



City and County of Swansea

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

Committee Room 5, Guildhall, Swansea

Monday, 21 October 2019 at 10.00 am

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

**Councillor(s)**

P Downing  
I E Mann

**Councillor(s)**

P R Hood-Williams  
M Thomas

**Councillor(s)**

J W Jones  
D W W Thomas

**Other Attendees**

Mark Thomas

Cabinet Member - Environment & Infrastructure  
Management

**Officer(s)**

Jeffrey Dong

Deputy Chief Finance Officer / Deputy Section 151  
Officer.

Mathew Perkins

Group Leader Waste

Michelle Roberts

Scrutiny Officer

Richard Rowlands

Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): L James, M H Jones, P K Jones, C E Lloyd and B J Rowlands

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**1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

None

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

None

**3 Minutes**

Agreed

**4 Public Questions**

None

**5 Review of Revenue Reserves**

The Panel thanked the Deputy Chief Finance and Deputy 151 Officer for attending the meeting to present the report and answer questions. The following was noted.

- The review and management of reserves (as outlined in the appendix to the report LAAP Bulletin 99) is a key tool to maintaining financial resilience.
- The report shows the position as at 31 March 2019.

- It is the responsibility of the Chief Financial Officers to advise Local Authorities about the level of reserves that should be held and to ensure that there are clear protocols to the establishment and use. Reserves should not be held without a clear purpose.
- It is the duty of the Chief Finance Officer to regularly review the position regarding the available reserves held.
- Reason for reserves is to act as a 'buffer' to spend. The Local Authority has many cost pressures and some of these are from unexpected quarters.
- Insurance reserve – risks to Council broad and wide and liability is great. The Council largely self-insures unless it is over the councils excess and then the insurers step in.
- A table of usable reserves showing a total £107,943m, it was explained that these are used to support expenditure. The Panel felt that the wording around this could be confusing to the public and could be explained better but did understand that these are the formal wording for such financial aspects. Some other terms like sinking funds were used in the report, which for the public, could be better explained.
- The Panel heard that in addition the council holds a net £135,137m that are unusable which are arising purely from accounting technicalities. These cannot be used to support capital or revenue expenditure.
- The Panel heard that all revenue reserves are actively managed in order to get the best returns but in line with the principles of security, liquidity, yield and return.

## **6 Recycling and Landfill - Annual Performance Monitoring 2018/19**

The Panel thanked the Cabinet Member and the Waste Services Manager for presenting the report and answering their questions.

- The Panel were pleased to hear that Swansea Council was well on target to achieving the 64% recycling measure. This was important because the council will not incur substantial fines if breached, but it also meaning less waste overall going to landfill.
- They heard that increase in recycling figure is partly due to the 'keep it out campaign' where a stronger approach to enforcing what is put out at the kerbside had been progressed. 90,000 properties have had black bags checked and in this process, only two have required fixed penalty notices.
- One of the key reasons that we need plastic collected to be 'cleaner' is we can get much better financial returns on already sorted plastic waste.
- It was heard how critical it is to change and how it is the right thing to do. We much improve our rates continuously, as the target for recycling in 2024/25 is 70%.
- Next steps include looking for at ways of working collaboratively with other councils to dispose of waste. We will have space in the Tir John landfill site until 2022 when we need to move to a different option. The collaborative partnership with Bridgend around food waste was discussed.
- The Panel asked why it takes so long to develop collaborative options and did recognise the complexity of these options. Successful collaboration with Bridgend around food waste but was a long a complex process before it came to fruition.

