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## ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2025.

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

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor C. Iannucci-Williams (Vice-Chair in the Chair); Councillors C.E.A. Champion, P. Drake, V.P. Driscoll, A.M. Ernest, M.J. Hooper, J.M. Norman, and J. Protheroe.

Also present: Councillors J. Aviet, R.M. Birch (Cabinet member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language, L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), C.P. Franks, S.M. Hanks, W.A. Hennessy, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing), Dr. I.J. Johnson, H.M. Payne, C. Stallard, E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health), and M.R. Wilson (Cabinet Member for Neighborhood and Building Services).

### ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Vice-Chair (in the Chair) read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors S. Lloyd-Selby (Chair), E. Penn and S.T. Wiliam.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

### INITIAL BUDGET 2025/26 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 TO 2029/30 PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2025 was presented by the Operational Manager – Accountancy, in conjunction with the Director of Place and the Head of Service - Neighbourhood Services. The purpose of the reference and the report was

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to put forward the Council's budget proposals for consultation with the Council's Scrutiny Committees, and other stakeholders.

A presentation was provided to the Committee, which outlined the:

- Background to the Budget for 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2025/26 to 2029/30.
- The 2025/26 Welsh Government (WG) settlement.
- The current economic prospects.
- The main headlines for the Budget and MTFP proposals.
- The overall financial position of the Council.
- The review of cost pressures and savings.
- The overall allocation of resources.
- Details on Council reserves.
- The response by the Council to the WG consultation on the provisional settlement.

The Director of Place and the Head of Service - Neighbourhood Services referred to the financial and budgetary costs and pressures in their respective service areas which ranged from waste disposal, highway repairs through to costs surrounding the Replacement Local Development Plan.

The Committee was asked for their views on the overall approach, cost pressures, savings and alternative ideas and suggestions. The Committee responded as follows.

On Councillor Norman's concerns on the proposals to cut the parks budget, and whether this would result in redundancies or redeployment of staff, it was explained that work around reshaping in this area and others for Neighbourhood Services was still ongoing. In such areas the Council had retained agency staff in tandem with freezing new staff appointments following staff leaving or retiring. The aim was not for this to adversely impact permanent positions, but it was still early in the reshaping process which would take a few months.

Councillor Hooper raised several points:

- The projected savings from the proposed car parking measures remained 'baked-in' to these financial proposals, and he reiterated the impacts of these on businesses and local communities that had been discussed at the recent Special Meeting of the Committee.
- The Council faced being on the 'sharp end' of cuts due to the Welsh and U.K. Governments' policies.
- He referred to the comments made about leisure services and the commercial revenue and income opportunities there, and whether more details could be provided. Such commercial operators were already under financial pressure, which could be made worse in the light of measures such as car parking charges.
- On Community Asset Transfers that were being considered for sale, closure

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or transferred, this seemed to be a declinist approach, due to the cuts in funding from the Welsh and U.K. Governments and would see further decline to local town centres, etc.

In response, it was explained that with the projected car parking savings, these predated the Special Meeting, due to this item being a reference from Cabinet from 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2025. The proposed savings would be subject to further consultation prior to the Council's budget being finalised. On asset transfers, there had been positive examples of this as well, with some organisations involved in these receiving grant funding and investment in these assets, with them having a higher degree of access to such funding and support than what the Council would have had separately.

Councillor Protheroe also made several comments, as follows:

- She disagreed with Councillor Hooper's position on the Community Asset Transfers, and stated that these could be a positive development for local communities, with non-Council organisations making such assets thrive.
- She felt there was a need for a review and pause on the reduction of bins within the Vale of Glamorgan following the 25% removal. She cited the seasonal use and demand for bins to dispose of litter in the Vale's seaside tourist areas during the Summertime as a reason why this should be considered. These areas were subject to considerable littering in the Summer months, despite the best efforts of volunteer litter pickers, and the demand for bins in such areas should be considered further by the Council.
- Following on from the point above, she suggested that the Council undertake an educational piece of work with schoolchildren around the issues of littering prior to Summertime. This was particularly important for those seaside and tourist areas, i.e. to mitigate the amount of plastic entering the sea and waterways.

In response, it was explained that the Council would take stock following this latest phase of bin removal, to consider any issues raised and to review the situation and implications of bin removal. If there were genuine and substantive concerns that were raised then the Council would ensure that litter surveys would be undertaken and to review where bins had been removed. In terms of tourist resorts, there were no plans to remove these from the immediate area, as it was fully understood that there was a significant demand and use of these during the summer months. On the bins removed as part of the 25% target, this were due to the need to remove duplication and bins that were misused. After this review, communications and a campaign would be undertaken to advise the public about litter and to take it with them should there be no bins available.

Councillor Ernest raised his concerns about the following:

- On the declining share of the Council's budget for Neighbourhood Services, its impact on local communities and residents having to pay increasing levels of Council Tax but with less services provided by the Council. This

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contrasted with the considerable share of the budget allocated to schools and social services, with both areas seeing considerable overspends.

