



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Service Improvement & Finance**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS Teams
Tuesday, 6 December 2022 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor C A Holley (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

P M Black
D H Jenkins
M W Locke

Councillor(s)

R Fogarty
M Jones
B J Rowlands

Councillor(s)

P R Hood-Williams
J W Jones

Cabinet Member(s)

Cllr Elliot King
Cllr Cyril Anderson

Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture
Cabinet Member Community Services

Officer(s)

Ben Smith
Richard Rowlands
Matthew Perkins
Rhian Millar
Rachel Percival
Rachel Percival

Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer
Corporate Performance Manager
Group Leader, Waste
Consultation Coordinator
Scrutiny Officer
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

None

26 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

There were no disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

Minutes

Minutes of previous meeting were agreed.

Public Questions

There were no public questions received.

Mid Term Budget Statement 2022/23 (Verbal)

Ben Smith the Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer attended to give an overview of the Mid Term Budget Statement 2022/23. He talked through the following:

- Wales Fiscal Analysis issued their assessment of the Barnett consequentials which indicates an estimated £600m being available but it is likely a large percentage of this will go towards reducing business rates for businesses.
- The £600m will be spread over two years, but predominantly delivered in 2023/24.
- The next biggest areas of spend for the Barnett consequentials, after business rates, are the health service, schools and social care.
- There is no obligation on Welsh Government to follow the allocations implied by Barnett consequentials. The budget on 13 December and local government settlement on 14th December will firm up all allocations .
- There is a potentially better outlook in the short term but the longer term is still both difficult to predict but likely to remain very challenging.
- With NHS boards operating at a deficit, and not having reserves unlike local government, it is likely that a substantial share of this money will go to health. Any money that does go into social care would have the knock on effect of helping relieving pressure on the health boards and the ambulance service.
- Spend from cash backed reserves in current year (2022-23) is likely to be around £40m which breaks down into broadly £20m of Economic Recovery Fund, £10m to cover the unfunded pay awards and potentially about £10m from ring fenced school reserves to cover their pay award.
- There is planned to be a draw from Economic Recovery Fund of up to £15m for spend on central energy costs to avoid individual services or individual schools making staffing related decisions driven solely by energy price spikes. This is in line with indicative earlier announcements by Leader and S151 Officer at Council.
- Councillors will need to consider balancing the need to raise council tax to maintain and protect services with affordability and cost of living issues for residents and taxpayers. There would be clear trade-offs in the choices to come final to Council in March to set a lawfully balanced budget.

Quarter 1 2022/23 Performance Monitoring Report

Richard Rowlands Corporate Performance Manager presented the report. It was noted that:

- Quarter 1 continues to demonstrate effects of the pandemic.
- A further review of performance indicators will take place alongside the development of the new corporate plan. Those will be reported from quarter 1 next year.
- From the 23 comparable indicators within the report, 5 are shown improving or maintaining trends. Of those that had dropped, 6 were attributable to the pandemic and 9 were not, the remaining 3 declines were minimal and within 5% of the previous result.
- There are 18 new indicators with no comparisons due to no previous data and 5 indicators that couldn't be compared to the previous financial year because the data wasn't collected due to the pandemic.
- Safeguarding performance held up well in quarter 1 with fewer children and families escalating into statutory services.
- In quarter 1 education continues to be affected by significant disruption caused by the pandemic for instance in regards to comparing exam results to teacher assessed grades.

- Indicators on statements of special educational needs focus on the number of statements issued but not how effective the statements are.
- There has been an increase in processing times for council tax and housing benefits teams, which is largely the result of staff being diverted to additional work from processing Covid and other Welsh Government grants.
- Staff sickness continues to be affected by impact from Covid-19.
- There is a drop in the number of online payments and forms that were made through the Council's website.
- Further indicators will be added to the area of Nature Recovery and Climate Change.
- New social services indicators will be added in the second quarter.

Recycling and Landfill - Annual Performance Monitoring 2021/22 and Recycling of Business Waste Briefing

Cllr Cyril Anderson, Cabinet Member Community Services and Matthew Perkins, Group Leader for Waste attended to present this briefing. It was noted that:

- The current Welsh Government targets for recycling is 64% and last year Swansea Council achieved 65.07%, a slight increase in compared to 2021.
- Mandatory recycling for all non-domestic premises will be enforced by Welsh Government in the near future. Deposit return schemes are also in the pipeline but the impact on the Council regarding these is unknown.
- Implementing the Waste Strategy has meant that recycling figures have jumped from 65% up to above 70% which is mainly due to the switch from landfill to sending waste to energy to waste plants which began in February 2022.
- Swansea Council will meet all current Welsh Government recycling targets.
- Three quarters of produced black bagged waste is sent to a waste to energy plant in Bedford as none closer could accommodate Swansea waste. The other quarter is initially sifted locally then sent to Scandinavia.
- Cardboard waste did double during the pandemic but has dropped back to pre-pandemic usage. Plastic waste remains static.
- Wood recycling is only available in a limited number of recycling centres. This is due to the space required to sort wood into hazardous and non-hazardous.

Audit Wales Report - "Making Equality Impact Assessments more than just a tick box exercise"

Cllr Elliot King, Cabinet Member Culture and Equalities and Rhian Millar, Consultation Coordinator attended to discuss this report. The following was noted:

- Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been in force since 2010, with Swansea Council implementing them since 2012.
- Last year the process was internally reviewed where EIAs were changed to a more integrated assessment approach (IIAs) which brings the different duties into one place to ensure that the Council are assessing the impact properly across the board in one single coherent process.

- Officers recognize there are areas that the Audit Wales report highlighted for improvement but there are similar issues across other authorities particularly with resources.
- Reporting and monitoring outcomes lies with the officer responsible for report/policy.
- Currently all public reports are subject to an IIA screening even those just for information however this is being reviewed internally.
- The IIA process would benefit from clearer public sector wide guidance.
- The Customer Engagement Strategy is currently going through public consultation. Performance Indicators for this strategy will then be discussed with a view not to focus on numbers but monitoring impact and reflection of all protected characteristics.

Letters

No comments were made on the attached letters to Cabinet Members.

Work Plan

No comments were made on the Work Plan.

The meeting ended at 11.45 am

Chair