

## **CABINET**

Minutes of a Hybrid meeting held on 16th January, 2025.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The Meeting recording is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor L. Burnett (Chair); Councillors B.E. Brooks, R.M. Birch, G. John, S.D. Perkes, S. Sivagnanam, E. Williams and M.R. Wilson.

Also Present: Councillor Dr. I.J. Johnson.

### **C232 ANNOUNCEMENT –**

The Leader commenced by advising of some housekeeping issues and advised that the meeting was being livestreamed, recorded and would be uploaded to the Vale of Glamorgan Council's website as soon as practicable after the meeting.

### **C233 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –**

No declarations of interest were received.

### **C234 INITIAL BUDGET 2025/26 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 TO 2029/30 PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION (EL/PR) (SCRUTINY – ALL) –**

The Leader presented the report to put forward the Council's budget proposals for consultation with residents, other stakeholders and the Council's Scrutiny Committees.

Local Authorities were required to set a balanced budget following a four week consultation period on the proposals which would also be considered by the Council's Scrutiny Committees with Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee tasked with reporting back to Cabinet.

The Council continued to be the second lowest funded Council per head of population in Wales and spent significantly above its notional formula needs assessment for Education and Social Services. The Council had the third lowest spend per head of all of the Welsh Counties and spend for all services with the exception of Education was benchmarked at low or very low. Council Tax was also low with the 2024/25 Council Tax at 5.63% below the Welsh Average, however with the ongoing cost-of-living crisis it was not something the Authority sought to address in the current year.

The budget was being developed alongside the new 2025-30 Corporate Plan that was key to the allocation of resources.

Councils across both Wales and England were experiencing significant financial pressures across both Children's and Adults Social Care, School finances especially Additional Learning Needs (ALN), pay awards and Home to School Transport. The new Westminster Government recognised those pressures and there was a favourable UK Budget at the end of October 2024 followed by a favourable settlement of 3.3% in December 2024, albeit below the Welsh average.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council continued to lobby for increased funding for 2025/26 including as part of a visit from the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government and at the Senedd Finance Committee, with emphasis on a funding floor.

An increasing proportion of the Council's resources year on year were taken up by Schools and Social Care, 68% in 2023/24, 70% in 2024/25 and rising to 71% in the initial proposals for 2025/26. The Leader referred to Table 3 within paragraph 1.38 of the report concerning net expenditure for 2024/25 which showed the percentage of different areas of spend within the Council, highlighting that Other Neighbourhood Services and Regeneration and Planning made up 2% and 1% of overall Council spending and were more likely to be what residents thought Council spending related to.

Council Tax was currently modelled at a 6.9% increase for 2025/26 and would be discussed at length through the Scrutiny process and would be revisited should additional funding become available to bring Council Tax down or invest in services. The Leader looked forward to discussing reshaping initiatives within different Service Areas within those Scrutiny conversations also as in contrast to previous years almost half of the gap was met from reshaping. Anyone could register to speak on the Council's draft budget proposals at Scrutiny as part of the four week period of consultation with residents and other groups.

The Leader referred to the publication of an Amended Appendix D to the report which set out the fees and charges, where the percentage increase for the fees and charges in the last column was previously represented as a decimal rather than a percentage and had been corrected. There was also a typographical error in paragraph 2.22 of the report that should state Band D rather than Band B properties, and Table 12 in paragraph 2.87 of the report contained an errant equal sign.

Councillor Wilson said the position faced by the Council was challenging and one faced by a number of Authorities in Wales. There were demographic issues to be considered, with an increase in Social Services spending for those living longer with more complex health needs. It was important to remember that many of the services provided were statutory services and came with risk if not funded. His own Portfolio of Neighbourhood and Building Services was already lean and faced challenges. The Authority remained committed to protecting vulnerable residents and he looked forward to hearing from the public during Scrutiny consideration of the proposals.

Councillor John said there was a realisation that people were struggling and hoped the percentage of Council Tax could be reduced subject to further support from Welsh Government.

Councillor Birch said while it was pleasing to see that the Vale of Glamorgan was able to spend above the average on education, there were more children presenting with more complex needs that required attention. She looked forward to the consultation with the public and Scrutiny Committees and hoped the report made it clear what the budget was being spent on and not just a focus on visible services.

The Leader said that Council did need to better communicate the full scale of both statutory and non-statutory services the Council delivered, including providing education for children, support for the elderly population or young, vulnerable people and homes for people who needed them.

