



**Dinas a Sir Abertawe**

**Hysbysiad o Gyfarfod**

Fe'ch gwahoddir i gyfarfod

## **Panel Perfformiad Craffu - Gwella Gwasanaethau a Chyllid**

**Lleoliad:** Ystafell Bwyllgor 5 - Neuadd y Ddinas, Abertawe

**Dyddiad:** Dydd Mercher, 19 Chwefror 2020

**Amser:** 10.00 am

**Cynullydd:** Y Cynghorydd Chris Holley OBE

**Aelodaeth:**

Cynghorwyr: P Downing, P R Hood-Williams, L James, M H Jones, P K Jones, J W Jones, I E Mann, B J Rowlands, R C Stewart a/ac D W W Thomas

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### **Agenda**

**Rhif y Dudalen.**

**1 Ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb.**

**2 Datgeliadau o fuddiannau personol a rhagfarnol.**  
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**3 Cofnodion.**

**1 - 18**

**4 Cwestiynau gan y Cyhoedd**

**5 Craffu ar y Gyllideb Flynyddol**

Dolen i [Bapurau'r Cabinet](#) ar gyfer 20 Chwefror 2020, sy'n cynnwys y cynigion cyllidebol (dylai'r papurau fod ar gael o 14 Chwefror 2020.)

- Rob Stewart Aelod y Cabinet - Economi a Strategaeth (yr Arweinydd)
- Ben Smith - Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Ariannol a'r Ganolfan Wasanaeth

**6 Crynhoi Barn a Chyflwyno Argymhellion**

Yna bydd Chris Holley, Cynullydd y Panel Gwella Gwasanaethau a Pherfformiad Cyllid, yn mynd i gyfarfod y Cabinet ar 20 Chwefror i gyflwyno barn gyfunol y paneli perfformiad craffu.

**Cyfarfod nesaf:** Dydd Llun, 2 Mawrth 2020 ar 10.00 am

*Huw Evans*

**Huw Evans**  
**Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Democrataidd**  
**Dydd Mercher, 12 Chwefror 2020**

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**Cyswllt: Craffu**

Councillor Chris Holley  
Convener  
Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny  
Performance Panel

*Please ask for:* Jane Walters  
*Direct Line:* 01792 63 6366  
*E-Mail:* jane.walters2@swansea.gov.uk  
*Our Ref:*  
*Your Ref:*  
*Date:* 20 January 2020

Dear Councillor Holley

## **SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND FINANCE SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL 9 DECEMBER 2019**

Thank you for your letter dated 2 January 2020 setting out the additional questions from the above Scrutiny Panel.

I set out below the responses to your questions:

### **1. Can you detail budget reductions relating to each Council Department and timescales for achieving them? Can you particularly outline your**

Budget savings are set out in full each year in the budget setting report to council. Proposals for 2020-21 will be finalised in due course. In relation to 2019-20 the savings agreed were

|                         |        |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Cross cutting           | £ 3.6m |
| Education (exc schools) | £ 1.4m |
| Place                   | £ 3.6m |
| Resources               | £ 0.6m |
| Social Services         | £ 3.6m |
| <br>                    |        |
| Total                   | £12.8m |

These were all due to be delivered by 31 March 2020.

### **a. Confidence in Social Services meeting its in year overspend, particularly in relation to care fees, by the end of the financial year.**

I am assured by the actions the Director of Social Services are taking that they will bar unforeseen circumstances managed to achieve a balanced service budget by year end.

I make that caveat as you are aware, services are demand led but with only one quarter to go I think the balance is in favour of social services living within budget for the year. A remarkable feat given the pressures all council social services departments are under across Wales.

**b. Confidence in Education meeting its in year overspend by the financial year-end.**

Education savings are more problematic in year. In prioritising the substantially larger schools budgets the non-delegated budgets are under pressure and the scale of overspending and nature of the overspending means direct action by the directorate is unlikely to remedy the position alone.