- On Community Asset Transfers, he referred to those examples where community groups and others had struggled with the maintenance and management of former Council community centres. These were essential hubs for the community offering a wide range of services and activities, and such facilities could suffer post-transfer with insufficient volunteers and an absence of Council management and oversight.

In response, it was explained that community groups and others which took over former council assets and community centres could apply and receive funding to help them run and maintain such facilities, which had been a challenge for the Council due to its competing demands and priorities. On spending on social services and schools, there were targeted proposals in place for reshaping these services, to ensure their continued deliverability and sustainability.

The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources referred to the scale and complexity of educational needs and those associated with social services, and the Council's duty of care in these areas. She also spoke about the positive examples and successes concerning Community Asset Transfers (i.e. the community libraries set up), and the Council was open to communities taking over local centres and hubs to help them thrive. The Council would be able to help such ventures start up in order for communities to successfully manage such assets. On the concerns raised about country parks, work would be done around the green and blue spaces, to make sure that what the Council provided was what residents wanted and to ensure that the parks remained commercially sustainable and cost neutral.

There being no further comments or questions, and after considering the report, the Committee subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the following comments be passed to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee as the lead Scrutiny Committee in order for them to be forwarded to Cabinet:

- In light of the car parking savings / proposals still being part of the report and consultation, it was important to consider the comments, etc. made and included as a recommendation at the Special Meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> January on these proposals and that, following consideration by the Committee, the report be referred back to Cabinet with the following comments / issues identified, in order for additional work to be done on the report's proposals prior to implementation:
  - The Committee welcomes the proposal concerning residential parking permits;
  - That Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) be applied to each of the proposals referred to in the report. The Committee felt there had been insufficient consideration on these and the impacts on the locations affected and further work was required;

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- Regarding the point on the use of EIAs above, this included Court Road multi-storey car park, with further work needed to identify current use and the potential impact of its closure on the availability of alternative car parking spaces, the potential impact that might have on nearby residents and any mitigation that would be required to address those concerns. The Committee was of the view that the future of Court Road car park should be set within a vision for the town centre in relation to town centre renewal and that consideration should be given to include a capital bid to secure the future of the car park as part of that process. Creative solutions should be explored to secure the future of the car park;
- Regarding the on-street car parking proposals, further consideration be given on this, including a period for free car parking of one or two hours and / or seasonal parking;
- Should on-street parking charges be introduced, then there should be a review period built into that so appropriate changes could be made as required;
- That the legal position in relation to the use of any money that might be raised through the introduction of car parking charges be clarified, in order to fully understand what that money could be spent on specifically;
- With regard to off-street parking charges, the Committee's view was that work should be done to improve the car parking facilities at Cliff Walk – Penarth, and Bron y Mor – Barry, prior to the implementation of charging at those locations;
- That appropriate enforcement capacity would be required to achieve the objectives of introducing charging both in on-street and off-street areas;
- Consideration should be given to what approaches could be made to ensure affordability in relation to parking permits so that local residents who might be experiencing financial hardship were not disadvantaged;
- In relation to off-street charges there should be engagement with the relevant stakeholders in the Western Vale in relation to the service design of car parks in that area.
- That the Council undertake an educational piece of work with schoolchildren around the issues of littering prior to Summertime.
- A review and pause of the reduction of bins within the Vale of Glamorgan following the 25% removal.

#### Reason for recommendation

In order that Cabinet be informed of the comments of the Committee before making a proposal on the Capital Programme.

#### DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2025/26 TO 2029/30 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2025 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Operational Manager – Accountancy. The purpose of the reference / report was for the proposals to be shared with the Committee and other

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Scrutiny ones for consultation, consideration and debate and any comments to be referred to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee as the lead Scrutiny Committee in order for their views to be forwarded to Cabinet.

A presentation on this agenda item was shared with the Committee, summarising the key headlines, details on the Programme and proposals, funding, pipeline schemes and next steps concerning the Capital Programme.

Following this, Councillor Hooper sought clarification on whether the resurfacing works at Bron y Mor and Cliff Walk car parks were included in the proposals and the current status on the proposed capital budget for potholes. In response, the proposed resurfacing was included in the Capital Programme for 2025/26. On the broader subject of surfacing, resurfacing and potholes, and the Capital Programme side of this, the funding for it had been maintained at approximately £2m with the potential for further funding via Welsh Government funding. There was also a revenue cost pressure that had been awarded in respect of potholes.

There being no further comments or questions, and after considering the report, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the reference, report and appendices for the draft Capital Programme for 2025/26 to 2029/30 be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the reference, report and appendices, as well as the discussions at the meeting and following consideration by Committee Members of the draft Capital Programme for 2025/26 to 2029/30.

#### UPDATE REPORT – RECYCLING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICE CHANGES 2024 (DEH) –

The purpose of the report, presented to the Committee by the Head of Service - Neighbourhood Services, was to update Committee Members on the performance of the area following the on-going Recycling and Waste Management service changes.