This was a matter for Executive decision.

Cabinet, having considered the report, the typographical changes referred to and all the issues and implications contained therein

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the Council's updated financial position as set out in the report be noted.

(2) T H A T the revised funding and spend assumptions, along with the draft reshaping and saving proposals be approved and the report and appendices be referred to Scrutiny Committees for their consideration and debate, with all Committee views being referred for scrutiny at the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and for a composite response to be developed and referred back to Cabinet on 27th February, 2025.

(3) T H A T the reshaping and savings proposals as described in the body of the report and appendix be approved and published for consultation as described in the body of the report.

(4) T H A T the fees and charges detailed in Appendix D to the report be approved for consultation, with delegated authority for the agreement of negotiable film charges to be signed off at Chief Officer level in Place Directorate.

(5) T H A T the underlying level of financial pressures not included in the proposals, most notably fully funding pay, be noted.

(6) T H A T delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources to respond to the Welsh Government draft settlement within the consultation timescales.

(7) T H A T the use of the urgency procedure as set out at section 15.14 of the Council's constitution be agreed to refer the report as described in Resolution (2) for consideration as soon as possible and to ensure that the Council could respond to the Welsh Government draft settlement within time and in pursuance of Resolution (5).

### Reasons for decisions

- (1) It was important for Cabinet to be regularly appraised of the Council's medium term financial position.
- (2) Scrutiny was an essential part of the budget setting process and it was important that the funding and savings assumptions were validated and the savings proposals were realistic and deliverable and would not have any unintended impacts.
- (3) To ensure the savings proposals were consulted upon widely.
- (4) To ensure the fees and charges were consulted upon widely ahead of inclusion in the draft budget on 27th February for approval, fees and charges being a Cabinet function.
- (5) To ensure Cabinet was aware that work was in place to manage and mitigate those pressures but do nevertheless represent significant financial risk.
- (6) To enable the Council to provide a robust response to the consultation of the Welsh Government draft settlement.
- (7) To ensure that the Initial Budget 2025/26 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2025/26 to 2029/30 Proposals for Consultation report could be presented to Cabinet on 27th February, 2025 for consideration and approval and to ensure that the Council could respond to the Welsh Government consultation on the draft settlement.

### **C235 DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2025/26 TO 2029/30 (EL/PR) (SCRUTINY – ALL) –**

The Leader presented the report to gain approval for the Draft Capital Programme Proposals for 2025/26 to 2029/30 so that they may be submitted to Scrutiny Committees for consultation, prior to the final Capital Proposals being presented to Members in February 2024.

Welsh Government (WG) announced the provisional 2025/26 General Capital Funding (GCF) settlement in December 2024, however no further indication had been received from Welsh Government at this time and therefore assumed that from 2026/27 onwards, the level of capital funding would be flatlined at £7.606m and would then remain constant for the remainder of the period of the programme.

A summary of the programme for the five year period was contained in paragraph 2.8 of the report with a total value of capital schemes over the next five years of £399.7m.

Given the high level of risk for the Council associated with some of the schemes submitted the approach necessitated has been that only those schemes of highest corporate priority and/or risk could be pursued. Table 1 on page 2 of the report contained a summary of the five year Capital Programme by Directorate with Table

10 on page 11 of the report detailing the capital bids that were proposed to be funded.

Scrutiny Committee would be asked to review the draft proposals and make any recommendations to Cabinet by 27th February, 2025. Managers would be asked to revisit the recommended schemes contained in the draft final proposals prior to presentation to Cabinet and Council to confirm final costs and spend profiles.

The Leader said that the Capital Programme had been a success for the Council over recent years and since 2014 had either re-built or remodelled ten Primary Schools, five Secondary Schools and two Special Education Schools, with Saint Richard Gwyn and Ysgol Iolo Morgannwg both planned. Over 80% of construction spend and sub-contractor employment on those schemes had come from Wales and 50% of the workforce had come from the post code.

With regard to Homes Development, the recent Gavin and Stacey Christmas Special showcased the Barry Island regeneration, the Pumphouse regeneration, the Goodsheds regeneration the Transport hub and the disco tunnel on Hood Road, all as locations that had been delivered since 2014 whether by the Council directly or in partnership with others.

