

Minutes of the Meeting of LEARNING COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
held at the Zoom on Thursday, 17 February 2022

PRESENT; Councillor Wyn Thomas (Chairman), Councillors Bryan Davies, Euros Davies, Marc Davies, Meirion Davies, Rhodri Davies, Endaf Edwards, Keith Evans, Hag Harris, Paul Hinge, Gwyn James, Alun Lloyd Jones, Lynford Thomas and Ivor Williams

Also in attendance: Councillors Ellen ap Gwyn, Ray Quant, Catrin Miles, Catherine Hughes, Rhodri Evans, Ceredig Davies

1.30pm – 4.10pm

1 Apologies

Councillor Odwyn Davies and Mark Strong apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.

2 Disclosure of Personal/Prejudicial Interests (including whipping declarations) Members are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. In addition, Members must declare any prohibited party whip which the Member has been given in relation to the meeting as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

None

3 Report on the draft Budget for 2022/23

The Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members met to consider the Service budget for those service areas that are within the Committee's remit and to consider the following recommendations:

1. To consider the overall Revenue and Capital Budgets proposed.
2. To consider the estimated Cost pressures being faced (£13.173m across all aspects).
3. To consider the proposed Fees & charges and the resulting estimated £155k additional income to assist with the Savings required.
4. To note the proposed £230k Travelling Savings Target for Officers & Members.
5. To note the £113k Savings Balance still required to be found.
6. To consider the 3 options proposed for Council Tax levels of 4.75%, 5.0% & 5.25%.
7. To provide any other appropriate Draft Budget related feedback to Cabinet.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, presented the report on the draft budget for 2022/2023 including the three year capital programme, explaining that this is a provisional settlement, and that the final settlement is due on the 1st March, 2022.

The Leader also stated that a letter had been received on 17th February 2022 from Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government announcing an increase of £50m for the local government settlement for 2021-2022. The amount to be allocated to Ceredigion County Council is unknown to date but is likely to be circa £1m. The funding is un-hypothecated (i.e. not allocated to specific services) and can be carried forward in reserves to the 2022-2023 financial year. It was explained that the implications of this additional funding would need to be considered and how that would be allocated for the 2022-2023 budget.

Members welcomed the additional funding but expressed their disappointment that the announcement was late and that it didn't allow for scrutiny to take place based on the new information. The Chief Executive confirmed that information would be presented for Council on 3rd March 2022 and that there would be an opportunity for further debate.

The relevant Cabinet Member presented the information relevant to their Service Area. Members were then given the opportunity for questions which were answered in turn by Cabinet Members and/or Officers.

Committee Members considered the Cost Pressures for those service areas that are within the Committee's remit; namely:

- Schools & Culture and Porth Cymorth Cynnar

And:

Committee Members considered the proposed Fees and Charges changes under the

Committee's remit in Appendix D, pages 14 to 15 of 51, of the agenda papers.

The Committee agreed that the 3 options proposed for Council Tax levels would not be discussed at today's meeting due the Welsh Government announcement that an estimated additional £1million had been allocated to Ceredigion Council.. Further discussions will take place at Council.

Recommendations:

Following consideration, Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:

1. **APPROVE** the overall Revenue and Capital Budgets proposed;
2. **APPROVE** the estimated Cost Pressures;
3. **APPROVE** the proposed Fees and Charges as outlined in Enclosure D, appendix 2 of the agenda papers, (pages 14-15 of 51)
4. **AGREED** to note the proposed £230k Travelling Savings Target for Officers & Members;

5. **AGREED** to note the £113k Savings Balance still required to be found.

The Committee did not have any other feedback related to the Draft Budget for Cabinet to consider.

4 Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32

The Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members considered the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32. An eight week consultation was held on the content of the Plan from 20.9.21 to 12.11.21. A range of responses to that consultation were received which have been collated, along with the Local Authority's comments, in the document 'WESP - response to the consultation'.

The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan was submitted to the Welsh Government on 31.1.22 and any comments they may make will be presented as amendments to the original Plan. There is no set date for the Welsh Government to submit its response to Local Authorities.

Following consideration of the consultation responses the committee **AGREED** to recommend the following to the Cabinet:

- i) To agree to adopt the content of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for 2022-2032 and to implement it from 1 September 2022 and for the following decade
- ii) That any comments made by the Welsh Government are included as amendments to the Plan and submitted to the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet for information
- iii) That an annual Action Plan is prepared and monitored through the Language Forum and the Bilingual Futures committee.
- iv) That an annual report on progress against the Welsh Education Strategic Plan is submitted to the Language Forum, Bilingual Futures committee, Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet

5 Minutes of the previous meeting and any matters arising therefrom

The Committee resolved to confirm the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 15th December as a correct record.

Matters arising
None.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 March 2022

Chairman: _____

Date: _____