Again much of the spend is demand led around special and additional learning needs provision and there has been spend pressure in transportation costs. Actions are being taken proportionately by the Director.

There remains the possibility of further one off late grants from the Welsh Government which may assist the situation indirectly and the S151 Officer will review the business case for releasing some sums from the centrally held inflation provision to ameliorate some of the excess transport costs being incurred.

**2. Have we reached the position where we cannot put more funding in the capital reserve fund?**

No, as the S151 Officer has repeatedly made clear there are current savings being achieved as a result of changes to capital financing (both the MRP review and early borrowing at locked in permanently low interest rates for long time periods) but also known future increased costs of capital financing given our ambitious, but affordable, capital programme.

The S 151 Officer is of the view it is most prudent to “bank” capital financing savings to finance future capital financing costs and I wholeheartedly concur. Furthermore the savings in relation to MRP savings are well known to be temporary in nature and it would be wholly imprudent to be spending those sort term savings on permanent ongoing revenue costs.

**3. You refer in your report to the Director of Resources stopping or reducing service through new ways of working. Can you tell us what this has or might include?**

At the current time, there is no plan to stop any service or reduce any offer. The new ways for working would see more digital transformation and channel shift to online applications.

The removal of systems and processes which do not add value or add cost without benefit, such as customer services or service centre, in how we process requests.

The move away from Paper to digital solutions and reduction in printing costs is another area of implementation within the new ways of working.

This is more around effective and efficient use of resources.

**4. Can you tell us why the previously identified model of merging marketing and communications from across the council into one team, has not progressed?**

The initial review identified that savings could be made and efficiencies achieved in merging the two areas, however through collaborative working and moving to a digital approach this has helped the two areas be more focused in what they deliver.

The communications focusses mainly on corporate communications and the marketing is more focused around the Place directorate and commercial operations.

This is no longer the benefit at the current time to merge the two areas.

**5. You refer to an increase in staff referrals to occupational health. Can you tell us the reasons why there has been such an increase?**

There are several reasons why there have been increases in referral to both Occupational health and stress management & counselling.

Bereavement including that of staff, debt, increases in sickness absence, family breakdown or ill health within the family and increases in suicidal ideation.

In addition to these we have seen an increase in chronic health conditions and in mental health which is mirrored nationally.

Once again thank you for your letter and questions.

Yours sincerely



**Y CYNGHORYDD/COUNCILLOR ROB STEWART  
ARWEINYDD/LEADER**



**To/  
Councillor David Hopkins  
Cabinet Member for Delivery and  
Performance**

**BY EMAIL**

*Please ask for:  
Gofynnwch am:*

*Direct Line:  
Llinell Uniongyrochol:*

*e-Mail  
e-Bost:*

*Date  
Dyddiad:*

Overview & Scrutiny

01792 636292

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

6 January 2020

**Summary:** This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Delivery and Performance. The letter concerns the Wales Audit Office Report and response on the effectiveness of local planning services in Wales and the Planning Annual Performance Report 2018/19.

Dear Councillor Hopkins,

On the 9 December 2019, the Panel met to discuss the Wales Audit Officer Report and Response on the effectiveness of local planning services in Wales and the Planning Annual Performance Report 2018/19. The Panel are grateful to you, Phil Holmes and Ian Davies for attending the meeting to discuss these reports.