Councillor Wilson referred to Appendix 2 to the report in relation to the money allocated to fleet parking which has linked to revenue savings of an estimated £350k a year as an example of investing to save and looking to address the climate emergency through Project Zero. He was also pleased to see continued investment in Victorian schools which would over time reduce expenditure on repairs. Officers were thanked for their work to organise and deliver those schemes. The Leader agreed that the Asset Renewals Scheme for schools were not mentioned as often as they should be and the team co-ordinating those schemes had to operate within certain windows of time in school holidays.

This was a matter for Executive decision.

Cabinet, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the draft Capital Programme for 2025/26 to 2029/30 be noted and the programme submitted for consultation to all the Scrutiny Committees.

(2) T H A T the report and appendices be referred to Scrutiny Committees for their consideration and debate, and that any recommendations of Scrutiny Committees be passed to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee as the lead Scrutiny Committee in order for their views to be forwarded to Cabinet.

(3) T H A T subject to Resolutions (1) and (2), the reprofile of the Penarth Marina Landslip Slope Stabilisation Works and the Housing Improvement Programme in line

with the Housing Business Plan be approved as set out in paragraphs 2.31 and 2.39 of the report.

(4) T H A T that the £2m Education Asset Renewal budget was allocated as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

(5) T H A T the use of the urgency procedure as set out at section 15.14 of the Council's Constitution be agreed to refer the report to as described in Resolution (2) for consideration as soon as possible.

#### Reasons for decisions

(1) In order to consult Members on the Capital Programme for 2025/26 to 2029/30.

(2) In order that Cabinet be informed of the comments of Scrutiny Committees before making a proposal on the Capital Programme.

(3) To reflect the work programme for the Penarth Marina Landslip Slope Stabilisation Works and the Housing Business Plan.

(4) To allow asset renewal schemes to be carried out in 2025/26.

(5) To ensure that the Draft Capital Programme Proposals 2025/26 to 2029/30 report could be presented to Cabinet on 27th February, 2025 for consideration and approval.

### **C236 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE 2024/25 (EL/PR) (SCRUTINY – ALL) –**

The Leader presented the report to present quarter 2 performance results for the period 1st April, 2024 to 30th September, 2024 in delivering the Council's 2024/25 Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

One of the ongoing discussions remained the balance of the detail within the reporting plans as they had a regulatory function, but also needed to be accessible by the public. Any areas for improvement were featured in the summary, as well as emerging areas of development and activity and emerging areas of concern, e.g. budget pressures having an impact on particular areas of work such as Community Centres.

The Annual Delivery Plan Monitoring Report had already been to all five Scrutiny Committees who noted the performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 commitments and noted the remedial actions to be taken to address five areas of underperformance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee.

The Leader proposed a third Recommendation to thank Scrutiny Committees for their consideration of the matter as there had been in-depth discussion and though there were no direct recommendations returned, there was a full discussion of the Performance Report, which was agreed.

Councillor John said that there were decisions that needed to be taken regarding Community Centres, which the Leader agreed was a necessary conversation that would involve those running community centres.

Councillor Perkes said it was fortunate that the Council had been in a position to build social housing for local residents in need of good quality, high standard and energy efficient homes as well as retrofit older homes in order to meet the Welsh Quality Housing Standards. The Cabinet Secretary had visited properties on Hayeswood Road and the new development on the Colcot Clinic site, as well as the Phase 2 adapted properties at Holm View.

Councillor Wilson referred to pages 148-149 of Appendix B which indicated the decarbonisation work being done as part of Project Zero which showed how well the Council worked across Departments, and he thanked Officers for their work to deliver for local residents.

The Deputy Leader said that although there were ongoing challenges it was important to note that the Council was achieving, often in partnership with others such as Third Sector organisations as part of collaborative working on matter such as Active Travel and Shared Prosperity Funding that had an impact on communities. The Leader agreed that many projects were delivered in partnership with others and the Council was grateful for that constructive relationship.

This was a matter for Executive decision.

Cabinet, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T Q2 performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 commitments as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives be noted.
- (2) T H A T the views and recommendations of Scrutiny Committees in relation to Q2 performance be noted and identified remedial actions as the basis to address areas of underperformance and to tackle the key challenges identified be approved.
- (3) T H A T Scrutiny Committee Members be thanked for their full and in-depth discussions concerning the performance report.

Reasons for decisions

(1) To ensure the Council clearly demonstrated the progress being made towards achieving its commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.

(2) To ensure the Council was effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to meet the Council's performance requirements as outlined in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and reflected the requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that it maximised its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.

(3) To enable Scrutiny Committees to fully consider the report.