



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Programme Committee**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Tuesday, 16 May 2023 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor P M Black (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

E W Fitzgerald
M Jones
F D O'Brien
T M White

Councillor(s)

R Fogarty
H Lawson
S Pritchard

Councillor(s)

V A Holland
W G Lewis
M S Tribe

Statutory Co-opted Member(s)

Elizabeth Lee

Councillor Co-opted Member(s)

C A Holley

P R Hood-Williams

S M Jones

Officer(s)

Geoff Bacon
Allison Lowe
Brij Madahar
Ben Smith
Debbie Smith

Head of Property Services
Democratic Services Officer
Scrutiny Team Leader
Director of Finance / Section 151 Officer
Deputy Chief Legal Officer

Also present

D H Hopkins
R C Stewart

Cabinet Member for Corporate Service & Performance
Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance & Strategy (Leader)

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): N/A

Statutory Co-opted Member(s): Beth Allender

Councillor Co-opted Members: L R Jones

108 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interest.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

109 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips.

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, no declarations of Whipped Votes or Party Whips were declared.

110 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 18 April, 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

111 Public Question Time.

No questions were received.

112 Urgent Item - Cabinet agenda item 10: Financial Procedural Rule 7 Additional projects to be included within the Capital Budget & Programme 2022/23 - 2027/28 - Economic Recovery Fund (ERF) Approved Schemes (exceeding one million pounds).

The Chair stated that pursuant to Paragraph 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972, he considered that the following 2 reports should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

- Financial Procedural Rule 7 Additional projects to be included within the Capital Budget & Programme 2022/23 -2027/28 – Economic Recovery Fund (ERF) Approved Schemes (exceeding one million pounds) (18 May Cabinet agenda item 10)
- Financial Procedural Rule 5 Additional Revenue Provision for Residual Economic Recovery Fund 2023/24 (18 May Cabinet agenda item 14)

Reason for Urgency:

To enable pre-decision scrutiny on those reports ahead of Cabinet decision.

Both urgent reports were presented in conjunction with one another. Minute 113 below reflects the discussions that took place for both reports.

113 Urgent Item - Cabinet agenda item 14: Financial Procedural Rule 5 Additional Revenue Provision for Residual Economic Recovery Fund 2023/24.

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance & Strategy (Leader), the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance, the Director of Finance and the Head of Property Services were all present for Scrutiny of the 2 urgent items, which were presented together.

Recent budget history and principles around the creation of the Economic Recovery Fund, and rationale for additional spending was highlighted to the Committee.

Cabinet was being asked to approve an additional capital allocation of £4,595,000 to the Capital Budget and Programme, with £4,550,000 via the Economic Recovery Fund, together with existing funds of £45,000 held under Capital for Street Sports:

- additional allocation of £2,050,000 re. Play Sufficiency
- additional allocation of £1,045,000 re. Skate Facilities, together with existing funds of £45,000 held for Street Sports
- additional allocation of £1,500,000 re. Domiciliary Care Travel

Cabinet was also being asked to approve schemes associated with residual Economic Recovery Fund to be undertaken in the 2023/24 financial year, with £4,530,000 available to release now as a final one-off sum for new priorities, adding to the 2023/24 Council revenue budget spending plans. The Committee noted that the ability to add items to the 2023/24 budget was due to the residual ERF and estimated unallocated balances on the central inflation provision as the energy spend would be lower than the assumed up to £15 million and consequently there would be a further use of reserves available to Cabinet in year. The schemes listed within Appendix A of the report (Cabinet Item 14) were already approved and would continue, however the schemes listed within Appendix B were additional items. The largest of these being: £1m for Levelling Up to target and support areas of multiple deprivation; Free Buses (£600k); Play Areas (£500k); Car Parking Offers / New Charges (£500k); Patch Team (£450k); Local Bus Support (£400k); and Enhanced Drainage Cleaning (£350k). It was clarified that in relation to the 17 additional priorities set out in the report, the summary showed full Revenue Costs.

In response to questions, it was made clear to the Committee that:

- these were 'one-off' allocations for 2023/24 (i.e., this year) to spend available ERF monies, and did not create any long-term pressure on the Council budget.
- subject to Cabinet approval of the reports, the ERF would then be fully committed.
- should there be any underspend then it would be a matter for the Director of Finance and Cabinet to consider whether any 'carry-over' is appropriate, taking into account other priorities that may emerge and subject to future funding.

The Committee also asked questions on various items to try to get into some of detail, in particular on Skate Facilities, and Domiciliary Care Travel with the following answers:

- The Capital allocation for Skate Facilities would include upgrade to existing facilities as well as creation of two new facilities like the new facility on Mumbles Road, to meet demand.
- The Capital allocation for Domiciliary Care Travel related to a requirement from the Welsh Government for all Welsh Councils to commit funds to encourage recruitment of Domiciliary Care Workers, and it was felt the best way to do this would be to enhance the offer to staff with investment towards vehicles that would help with worker mobility particularly for work in more rural / remote locations. The Committee Cabinet queried how the £1.5m will be managed and would ask the relevant Scrutiny Panel to monitor this, as this investment will give rise to ongoing revenue costs that the Social Services Directorate will need to manage.

