



City and County of Swansea

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

Multi-Location Meeting - Lilian Hopkin Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Tuesday, 10 December 2024 at 10.00 am

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

**Councillor(s)**

P M Black  
D H Jenkins  
J W Jones  
M S Tribe

**Councillor(s)**

C M J Evans  
M H Jones  
M W Locke  
T M White

**Councillor(s)**

L James  
M Jones  
W G Thomas

**Cabinet Member(s)**

Rob Stewart  
Elliott King

Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy  
Cabinet Member for Culture, Human Rights and Equalities

Cyril Anderson

Cabinet Member for Community (Services)

**Officer(s)**

Ben Smith  
Nigel Williams  
Matthew Perkins  
Lisa Richards  
Karen Gibbins  
Karen Davies  
Rachel Percival

Director of Finance / S.151 Officer  
Head of Corporate Building Services and Waste  
Group Leader, Waste  
Senior Contacts and Projects Manager  
Library Services Manager  
Principal Librarian  
Scrutiny Officer

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): S M Jones

### 45 **Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, the following interests were declared:

Cllrs Chris Holley and Mark Tribe declared a Personal Interest relating to minute item 50.

### 46 **Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips**

None.

#### **47 Minutes**

Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

#### **48 Public Questions**

There were no public questions received.

#### **49 Mid Term Budget Statement 2024/25**

- The Leader and Ben Smith attended to give an overview and answer questions.
- At the time of our meeting, the full announcement by Welsh Government and the Local Government Settlement was imminently expected.
  - The officer was anticipating an uplift for Swansea of 6-7%, including National Insurance compensation at this point, which remained unknown and might not be in the settlement at all.
  - The 6-7% equates to around £27m to be added to the overall envelope for aggregate external finance if NI is included. Therefore 1% equates to around £4m in cash.
  - Teachers' pension and pay compensation would either come through the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) or as continued separate grant for next year (as was the case in the current year). The officer felt it was more likely to be in the RSG. National Insurance is not expected to be part of the RSG.
  - This uplift would not negate the need to make significant savings, but the savings would be small in proportion to the likely increase in revenue support grants and the overall resources available to the Council.
  - Plans are to publish the necessary budget proposals as early as possible in January so that planning can be made with more certainty, then a comprehensive spending review will be conducted midyear next year to inform the following three years.

#### **50 Recycling and Landfill - Annual Performance Monitoring Report**

- Cllr Cyril Anderson and Matthew Perkins presented the report and answered questions.
- In 2023/24 the Council exceeded the current statutory recycling target of 64% by achieving 70.5%, this places the Local Authority 5th Wales for recycling performance.
  - In the Welsh Local Government Association financial benchmarking from 2022-23, the Council was shown to have the third lowest net expenditure in Wales.
  - Reusable containers will be rolled out in 2025 once more details on a flexible plastic trial have been received so the two can be rolled out simultaneously.
  - Engagement in targeted areas continues with the use of the Keep Recycling Out policy. Fines can also be issued.
  - Welsh Government are reviewing future recycling targets which may have more carbon outcomes and focus on reduction not just recycling. The Council are therefore awaiting future guidance.

- Public facing segregated bins remain a challenge as they can be misused. This does therefore discourage workplaces and community spaces like libraries from having public facing bins. The roll out of the Deposit Return Scheme may help to improve this.
- Black bags are not currently sorted through for additional recycling.
- Robotic technology is improving but currently is expensive and too experimental for wider roll out.
- Corporate complaints are picked up by collection supervisors. There has been several challenges this year and it was hoped that complaint numbers would go back down to normal levels in future.
- The Panel have asked for detailed report on the bailing plant in due course.

## **51 Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Performance Report**

Cllr Elliott King, Karen Gibbins and Karen Davies attended to present the report and answer questions.

- Swansea Library Service submits data annually to the Welsh Government as part of the Welsh Public Libraries Framework as a way of checking that the Local Authority is providing this legislative service.
- All 13 core entitlements were met. There were also 16 quality indicators, seven of which have targets. Of these seven quality indicators, four were met in full, one in part and two were not met.
- Swansea Libraries continue to perform well and compares well with other Authorities on virtual usage, event attendance, which has gone up by 48% and in general user support which has gone up by 158%. Other positives were partnership working, engaging with schools and satisfaction levels of 91% for these types of user support.
- It performs less well in terms of acquisitions including Welsh language books, the number of qualified staff and the amount of time staff devote to training. The officer laid out plans for improvements in all these areas.
- Condition surveys identified critical issues several years ago and works have taken place.
- The community hub project review is ongoing and looks at the future model of community hubs. There are currently no plans to close any libraries. The Panel would like to see the community hubs report when this is published.
- A new management system is due to be activated imminently.
- The Panel have asked for further information regarding the numbers of staff and long term absences currently in the library service and the footfall/usage of the individual libraries and their estimated stock levels.

## **52 Work Plan**

The work plan was noted.

**53 Letters**

The meeting ended at 11.59 am

**Chair**