### **Wales Audit Office Report and response on the effectiveness of local planning services in Wales**

We heard that the Wales Audit Office report draws four main conclusions. Thank you for providing us with the detailed action plan designed to address the issues raised. In summary, you said:

1. Planning Authorities find it challenging to balance competing demands because of the complexities of the planning system  
*Council accepts this.*
2. Insufficient capacity and reducing capacity are eroding planning local authority resilience  
*Council concurs with this Planning has had to live within its means as with every other council department.*
3. Timeliness and quality of decision making varies widely and performance on managing applications is poor  
*Do not agree with this as performance has improved in Swansea and fair well on Welsh Government indicators (it was noted that the Wales Audit Office did not use the WG indicators to assess this)*

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4. Further work is required to deliver the wellbeing aspects of the Planning (Wales) Act and Planning Policy Wales.  
*Swansea is ahead of the curve in relation to this because we have recently adopted the Local Development Plan with these aspects incorporated into it.*

We agreed that Audit reports are useful exercises and can assist services by deep diving into certain aspects but we felt that this did not do that on this occasion. We heard that this report was based on a small number of in-depth consultations with some local authorities and then via a questionnaire with the others, including Swansea. We heard that with most Audit reports, the inspectors come back to authorities to discuss the outcomes before they are published. This did not happen with this particular Audit, which we feel was an error, as Planning is a vital part of Council services and consultation prior to publication would benefit all parties concerned. We did share your view that the Audit Report was not reflective of Planning in Swansea and that it does not show enough technical knowledge to make assessment useful. The Panel would like to see the Welsh Government's response to the report in due course.

In our discussion about the Planning Annual Report, we were pleased to hear that a lot of work is taking place around wellbeing and biodiversity. We took the opportunity to raise the issue of capacity in the Nature Conservation Team and its ability to be able to enforce ecological issues and regulations.

We are interested in any thoughts you may have on the issues contained in this letter but can we please have a formal written response to the following point by 27 January 2020.

1. What is being done in Swansea to ensure there is capacity to regulate and ensure ecological constraints are followed?

Yours sincerely,



**Councillor Chris Holley**  
**Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel**  
✉ [cllr.chris.holley@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.chris.holley@swansea.gov.uk)

Councillor Jeff Jones  
Convener,  
Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny  
Performance Panel

*Please ask for:* Councillor Rob Stewart  
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*Our Ref:* RS/JW  
*Your Ref:*  
*Date:* 31 January 2020

**SENT BY EMAIL**

Dear Councillor Jones

## **SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND FINANCE PERFORMANCE PANEL 20 JANUARY 2020**

Thank you for the scrutiny session on 20 January regarding the initial proposals for the 20-21 budget which you chaired on behalf of Councillor Chris Holley.

I very much agree with most of your summation of the matters we discussed fully and am pleased the panel recognised the scale of funding coming in 20-21, the tight timings, and the opportunities afforded to invest more in Swansea's future and the Council's priorities. I look forward to soon concluding the consultation round and reporting back to Cabinet and Council on the final budget options in due course on 20<sup>th</sup> February and 5<sup>th</sup> March respectively.

With regard to the two follow up matters you have raised I would advise as follows.

1. Our public consultation follows our normal approach, albeit to a tighter timescale this year, following the delayed provisional settlement. This involves general opportunities for any interested individuals or groups to express views online and in writing on general matters, specific issues, or our survey and has been publicised both in the press and on social media. We will know if any environmental groups have taken part once the consultation closes and highlight accordingly.
2. The budget proposal of £40,000 relates to the Council vacating Alexandra House and ceasing lease arrangements, which will mean that staff will relocate into the Guildhall or out of 5 Community based venues, as part of the integrated family support offer and the developing early help hub model. The lease cost was met from core funding and grant and the amount released is the core element only whilst additionally freeing up grant for re-investment into front line provision, enabling more effective working through integration and puts services into the community.



**Page 2**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rob Stewart', written in a cursive style.

**Y CYNGHORYDD/COUNCILLOR ROB STEWART  
ARWEINYDD/LEADER**



**To/  
Councillor Rob Stewart  
Cabinet Member for Economy and  
Strategy**

**BY EMAIL**

*Please ask for:  
Gofynnwch am:*

*Direct Line:  
Llinell Uniongyrochol:*

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e-Bost:*

*Date  
Dyddiad:*

**Overview & Scrutiny**

**01792 636292**

**scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk**

**29 January 2020**

**Summary:** This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Economy and Strategy. The Panel met on 20 January 2020. This letter relates to the Sustainable Swansea – Fit for the Future Budget proposals.

