

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: **THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

SUBJECT: **SPECIAL CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 26TH SEPTEMBER, 2019**

REPORT OF: **DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors M. Cook
P. Edwards
J. Hill
L. Parsons
J. Wilkins

**Leader of the Council/Executive Member –
Corporate Services**
Councillor N. Daniels

AND: Managing Director
Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
Chief Officer – Commercial
Chief Officer - Resources
Head of Education Transformation
Head of Governance & Partnerships
Head of Children's Services
Team Leader Performance
Organisational Development Manager –
Payroll / Health & Safety
Corporate Health & Safety Advisor
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u>	

	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Paulsen and D. Wilkshire.	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2018/19</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to give Members the opportunity to consider options to allocate £9.9 million of capital funding to the capital programme for the period to 2025/26 based upon a review of current available capital resources and an assumption of capital funding from the Welsh Government for 2024/25 and 2025/26.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member commented on the Cemeteries Investment Programme and said that some cemeteries, including one in his Ward, was running out of burial space and enquired if this issue could be part of the scheme. The Director of Regeneration & Community Services said that this was a programme of works and whilst financial investment in the infrastructure of the seven cemeteries would increase public satisfaction and improve the visitor experience, the issue of running out of burial space would need to be addressed through a separate piece of work.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding timelines of the 21st Century Schools Band B Programme – Secondary School Remodelling Projects. The Head of Education Transformation said that secondary schools were a priority for future investment. Due to the complexity of remodelling ‘live’ schools and to minimise disruption to pupils and provide more time to plan and prepare, remodelling would commence from 2022 in the Band B programme.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s enquiry regarding Tredegar Company Shop, the Director of Regeneration & Community Services said that work with CADW had</p>	

progressed and the funding allocation would help to address issues going forward, however, it was difficult to predict a timescale for the end of the project.

The Leader/Executive Member – Corporate Services commented that officers had prepared a fair capital programme with Education and Household Waste receiving political and professional support from across the Council. In relation to maintenance of cemeteries a programme of works to improve the condition of cemeteries had now been agreed. He felt that this was a fundamentally balanced budget and that it would be prudent to retain a substantial contingency for allocation at a future date.

The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 3; namely a combination of paring down the schemes in period 1 (19/2020 to 23/2024 which was the most oversubscribed) by 20% to allow the funding to meet the requirements of an optimum number of schemes and allocating to the highest scoring projects in periods 2 and 3, leaving funding remaining in each period for allocation at a future date.

No. 5

ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE 2018/19

Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Performance and Democratic which presented the Council’s Assessment of Performance 2018/19 for Members consideration.

The Head of Governance & Partnerships spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein. The document picked up key points such as engagement, etc. and was a mixture of case studies and key activities. For publication the document would be formally formatted to make it more accessible and readable for the public. The info graphic pages would cover the high level performance and engagement with the community. As the Assessment of Performance was subject to external audit by the Wales Audit Office it was important to capture the progress the Council had made against each Well-being Objective in 2018/19 to ensure the Council was compliant.

	<p>A Member commented that it was an interesting and easy to read document. The Head of Governance and Partnerships said that it demonstrated the Council's commitment to the community.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Council's Assessment of Performance 2018/19 be recommended for approval at Council and for publication before 31st October, 2019.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 01/04/2018 – 31/03/2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development and the Corporate Health and Safety Advisor which presented details of the annual Authority's Health and Safety and Fire Safety at work performance.</p> <p>The Organisational Development Manager – Payroll / Health & Safety spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member enquired if there were any recurring accidents/incidents. The Corporate Health & Safety Advisor said that there were some recurring incidents but these were followed up with recommendations for preventing further incidents. There had been a significant increase in employee accidents/incidents in the Education Department in relation to violence and aggression towards school based staff and this would require further analysis.</p> <p>A Member referred to the 112 accidents/incidents investigated and asked if this was an increase on last year. The Corporate Health & Safety Advisor said that 112 accidents/incidents was not the total number as it depended on the nature of the accident how the Health & Safety Advisors responded i.e. telephone, etc.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding listing the different types of attacks on staff, the Corporate Health & Safety Advisor explained that this information was reported to the Health & Safety Executive, however, it was not included in the Annual Report as it would be a more</p>	

	<p>complex and difficult to read document. A staff training matrix had been prepared but further training for school based staff needed to be developed. The Member reiterated that it was important that Members be aware of the different types of attacks on staff. The Corporate Health & Safety Advisor said that the inclusion of a more detailed account of accidents/incidents regarding violence and aggression towards staff would be considered for future Annual Reports.</p> <p>The Chair enquired regarding the reasons for the increase in staff absence. The Corporate Health & Safety Advisor said that a separate piece of work in relation to the attendance policy was being undertaken and his colleagues in Organisational Development would have more detail regarding absence statistics.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Directorate reviews their health & safety management arrangements to ensure they have the capacity to comply with statutory duties; • Any strategic/operational decisions taken by services must be subject to a health & safety risk assessment within the wider impact assessments; and • The Health & Safety Section produces a bi-annual report to the Corporate Leadership Team detailing service areas of non-compliance in relation to fire risk assessments and health & safety inspections with the aim to achieve full compliance. Due to the upward trend within the Education Department it is recommended that a detailed investigation is carried out and a report is produced detailing the findings. 	<p>Health & Safety Advisor</p>
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>PREPARATIONS FOR EXITING THE EU</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Governance & Partnerships and the Policy Officer which was presented to provide an update on the preparatory work underway at the Council to prepare for the UK's exit from the EU.</p> <p>The Head of Governance & Partnerships spoke to the</p>	

report and highlighted the main points contained therein, which included that there was a level of uncertainty of the full implications of exiting the EU and the situation remained fluid. Members would be aware of the national picture and that the Welsh Government had published its 'no deal' Action Plan which contained 14 strategic risks. The majority of those risks were outlined in the Council's impact assessment document prepared by the Officer Brexit Core Planning Group (BCPG). The Group used a collaborative approach across services to look at specific issues such as Social Care and engaged with local businesses to determine their views, concerns and preparations for Brexit and received advice and guidance from the WLGA and the Welsh Government.

The Council was working actively with regional partners through the Wales and Gwent Local Resilience Forum to facilitate a collective approach to respond to any risks and issues associated with leaving the EU. A business engagement event had been held in March 2019 and a further event was planned for October and would consider risks relating to any recruitment and retention issues. Work was underway to support the EU settlement scheme and EU national members of the public would receive direct support through the Community Cohesion Officers.

There was uncertainty regarding the EU Investment Fund beyond the end of the current EU funding programme (December 2020). Grant funding from the Welsh Government had been secured through the WLGA for Brexit planning preparations facilitated by the Corporate Policy Officer. The Council was doing everything possible to prepare and understand issues facing the Authority and in the event that the UK did not leave the EU on the 31st October, the work already undertaken in relation to understanding supply and supporting local people could be used in other aspects of work for future issues.

The Head of Governance & Partnerships advised that the Members briefing session on exiting the EU would be held on 16th October, 2019 to enable representatives from the WLGA to attend.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be

accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report be noted and the Members briefing session on exiting the EU for all Council Members be held on 16 th October, 2019; and further committee reports as part of the forward work programme be noted.	
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