- Council will move away from landfill, as Tir John will be filled by 2022. Options for the best way forward are being looked at all. It was recognised that the South West region needs a waste energy strategy, with possibly a waste to energy plant and Welsh Government recognise this. We will need an answer for here in Swansea, about what we are going to do after 2022, within the next 12 months. The council is working on this.
- Continuing to push with plastics segregation at doorstep, so the public understand what is/isn't recyclable.
- Welsh Government is introducing waste targets for private waste disposal contractors, which will put us all on a more even playing field so may be able to compete better.
- Panel congratulated team for work they are doing in student areas to increase compliance.
- Flats and ensuring sufficient space and facilities to recycle was raised, it was recognised that this is complex because every block is different and require different solutions. We are looking at individually to find bespoke solutions but is time consuming. Panel pleased to hear about this good work.
- Panel would like to see a breakdown in cost of what we get for different recyclables. We recognise this will only be a snapshot in time as the markets vary massively.

## 7 **Q1 2018/19 Performance Monitoring Report**

The Councils Corporate Performance Manager attending the meeting to discuss the quarter 1, performance monitoring report. He said the overall picture was the majority of indicators have met the targets in Quarter 1. With 56 improved or staying the same compared to last year's 67.

Some of the individual indicators highlighted include:

- AS13a – Number of carers (18+) who received a carer's assessment in their own right. This has declined by 18.8% from this time last year. The Panel were informed that assessments have been offered but it is the carers right to decline. However, they are trying to encourage carers to improve uptake.
- Measure 19 - Delayed transfers of care - shows that there has been a significant increase in the number of DTOCs when comparing with the same period last year (nearly a 68% increase), which the comment attributes to a lack of provider availability that should improve with the recommissioning work going on, along with the regional work being done on hospital to home.
- CFS2 – Number of Looked After Children at the end of the period. This is declining meaning more children in care up by 7% (36 children) on this time last year. However, the rate of LAC as measured by CFS18 is showing improvement – it shows a second consecutive fall in the rate of children becoming LAC. Numbers of children in need and children on the CPR have fallen compared to the same period last year.
- SAFE27 – Total number of staff who have completed the corporate mandatory safeguarding awareness training. This fell short of the target, although it is unclear if this is to do with non-compliance or ever diminishing returns as more staff get trained. Work is currently underway to reinforce the importance of completing this training.

- SAFE28 – Percentage of Elected Members who have received training in safeguarding vulnerable people. The Panel were pleased to see this figure was 100%.
- POV07 - training and employment weeks created by BBM. The target was missed and there is nearly a 53% drop in performance compared to Q1 last year. The Panel heard about delays starting projects, which has affected the number of training and employment weeks available.
- EDU015b – Percentage of final statements of SEN issued within 26 weeks. The Panel heard this has not met target but that only equates to only one statement.
- POV6 – Average number of days all homeless families with children spend in Bed and Breakfast. The Panel heard that this is a volatile indicator that can have occasional spikes.
- POV10 and POV11 – Swansea Working employment gained and qualifications achieved - targets were missed and results were the lowest achieved since results started being recorded at the beginning of last year. The Panel heard about low engagement numbers and other factors affecting performance due to the newness of the programme; this is expected to improve as the programme matures.
- HBCT01a and HBCT02a - the time taken to process both Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit new claims has increased compared to the same period last year. The Panel were told that the report states that it is expected that performance will improve as the year progresses.
- EC2 – Percentage of all major applications within an economic imperative that are approved. The Panel heard that this target would have been met but for two approvals refused due to not meeting council's policy.
- CHR002 – Number of working days/shifts per full time employee equivalent lost due to sickness absence. This figure high this quarter and highlighted as Red on the RAG status. The Panel noted that the management of absence policy is being reviewed. Specific targets are to be included in Directorate objectives and specific support provided to high absence sections.
- FINA6 - Percentage of identified forecast General Fund Revenue savings and income for the year compared to originally approved budget – the Panel were pointed to the comment, which reflects the ongoing risks to balancing the budget.

## **8 Work Plan 2019/20**

The work plan was noted. The Panel were about the invitation for Panel members to attend the Development and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel on the 18 November 2019 where they will be looking at the FPR7 report.

The meeting ended at 11.30 am