Dear Councillor Stewart,

On the 20 January 2020, the Panel met to discuss the Annual Budget proposals for 2020/2021. The Panel are grateful to you and the Chief Finance Officer for attending the Panel to provide information and answer questions.

We heard that due to the General Election held on 12 December, the Welsh Government delayed its announcements on the budget and provisional settlement until 16 December 2019. This made the budget process extremely challenging and uncertain. The funding increase for local government for 2020-21 is the best in over a decade and extremely helpful because it is of a different magnitude to recent settlements enabling much greater choice to be exercised over relative priorities, funding commitments and local taxation levels for 2020-21. You said it is hoped that this change of emphasis and funding can now be sustained over the medium to longer term to allow the council to not only maintain, but also develop, and extend vital services to the public.

You told us Education continues to be the biggest area of funding within the council's revenue budget and will continue to be a key priority for the council. Also it is intended that there will be a 6.5% (9.7 million pounds) cash increase in schools core funding. This is predominantly to fund teachers' pay and pension costs.

We heard that the decision about this year's council Tax increase had not yet been made. We understand that the Council Tax planning assumption was up to 5% but the overall yield last year was higher still, which was due to no longer having discount on empty homes, the 100% premia on long term empty homes and growth in the tax

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base. You explained that council Tax forms just over 25% of the income the council received which equated last year to 122 million pounds, with the Revenue Support Grant from Welsh Government being 242 million and Business Rates raising 80 million. I raised that a number of residents had relayed concerns to me about the present affordability of council Tax and the impact another rise would have on them. I asked whether the Local Authority carries out an appraisal of affordability, you said that an equality impact assessment is completed and consultation is carried out before a decision is made on any increase. We do also understand that we fund the council Tax Reduction Scheme that is targeted at lower income groups and costs 22 million pounds, which is not fully funded by Welsh Government.

We discussed using the MRP and Capital Equalisation Reserves savings to ease the interest charges on the City Deal loan. The Chief Finance Officer said that this has been agreed by council.

We heard that the budget proposals are currently out for wide consultation, we asked whether Environmental Groups had been contacted with regard to the budget consultation exercise and you said you would find out more and feedback on this.

We also raised the following issues with you relating specifically to savings proposals:

- The Increase in fees and charges relating to Bereavement services. We heard that the council charges are small compared to the overall costs of a funeral. Swansea is mindful of its position in relation to other councils.
- The impact of the savings proposals on jobs in 20/21. Hearing that this reduction in staff numbers is a fraction of what it has been in past years and every effort is being made to minimise this figure even further.
- The quarter of a million pound saving proposal for Home to School Transport. We heard that the council is continuing to look to get the best value we can for our transport services, that HTS transport costs are significant, that the council has and is continuing to renegotiate contracts and working to ensure a more joined up approach to transport across the council.
- We raised and wanted to find out more about the savings proposals line under Social Services Poverty and Prevention of £40,000, which says Relocation of staff from Alexandra House to release grant funding from Flying Start and Families first.

We asked the question whether it was prudent to continue to take monies out of insurance reserves. The Chief Finance Officer has allowed monies to be taken out of the insurance reserves where appropriate, that he does take professional advice about the councils insurance reserves and that we are effectively covered currently for 9 out of every 10 years of possible claims and this was considered to be very prudent.

We understand around 20% of this year's original savings targets had not been achieved. We heard most directorates have made significant savings in other ways, with the Director of Education who is still working on further savings proposals to help reduce forecast over spending in that Directorate. We were pleased to hear that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter budget monitoring report is expected to show big inroads into reducing the overall service in year overspending figure.

We welcome your views on the issues raised in our letter but would be grateful if you could respond in writing to the following points by 19 February 2020.

