

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale on Monday, 29th January, 2018 at 5 p.m.

PRESENT

County Borough Councillor M.J.Powell – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

S.Bradwick	S.Rees-Owen
G.R.Davies	T.Williams
J.Elliott	C.J.Willis
G.Holmes	R.Yeo
W.Lewis	

Non Committee Members in Attendance

County Borough Councillor L.M.Adams – Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Mr.R.Hull – Chair and Lay member of the Audit Committee

Officers in Attendance

Mr.C.Lee – Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services
Mr.B.Davies – Director, Financial Services
Mrs S Davies – Head of Finance
Mr.C.B.Jones – Director, Legal & Democratic Services
Ms.K.May – Head of Democratic Services

28 **WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed Ms K.Simmons, Performance Auditor of the Wales Audit Office, to the meeting.

29 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors S.Belzak (ex officio Member) and J.Cullwick.

30 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

RESOLVED – to note that in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct there were no personal declarations made at the meeting pertaining to the agenda.

31 MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee held on the 18th December, 2017.

31 MATTERS ARISING

Following the meeting of this Committee held on the 18th December, 2017, and prior to today's meeting, Members had been provided with the amount of Council Tax raised in each Community Area within Rhondda Cynon Taf, copies of which were also circulated at the meeting.

Some Members were still of the view that the level of Council Tax should be varied for different areas within the County Borough. The Director of Financial Services once again, explained to Members that there is no statutory basis for this in that there is a legal requirement to have a single level of Council Tax each year that applies to all community areas of a local authority (excluding variations as a result of areas with Community Councils)

Following a discussion, the Member concerned wished to have recorded the fact that he still felt very strongly about the amount of Council Tax raised in the community areas of Taff-Ely compared to the community areas within Rhondda and Cynon Valley.

32 WORK PROGRAMME

Members were given the opportunity to update the Committee's Work Programme which had been agreed at the meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee held on the 24th July, 2017.

One Member wished to have further information on the Council's Reserves, when it was indicated by the Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services that the information is reported on a regular basis to Members and is contained within the Council Performance reports that are presented to this Committee on a quarterly basis. However, he would provide an overview should Members so wish at a future meeting.

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee reminded Members that in accordance with the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Procedure Rules as set out in Part 4, Section 1(b)(i); the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to review the thematic Scrutiny Committees' Work Programmes to ensure that there is efficient use of the Committees' time and that the potential for duplication of effort is minimised.

RESOLVED – that the Work Programmes of the Thematic Scrutiny Committees be considered at the meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs/Vice-Chairs meeting which is scheduled to take place on Wednesday of this week, 31st January, 2018.

33 THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT 2018/19 REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY PRE-SCRUTINY

The Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services provided Members with a presentation in respect of the Council's Draft 2018/19 Revenue Budget Strategy which contained the views of the Council's Senior Leadership Team under the following headings:-

- Council's Current Financial Position
- The 2018/19 Final Local Government Settlement
- The Starting Point Budget Gap
- Budget Consultation Outcomes
- Key Building Blocks
 - Council Tax
 - Schools
- The Final Budget Gap and Strategy Options
- Conclusion and Next Steps

Following the observations made, the Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services indicated that the overview provided was to assist Members in formulating their views on the draft proposals especially with regard to:

- Council Tax levels
- A proposed schools increase
- Fees & Charges
 - Level of increase
 - Any exceptions/variations
- Strategy options to close remaining budget gap

A Member raised a query in relation to the decision that was made at the last Council Meeting held on the 17th January, 2017 in relation to the new level of Council Tax 0% discount for all Class C properties in RCT i.e. those properties which have been empty for longer than six months, effective from 1st April, 2018; which it was estimated would result in an increase of £1.5M.

In response the Group Director stated that the £1.5M is a one off additional resource which would be set aside and added to the funding available through the Council's Empty Property Grant Scheme.

In response to a further query raised at the meeting, the Group Director explained the process in respect of transitional funding which allows the Council to move away from the annual budget setting process and supports the council in smoothing the impact of part year savings and costs of future years. He also indicated that through savings achieved in year, the level of transitional funding was being replenished on a regular basis.

Members were happy with the proposed Council Tax level and queried the levels that had been proposed by other local authorities in Wales, when it was

indicated by the Group Director that like this Authority, other Welsh Authorities were still at the consultation phase and therefore it would be difficult to make assumptions until such time as the Council Tax levels are publicly ratified.

The Committee also welcomed the schools increase as most Members were on the Governing Bodies of schools within their respective areas, who were also facing challenging times in meeting the budget gaps.

Members were also pleased to see that Community and Adults care had been protected.

One Member wished to place on record that within the public consultation report (page 74) under the heading `Highways` that the speed bumps referred to at Ton Pentre were not funded by the Council but were funded from the windfarm that had been installed at Blaenavon.

Following a discussion, the Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services stated that the views of Members of this Committee would be fed back to the Cabinet at its meeting in February which would be incorporated into a report that would be presented to full Council on the 28th February, 2018.

34 2017/18 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT STEWARDSHIP REPORT

The Committee received the Head of Finance who provided Members with an overview of the Treasury Management information that was presented to Council on the 29th November, 2017 detailing:-

- The Council's Treasury Management activity during the first six months of 2017/18; and
- Prudential Indicators for the same period.

Following consideration of the report that was presented to the Council on the 29th November, 2017, it was **RESOLVED** – to endorse the recommendations that were agreed by Council on the 29th November, 2017.

**M.J.POWELL
CHAIR**

The meeting closed at 6.09 p.m.