



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, 13 February 2024 at 9.00 am

Present: Councillor C A Holley (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

P M Black
L James
M Jones
M W Locke
M S Tribe

Councillor(s)

C M J Evans
D H Jenkins
S M Jones
B J Rowlands
T M White

Councillor(s)

E W Fitzgerald
M H Jones
J W Jones
W G Thomas

Officer(s)

Ben Smith
Rachel Percival

Director of Finance / Section 151 Officer
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): P R Hood-Williams

58 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

There were no disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

59 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None.

60 Minutes

Minutes of previous meeting were agreed.

61 Public Questions

There were no public questions received.

62 Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Cabinet Reports: Annual Budget

The Leader and Ben Smith the Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer attended. They talked through the following:

Medium Term Financial Planning 2025/26 to 2027/28 (MTFP)

- There are no material changes to planning assumptions since the draft MTFP presented to the Panel in January.
- There is uncertainty and potential for changes over time to the MTFP which makes forecasting a challenge.
- The fire service levy equates to 1% of the proposed 5.99% Council Tax rise.

Revenue Budget 2024/25

- There are potential changes to the Revenue Budget due to further Welsh and UK Governments announcements before Council in March.
- Schools are receiving a one off cash uplift of £7m from the Hwb ICT reserve. This has not come from general School reserves.
- Additional comments from the public consultation will be made available to Councillors in due course.
- The levy of the Corporate Joint Committee has been reduced by 10%. Due to requirements for work programme delivery this could not be reduced further.
- There are no plans in the Revenue Budget to cut Local Area Coordinators however reference was made to a discussion during pre scrutiny of Social Services budgets on 12 February that there is a risk to funding.

Capital Budget and Programme 2023/24 – 2028/29

- The capital programme is ambitious however assurances were given that the cost of servicing the debt remains affordable with plans to wait to borrow further when interest rates have reduced.
- Capital underspend and attendant saving on revenue capital financing costs has either been used to offset the revenue budget overspends or added to the Capital Equalisation Reserve. Potential future borrowing of £50m is built into the Medium Term Financial Plan although there are future decisions in the longer term for how the £50m is to be timed for external borrowing and financed temporarily in the meantime.
- The School Building Programme has no specific delays and current plans are to proceed as scheduled.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budget 2024/25 and Capital Budget and Programme 2023/24 – 2027/28

- Assurances were given that the current ringfenced reserves are adequate for the HRA.
- It was noted that service charges for social housing are uplifted annually in addition to rents.

Panel Members feedback for Cabinet based on their discussions will be addressed in a letter to the Leader and presented to Cabinet by the Chair on 15 February 2024.

63 Exclusion of the Public

The public were excluded from the meeting on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as set out in Paragraph 14 of Schedule 12A of the

Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007.

64 Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Cabinet Reports: Annual Budget

65 Work Plan

The Panel noted the Work Plan.

66 Letters

The meeting ended at 11.15 am

Chair