1. Can you tell us whether environmental groups have been included in the budget proposals consultation exercise this year?
2. Can you tell us more about the savings proposals line under Social Services Poverty and Prevention of £40,000, which says Relocation of staff from Alexandra House to release grant funding from Flying Start and Families First?

Yours sincerely,

**Councillor Jeff Jones**

**Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel**

✉ [cllr.jeff.jones@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.jeff.jones@swansea.gov.uk)



**To/  
Councillor David Hopkins  
Cabinet Member for Delivery and  
Performance**

**BY EMAIL**

*Please ask for:  
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Dyddiad:*

Overview & Scrutiny

01792 636292

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

29 January 2020

**Summary:** This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Delivery and Performance. The letter concerns the meeting on 20 January 2020 and the Quarter 2 Corporate Performance Monitoring.

Dear Councillor Hopkins,

On the 20 January 2020, the Panel met to discuss the Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring Report 19/20. The Panel are grateful to Corporate Performance Manager for attending to discuss the report.

We heard that overall 49% of indicators have meet their targets and 39% are showing improvements. This is showing a decline in performance from the corresponding quarter last year. Fewer indicators are showing improvement overall compared with this time last year.

Some of the individual indicators we discussed include:

- *AS13a Number of carers (18+) who received a carer's assessment in their own right during the financial year.* 52 fewer carer's assessment were completed compared to 2018/19. We heard that this was attributed directly to the sickness levels within the integrated hubs, these are being managed and it is hoped the next quarter will see an improvement.
- *AS9 - The percentage of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding (DoLS) assessments completed in 21 days or less.* We heard that performance has dipped compared to previous quarters but this will improve with permanent staff rather than staff rotating. We want to find out more about when this will happen.
- *CFS18 - The rate of looked after children (LAC) per 10,000 of the 0-17 Swansea population at the end of the period and CFS2 – The number of Looked After Children (LAC) at end of period.* We heard there has been a recent reduction in the LAC population and it is stabilising. There is a safe LAC reduction strategy in place, which is monitored monthly through the strategic LAC meeting. The current pressures relate to children under 2 years of age.

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- Measure 19 – *The rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 and over.* We heard that staff shortages within the domiciliary care sector continue to impact on this service. However, they have recently re-tendered the service splitting the providers into geographical zones, which is expected to have a positive impact on delays.
- BBMA4 – *The number of apprenticeships or trainee starts in the Council.* We heard this indicator records new starts and is currently under review to include a wider apprentice and trainee strategy. This will include the recruitment of trainees and in work apprentices which are currently not recorded.
- EDU015b – *The percentage of final statements of Special Education Needs (SEN) issued within 26 weeks excluding exceptions.* We heard that this quarter covers school holidays when there are less staff, however, there are capacity issues within the team due to the volume of operational day to day work as well as a backlog of statements which are affecting the ability of the team to reduce the backlog and improve the PI. Secondly, the system is largely paper drive and there is not capacity to review systems to improve efficiency without compromising the LA statutory duties further.
- POV07 – *The number of training and employment person weeks created by Beyond Bricks and Mortar for unemployed and economically inactive.* We heard this is 27% lower than last year. There has been a delay in the start of a number of projects, which has reduced the number of opportunities for training work. It is envisaged they will catch up on this delay in the weeks and months ahead.
- HBCT01a – *Housing Benefit speed of processing, average time for processing new claims.* We understand there has been a drop in performance, but as expected, due to reduced resources and because the more complex cases remain in housing benefit and easier cases transfer to Universal Credit.
- HBCT01b – *Housing Benefit speed of processing, average time for processing notification of change in circumstances.* A minor dip in performance as expected due to reduced resources.
- HBCT02a – *Council Tax reduction speed of processing, average time for processing new claims.* As expected, performance has dipped due to a process change, which increased Council Tax Reductions granted to individuals at the cost of an apparent decrease in performance stats. In reality, no worsening of the service to applicants.
- HBCT02b – *Council Tax speed of processing, average time for processing notification of change in circumstances.* A minor dip in performance as expected due to reduced resources.  
The panel wished to find out more about the decline in the processing of Housing Benefits and Council Tax shown in the above four indicators and have asked for more information.
- CHR002 – *The number of working days/shifts per full time equivalent lost due to sickness absence.* We heard that the data is currently under review and in a new Management of Absence Policy is underway. Proposals have also been sent to CMT for targeted objectives to reduce sickness in the longer term. The Panel would like to see at breakdown of this indicator by department and by issue.
- FINA6 – *Percentage of identified forecast General Fund Revenue savings and income for the year compared to originally approved budget.* We understand the Corporate Management Team continues to expect that both service and overall