A presentation was shared with the Committee, to accompany the report, to summarise and highlight its updates and findings which included:

- The latest update on the green waste subscription service: this detailed the number of annual subscriptions for the first full year of the new garden waste subscription service. The report advised that there was a total of 13,973 subscribers in 2024, up to 31st December, 2024 which was an increase of 1,338 subscriptions on 2023 (12,635). The price for the service remained the same as the introductory year but based on a full year's charge of £36 for up to 8 bags and £54 for the unlimited service. An incremental approach to service costs and the use of technology to improve service delivery were also referred to.

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- An outline of the performance for the green waste subscription service was shared with the Committee. The increased subscription numbers had ensured that the service avoided any detrimental impact to the Organics Partnership and the associated contractual obligations. It was likely that this potential risk was now minimal.
- An update on the black bag and on the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) sites. Overall residual waste was in decline and recycling tonnage was increasing.
- Other recycling and waste updates for the Committee i.e. on phasing out co-mingling recycling and the soft plastics collection trial to be introduced this summer.
- An illustrated recap on the composition of black bags, with food waste remaining a significant part of this.
- An update on future service changes and in respect of ongoing service infrastructure and legislation changes was provided, from the 'blueprint' review in 2025, through to the Recycling at Work Regulations (Wales) and UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK- ETS).
- Committee was also given an update on infrastructure, such as about the Resource Recovery Facility (RRF), the Barry Reuse Shop and Llandow HWRC.
- An outline of the key targets on recycling and waste management were given, with 2025 being a crucial year with a target of 70% recycling.

Following the presentation, the Committee raised several questions and comments, including the following.

On Councillor Hooper's query about the numbers of residents using the green waste collection now in comparison to when this was included in their Council Tax, it was explained that such data had not been measured on the numbers of people putting out green waste bags previously. The only data available was concerning green waste tonnage, which had largely been consistent over 3-4 years. Also, some residents may have done some home composting or taken such green waste to the recycling centre, which would not be measured. On the Councillor's follow up query on whether the extent of wood being recycled suggested that this was being used increasingly to heat homes due to the cost of gas and electricity and the negative impact of this environmentally, no such link had been seen or could be connected to such use. Most of the wood taken to recycling centres was the DIY type of wood, as well as those used for furniture, laminated wood, etc. Although this was at high levels, this reflected the popularity of DIY projects rather than greater use of wood as a form of fuel and source of heat. Welsh Government may change the focus on recycling and waste targets from tonnage to a focus on carbon which may change the dynamics of recording and achieving recycling targets.

Councillor Protheroe raised queries around the Council's relationship with its waste contractors, their responsibility for recycling and the market for this, and shared the concerns about how this worked, with some recycled products not having value great enough for contractors to do anything with these and so these were potentially ending up in residual skips. She appreciated the work that the Council would be doing to investigate this. She therefore wanted clarification on what the contractors

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did in terms of their responsibility with the recycling markets and how that worked, basically where all the Council's recycling goes if there was a good price for it and if the Council earned any money through that part of the process. It was explained that an all-inclusive management rate was part of the contract arrangement with the Council and its contractors. The contractors charged the Council a management rate which was inclusive of their management, staff, machinery, etc., and they had the income or cost associated with the recycling which meant they needed to know where the recycling was going and had to provide the Council under the environmental permit and transfer, every end destination. The contractors also had targets to meet within the contract so they had to achieve a minimum 72% recycling rate and reported to Natural Resources Wales. The transfer was to be done sustainably either in Wales or the U.K. wherever possible. The Council was looking more closely into their activities. Contractors, where there was something adverse within the markets tended to use a residual skip rather than going that extra mile to ensure that the product was recycled. Therefore, this had been a cause for concern, particularly in the last year, and the Council was scrutinising every activity because of the importance of achieving the 70% recycling rate so the next steps would be to look more closely at where those materials were going see if the Council could get better markets. The Council would also undertake some knowledge sharing with other councils in Wales around inhouse services and the Council could possibly look at how much that would actually cost to deliver that service as opposed to paying the management fee and it could do an analysis of that service and see whether the Council could do this for better value for money and more sustainably if it did it in a different way. This could form the basis for a future report to Cabinet with some recommendations and probably a referral to this Committee. The Councillor welcomed this approach, linking in with other authorities, and to take a more 'circular economy' approach. She looked forward to the proposed report going to Cabinet and the Committee.

Councillor Drake raised concerns around the disposal of disposable vapes and possible fires being caused as a result. It was confirmed that there had been no recent reports of such fires occurring, and the key concern was around other types of battery that were getting into general waste, such as those used for power tools, when residents were not using the allocated battery bag or disposing at the recycling centre. The Welsh Government's review of potentially banning disposable vapes could also help address these slipping through the waste stream and mitigate street litter.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services also spoke, highlighting the importance of the circular economy in helping tackle unnecessary waste, the greater use of reuse shops and meeting the 2050 net zero target as part of this as well. He felt the 70% recycling target was achievable, as well as highlighting the benefits of the green waste changes that had been enacted by the Council. He wished to thank all those Council staff and officers involved with waste management and recycling.

There being no further comments or questions, and after considering the report, the Committee subsequently



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RECOMMENDED – T H A T the contents of the Update Report – Recycling and Waste Management Service Changes 2024, be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report, as well as the discussions at the meeting and following consideration by Committee Members of the update.