assets will ensure that facilities are in place to best support our communities, location will be of paramount importance and reassured Members that it will be ensured they are of sufficient quality, particularly in relation to energy efficiency and Climate Change so they are managed in a sustainable way. The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications added that when making these decisions, as part of the Impact Equality Assessment, a Socio Economic Assessment is also undertaken, going forward a public Health impact assessment will also be undertaken which all requirements for key decisions are taken in Wales

In response to a question, the Service Director Finance and Improvement Services confirmed the timeline in place for the Strategic Asset Management Plan, the draft Corporate Asset Management plan will be drafted by 31 March 2023 and Members will be able to review from then

A Member referred to the disposal of assets and commented that the process for our Community partners to undertake this can be quite a timely and complex process and asked if the governance of this could be streamlined?

The Service Director Finance and Improvement confirmed that the Asset Transfer process is part of the Corporate Plan Action Priority Plan which is currently in the process of being reviewed and will continue to be reviewed as we receive feedback from our partners in the voluntary sector to ensure it is fit for purpose whilst ensuring due diligence is applied throughout the process

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. Members scrutinised the progress updates (Appendix 1a – Strategic Asset Management and Appendix 2a – Workforce Planning).
2. Considered the progress made by Council Services to date in

implementing recommendations reported by Audit Wales and determine whether further information and / or further progress updates are required.

3. Considered whether there are any matters of a governance, internal control or risk management nature that require referral to the Council's Governance and Audit Committee.

**15 URGENT ITEMS**

**This meeting closed at 6.15 pm**

**CLLR J EDWARDS  
CHAIR.**