net expenditure be held within the relevant limits for the current year's budget as set by Council.

We heard about the four indicators that will be reported to Cabinet annually relating to the natural environment and biodiversity. We heard that these will include indicators on carbon reduction, trees planted, areas of wildflower sown and water quality. We would like to see the descriptors for these including how they were chosen and put together.

We were concerned to hear that the Corporate Biodiversity Working Group had no direct reporting mechanism into any Councillor meetings. The Convener of the Natural Environment Scrutiny Panel plan will follow up upon this in his panel.

We are interested in any thoughts you may have on the contents of this letter but can we please have a written response to the following points by 19 February 2020

- 1) Indicator AS9 - *The percentage of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding (DoLS) assessments completed in 21 days or less.* We heard that performance has dipped compared to previous quarters but this will improve with permanent staff rather than staff rotating. Can you tell us when this will happen?
- 2) The panel wished to find out more about the decline in the processing of Housing Benefits and Council Tax shown in the four indicators HBCT01a, HBCT01b, HBCT02a, HBCT01b. Can you please provide us with more information about the reasons for this decline?
- 3) CHR002 – *The number of working days/shifts per full time equivalent lost due to sickness absence.* We heard that this data is currently under review and in a new Management of Absence Policy is underway. The Panel would like to see a breakdown of this indicator by department and by sickness reason.
- 4) We heard about the four indicators relating to the natural environment and biodiversity that will be reported to Cabinet annually, which include indicators on carbon reduction, trees planted, areas of wildflower sown and water quality. Can you provide us with the descriptors for these including how they were chosen and put together?

Yours sincerely,

**Councillor Jeff Jones**

**Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel**

✉ [Cllr.jeff.jones@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.jeff.jones@swansea.gov.uk)



City and County of Swansea

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

Committee Room 5, Guildhall, Swansea

Monday, 20 January 2020 at 10.00 am

**Present:** Councillor J W Jones (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**

P Downing  
M H Jones  
R C Stewart

**Councillor(s)**

P R Hood-Williams  
P K Jones  
D W W Thomas

**Councillor(s)**

L James  
B J Rowlands

**Other Attendees**

Rob Stewart Cabinet Member - Economy & Strategy (Leader)

**Officer(s)**

Michelle Roberts Scrutiny Officer  
Richard Rowlands Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager  
Ben Smith Chief Finance Officer / Section 151 Officer

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): C A Holley and I E Mann

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**1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**

None

**2 Minutes and Letters**

The letters and minutes were received by the Panel.

**3 Public Questions**

None

**4 Sustainable Swansea - Fit for the Future: Budget Proposals 2020/21 – 2023/24**

The Panel thanked the Cabinet Member Economy and Strategy and Chief Finance Officer for attending the meeting to discuss the Budget Proposals report. The following points were noted from the discussion:

- Due to the General Election held on 12<sup>th</sup> December, the Welsh Government delayed its announcements on the budget and provisional settlement until 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019. This made the budget process extremely challenging and uncertain.



