



City and County of Swansea

## Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel - Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance**

**Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS**

**Teams**

**Tuesday, 16 January 2024 at 10.00 am**

**Present:** Councillor C A Holley (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**

P M Black  
P R Hood-Williams  
M Jones  
M W Locke  
T M White

**Councillor(s)**

C M J Evans  
L James  
S M Jones  
B J Rowlands

**Councillor(s)**

E W Fitzgerald  
M H Jones  
J W Jones  
M S Tribe

**Cabinet Member(s)**

Cllr Rob Stewart

Cabinet Member for Economy Finance and Strategy

**Officer(s)**

Ben Smith  
Richard Rowlands  
Steve Hopkins  
Geraldine Williams  
Steve Hopkins

Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer  
Strategic Delivery and Performance Manager  
Tourism and Marketing Manager  
Tourism Development Officer  
Tourism and Marketing Manager

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): D H Jenkins

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**49 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

There were no disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

**50 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips**

None.

**51 Minutes**

Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

**52 Public Questions**

There were no public questions received.

### **53 Budget Proposals**

Cllr Rob Stewart and Ben Smith attended. The following was discussed.

- Overall, the budget demonstrates financial challenges in 2024/25 and into the medium term financial plan.
- Whilst there is a focus on savings, an £80m of additional finance is being added to the budget over the next four years.
- The Council does not have control over local authority and teachers pay awards therefore estimates are included in the budget.
- Officer advice is that current borrowing rates are not advantageous and to delay borrowing till the end of the medium term financial plan.
- Previous years have resulted in an underspend in capital spending. Officer advice is to draw down on this in 2024/25.
- The budget includes drawing over £8m in reserves for 2024/25. This breaks down into just over £1m from the Capital Equalisation Reserve and £7m originally earmarked for school IT upgrades. This £7m will be used for Schools only and will be used fully in 2024/25.
- The contingency fund will be reduced from £5m to £3m to allow for an additional £2m to go towards services.
- The Council is in a strong position as regards to reserves, however long-term drawing on reserves is not sustainable.
- No decisions on Council Tax rates have been made yet.
- A UK Government budget is due in March however if there are any additional gains from this, they would be too late for the 2024/25 budget setting.
- The fire Service levy is likely to be over £1m. This is paid for out of council budgets.

### **54 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report 2nd Quarter 2023/24**

Cllr Rob Stewart and Ben Smith attended. The following was discussed.

- The second quarter demonstrates an overspend of around £7.5m.
- There is a commitment within directorates to achieve a balanced position by year end.
- Some earmarked reserves have been effectively reclassified as a provision. This still allows it to be available in the short term for cash usage should this be required by Council but there is an important accounting distinction between the two classifications.
- Various avenues are being explored to deliver school transport in more cost-effective ways.

### **55 Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring Report 2023/24**

Richard Rowlands attended, and the following was discussed.

- The officer took Panel members through the new layout of the report.
- The Panel praised the new format and highlighted areas of improvement within Social Services.

## **56 Tourism Destination Management Plan Update**

Steve Hopkins attended, and the following was discussed.

- The Destination Management Plan 2023-26 was agreed by Cabinet in October 2023.
- The Panel praised the report and overall were pleased with the outcomes.
- There is a growing confidence in tourism that the industry is recovering from the effects of the Pandemic.
- The officer talked through several findings through research carried out in advance of the Destination Management Plan including a visitor survey, a local business survey and a hotel demand study.
- In 2022 4.2m visitors visited Swansea.
- Strategic priorities are, quality, creating an all-year-round destination, encouraging sustainability, and working in partnership.
- Hotel room occupancy in Swansea exceeds the Wales average. The hotel demand study indicated that Swansea needs a further 3 hotels to meet demand.
- Visitor survey responses overall demonstrated high satisfaction.
- Visitors placed the highest importance and lowest satisfaction on the availability and cleanliness of public toilets. Signposting of public toilets was also discussed.
- The site [visitswanseabay.com](http://visitswanseabay.com) exists to promote events to tourists and residents and a new website is also in development.

## **57 Work Plan**

The work plan was noted, and reference was made to next months meeting which will be pre scrutiny of the annual budget on 13 February prior to it going for Cabinet approval on 15 February.

The meeting ended at 12.14 pm

**Chair**