The Committee felt that a number of the new items of expenditure will generate interest from Councillors across the city and county to see how schemes can benefit their local areas, for example CCTV Cameras, Disabled Parking Bays, Dropped Kerbs, Youth Engagement, and Cabinet would need to discuss the best way these funds can be used. As well as the input Cabinet will seek from relevant officers, Committee members felt there should be Councillor engagement with a mechanism developed that will ensure an equitable distribution of investment across local areas, with clear process for prioritisation given limited resources to deliver improvements. It was suggested that Councillors should be encouraged by Cabinet to identify priorities that can be considered as part of the process. Given the time and effort it takes to produce proposals the Committee advised that would help to have greater clarity about criteria that will improve the success rate when Councillors do submit plans.

The Committee felt it was a very helpful session which enabled the Committee to understand the variance to agreed budget and financial implications. Overall the Committee had no issues with the recommendations in the reports and proposed Cabinet decision, and broadly welcomed the additional investment that would benefit residents across the city and county.

The Chair thanked all Members, Officers and Board Members.

Resolved that the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee write to the Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance & Strategy, reflecting the discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

The Chair stated that Councillor Holley would attend the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 18 May, on his behalf, to provide verbal feedback on both reports.

114 Scrutiny Performance Panel Progress Report: Climate Change & Nature (Councillor Hannah Lawson, Convener).

Councillor H Lawson provided a report summarising the work of the Climate Change & Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel over the past year, and key issues which the Panel had focussed on.

Resolved that the Scrutiny Performance Panel Progress report in respect of Climate Change & Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel be noted.

115 Membership of Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups.

No revisions were reported.

116 Scrutiny Letters.

The Chair presented a report on 'Scrutiny Letters' for information.

117 End of Year Review 2022/23.

The Chair presented a report on the End of Year Review 2022/23 and invited Committee members to reflect on their experience and provide their views, for example:

- Had things worked well within the Committee over the past year?
- Had the Committee's work and overall work programme focused on the right things?
- What, if anything, could be done better?

The following comments were made:

- The Annual Work Planning Conference is a good way to get all Councillors involved in identifying Scrutiny priorities for the year ahead.
- Recent Inquiry Panels have worked very well.
- The timing of Scrutiny activity should be considered to ensure topics are being discussed at the right time when it will enable meaningful discussion and maximum impact and value. This will help encourage councillor engagement in Scrutiny.
- The timeliness of financial monitoring information to support effective Scrutiny and better co-ordination with Cabinet reporting, needs to be considered.
- Tourism will be an important topic for the Development & Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel to monitor given its importance to the local economy.
- Overall, the work of Scrutiny should be mindful of pressure not only on officers providing information but on Councillors participating in Scrutiny. It would help if Councillors were clear about the demands of any Scrutiny activity to help them consider their involvement and ensure they can give their time to it, balancing other demands whether within Scrutiny or elsewhere.
- Whether there is scope to provide Councillors with more time to review agendas / information to help them to prepare for meetings.
- The Committee will need to consider the impact of any reduction in resources on the Work Programme and capacity, as the proposed deletion of a Scrutiny Officer post within budget savings for 2023/24 was only deferred for 1 year. The Committee will need to consider quality vs quantity, ensuring effective scrutiny but also good coverage of scrutiny across all important areas of the Council.
- All paid thanks to the Scrutiny Team for all their continued hard work and support over the year.

The Chair stated that all Scrutiny Performance Panels had also been invited to reflect on their work and observations that might inform future Scrutiny and improve the effectiveness of the Panel.

A Councillor Scrutiny Survey had also been circulated in recent weeks to gather feedback from all Councillors, and survey results, once analysed, would be included in the Scrutiny Annual Report.

In addition to self-evaluation, the Chair stated that post-meeting feedback is now being collected from Cabinet Member and officers attending Scrutiny meetings. The

Committee was advised that this feedback has been very positive. He shared two improvement suggestions arising from this:

- With hybrid meetings it is useful when the Chair says who is in the physical room, as it is unclear from the cameras to those participating online.
- Being careful not to stray into personal / ward specific issues during Scrutiny

In terms of next steps, the Chair informed the Committee that:

- The Council AGM on 18 May will re-appoint the Scrutiny Programme Committee as a Council body and the Committee will elect its Chair and Vice-Chair for 2023/24.
- A Scrutiny Work Planning Conference is being planned for 4 pm on 13 June 2023, which will be an 'in-person' event at the Lord Mayor's Reception Room, Guildhall. Councillors will have the opportunity to contribute ideas at the Conference, but should they wish to raise anything ahead of that they can email suggestions to the Chair or Scrutiny Team Leader. Taking into account Conference feedback the Committee will meet in July to agree the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2023/24.

Pre-decision Scrutiny on an upcoming Cabinet report: 'FPR7 Redevelopment of 277-278 Oxford Street - Community Hub Project' will take place. Should the report proceed to a Cabinet meeting on 15 June, as currently planned, a Special Scrutiny Programme Committee meeting will be held at 3pm on 13 June, i.e., immediately before the Work Planning Conference.

118 Date and Time of Upcoming Panel / Working Group Meetings.

The Chair referred to the date and time of upcoming Scrutiny Panel/Working Group Meetings, for information.

The meeting ended at 4.52 pm

Chair