- The now known scale of funding increase for local government for 2020-21 is the best in over a decade and extremely helpful because it is of a different magnitude to recent settlements it enables much greater choice to be exercised over relative priorities, funding commitments and local taxation levels for 2020-21. The Cabinet Member for Economy and Strategy said it is hoped that this change of emphasis and funding can now be sustained over the medium to longer term to allow the Council to not only maintain, but also develop, and extend vital services to the public.
- The final figures for 2020/21 and any potential announcements on future year implications are expected from Welsh Government on 25 February.
- Education continues to be biggest area of funding within the council's revenue budget and will continue to be a key priority for the council. It is intended that there will be a proposed 6.5% (9.7 million pounds) cash increase in schools core funding. This is predominantly to fund teachers' pay and pension costs.
- The Panel heard that the decision about this year Council Tax increase has not yet been made. The Panel heard that the Council Tax planning assumption was up to 5% but the overall yield was higher still, which was due to no longer having discount on empty homes, the 100% premia on long term empty homes and growth in the tax base. In addition, that Council Tax forms just over 25% of income the council received which equated last year to 122 million pounds, with the Revenue Support Grant from Welsh Government being 242 million and Business Rates raising 80m. It was also highlighted that we have to fund the council tax reduction scheme of 22 million pounds that is targeted at lower income groups and which is not fully funded by Welsh Government. . The Convener raised that a number of residents had relayed concerns to him about the present affordability of Council Tax and the impact another rise would have on them. He asked whether the Local Authority carries out an appraisal of affordability, the Cabinet Member said that an equality impact assessment is completed and consultation is carried out before a decision is made on any increase.
- The Cabinet Member was asked whether Environmental Groups had been contacted with regard to the budget consultation exercise and he replied saying he would follow up on this to ensure it is the case.
- Increase in fees and charges relating to Bereavement services was raised, they heard that the council charges in this area are small compared to the overall costs of a funeral. Swansea is mindful of its position in relation to other councils.
- The Panel heard about the impact of the savings proposals on jobs in 20/21. Hearing that the reduction in numbers is a fraction of what it has been in past years and every effort is being made to minimise this figure given in the report.
- The Panel asked about the ¼ million saving proposed for Home to School Transport. They heard that the council is continuing to look to get the best value we can for our transport services, that HTS transport cost is significant, Council has and is continuing to renegotiate contracts and ensuring a more joined up approach to transport across the council.
- The Panel heard that Swansea would ensure that any grants opportunities that come via regional working would cover our costs and provide the maximum benefit to Swansea.

- The Panel wanted to find out more about the savings proposals line under Social Service Poverty and Prevention of £40,000, which says Relocation of staff from Alexandra House to release grant funding from Flying Start and Families first.
- Continuing to take monies out of insurance reserves was raised. The Panel heard that the Section 151 Officer has allowed monies to be taken out of the insurance reserves where appropriate, that he does take professional advice about our insurance reserves. That we effectively cover the council currently for 9 out of every 10 years of possible claims and this was considered to still be very prudent.
- Around (20%) of this year's original savings have not been achieved as originally expected but most directorates have made significant savings in other ways. The Director of Education was still working on further savings proposals to help reduce forecast over spending in that Directorate. The Panel heard that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter budget monitoring report was expected to show big inroads into reducing the overall service in year overspending figure.

## 5 Q2 2018/19 Performance Monitoring Report

The Corporate Performance Manager attending the Panel to present the Q2 Performance Monitoring Report and answer questions. The following indicators and issues were highlighted for discussion:

- 49% of indicators have meet their targets and 39% are showing improvements, this is showing a decline in performance from the corresponding quarter last year. Fewer indicators showing improvement overall compared with this time last year.
- AS13a *Number of carers (18+) who received a carer's assessment in their own right during the financial year.* 52 few carer's assessment completed compared to 2018/18. This was attributed directly to the sickness levels within the integrated hubs, these are being managed and it is hoped the next quarter will see an improvement.
- AS9 - *The percentage of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding (DoLS) assessments completed in 21 days or less.* Performance has dipped compared to previous quarters but this will improve with permanent staff rather than staff rotating. The panel wanted to find out more about when this will happen.
- CFS18 - *The rate of looked after children (LAC) per 10,000 of the 0-17 Swansea population at the end of the period* and CFS2 – *The number of Looked After Children (LAC) at end of period.* There has been a recent reduction in the LAC population and it is stabilising. There is a safe LAC reduction strategy in place which is monitored monthly through the strategic LAC meeting. The current pressures relate to children under 2 years of age.
- Measure 19 – *The rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 and over.* Staff shortages within the domiciliary care sector continues to impact on this service. However, they have recently re-rendered the service splitting the providers into geographical zones which is expected to have a positive impact on delays.
- BBMA4 – *The number of apprenticeships or trainee starts in the Council.* This indicator records new starts and is currently under review to include a wider apprentice and trainee strategy. This will include the recruitment of trainees and in work apprentices which are currently not recorded.

- EDU015b – *The percentage of final statements of Special Education Needs (SEN) issued within 26 weeks excluding exceptions.* This quarter covers school holidays when there are less staff, however, there are capacity issues within the team due to the volume of operational day to day work as well as a backlog of statements which are affecting the ability of the team to reduce the backlog and improve the PI. Secondly, the system is largely paper drive and there is not capacity to review systems to improve efficiency without compromising the LA statutory duties further.
- POV07 – *The number of training and employment person weeks created by BBM for unemployed and economically inactive.* This is 27% lower than last year. There has been a delay in the start of a number of projects, which has reduced the number of opportunities for training work. It is envisaged they will catch up on this delay in the weeks and months ahead.
- HBCT01a – *Housing Benefit speed of processing, average time for processing new claims.* Drop in performance, as expected, due to reduced resources and because the more complex cases remain in housing benefit and easier cases transfer to Universal Credit.
- HBCT01b – *Housing Benefit speed of processing, average time for processing notification of change in circumstances.* A minor dip in performance as expected due to reduced resources.
- HBCT02a – *Council Tax reduction speed of processing, average time for processing new claims.* As expected, performance has dipped due to a process change, which increased Council Tax Reductions granted to individuals at the cost of an apparent decrease in performance stats. In reality, no worsening of the service to applicants.
- HBCT02b – *Council Tax speed of processing, average time for processing notification of change in circumstances.* A minor dip in performance as expected due to reduced resources.  
The panel wished to find out more about these for HBCT indicators asking department for component parts to this decline.
- CHR002 – *The number of working days/shifts per full time equivalent lost due to sickness absence.* Data is currently under review and in a new Management of Absence Policy is under review. Proposals have also been sent to CMT for targeted objectives to reduce sickness in the longer term. The Panel would like to see at breakdown of the indicator by department and by issue.
- FINA6 – *Percentage of identified forecast General Fund Revenue savings and income for the year compared to originally approved budget.* CMT continues with the expectation that both service and overall net expenditure must be held within the relevant limits for the current year's budget as set by Council.
- The Panel also heard about the four indicators relating to the environment and biodiversity that will be reported annually. They will include: Carbon Reduction, numbers of trees planted, areas of wildflower sown and water quality. The panel would like the see the descriptors for these including how they were chosen and put together.
- The Corporate Biodiversity Working Group was raised and concerns were raised that there is currently no direct reporting mechanism for this into any Councillor meetings. The Convener of the Natural Environment Scrutiny Panel will follow up upon this in this panel.

- Scrutinising delegated decisions and the visibility of the decision-making process as a council was also raised by a panel member who also said that they believe Legal are looking into how these can be seen by scrutiny.

## **6 Work Plan 2019/2020**

The Panel received the Work Programme.

The meeting ended at 11.30 am.