

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 14 November 2016

Time: 11.00 am

Present: Councillors D Wilcox (Chair), P Cockeram, G Giles, D Harvey, R Jeavons, R Poole, J Richards, R Truman and M Whitcutt

In Attendance: Mr W Godfrey (Chief Executive); Mr M Nicholson and Ms B Owen (Strategic Directors); Mr G D Price (Head of Law and Regulation); Mr M Rushworth (Head of Finance) ; Mr R Cornwall (Head of People and Business Change) and Mr J Harris (Chief Education Officer

1 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion

2 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 17 and 28 October 2016 were confirmed as true records by the Cabinet

3 **Education/ Pupil Performance Data 2014/15 Key Stages 1, 2 and 3**

(This item was discussed out of order and later at the meeting owing to the attendance of EAS representatives)

The Cabinet Member for Education and Young People introduced a report that provided Cabinet with combined pupil performance data for Newport schools at Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and 3. The report highlighted the expected levels of achievement at the end of the foundation phase, key stage 2 and 3. The data also provided comparisons between gender achievement levels and compares performance with the national average for Wales.

The Cabinet Member referred to excellent performance in the foundation phase. This had improved from 88.1% in 2015, to 89.1% pupils achieving the foundation phase indicator (FPI) in 2016, an increase of 1 percentage point. Newport currently ranks 6th in Wales for the FPI when compared with other local authorities, which is above the LA's Free School Meals ranking (16th, 2016 PLASC data), and above the rank position of 8th in 2015. Cabinet was informed that in order to ensure that Newport sustains very strong outcomes at Foundation Phase, a series of programmes and actions had been agreed by the Local Authority and will be delivered by the EAS. These programmes and actions were set out in detail in the report

Cabinet was informed by the Cabinet Member that as to Key Stage 2, performance remained good with 88.8% pupils achieving the core subject indicator (CSI), 0.5 percentage points below 89.3% in 2015. Newport is ranked 12th in Wales, which is higher than could be expected given the LA's Free School Meals ranking. Cabinet Members were informed that in order to sustain Newport's strong Key Stage 2 performance a series of actions were set out in the report. These actions would be carried out by the EAS

The Cabinet Member described Key Stage 3 performance as adequate. However, there was a good three year improvement trend at all levels. Level 5 and 6 outcomes are above the regional average but below that of Wales. The level 5 CSI is 1.5% below Welsh Government modelled expectation, although the gap is closing over time. Actions to address issues were set out in the report

The Cabinet was pleased to note that Newport continues to perform above the all Wales average and well above its 'natural' local authority ranking position for Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 pupil outcomes. The Cabinet considered it encouraging seeing progress in Key Stage 3 pupil outcomes whilst at the same recognising that challenges remain at secondary level

The representative of the EAS in attendance at the meeting stated that whilst encouraging progress had been made; Key Stage 3 outcomes remain a challenge and must improve in order to secure better outcomes for pupils at Key Stage 4. The continuing gap between boys and girls – whilst again improving- also needed to be monitored carefully and addressed.

The EAS representative also mentioned that with Newport's increasing diversity, some schools were showing best practices in dealing with its diverse school populations and these were being shared with others as examples of good practice.

Decisions:

To acknowledge the position regarding pupil performance, actions planned and progress made

4 Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 - Assessment of Local Well-being

The Deputy Leader introduced a report which referred to the previous reports on the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 presented to Cabinet in in March and September. The Act is about improving the social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and requires public bodies to think about the long term, work with communities and each other and take a joined up approach.

The Act also established a Public Services Board (PSB) which in Newport is chaired by the Deputy Leader but essentially works as a partnership. The report presented to the Cabinet related to the requirement for the PSB to develop an Assessment of Local Wellbeing.

The Deputy Leader stated that the Assessment of Local Wellbeing will be produced by the December meeting of the PSB. Following consultation with key bodies, including Scrutiny, the Assessment must be published by April 2017.

The assessment must provide an accurate analysis of the state of well-being in each community and in the area as a whole. This will include assessments of communities in the area, which in Newport will be a development of the existing ward profiles. The consultation on Newport's Assessment of Local Wellbeing was underway and it was reported that some 3000 responses had been received to date.

The ward profiles have been in place since 2013/14 and have since been updated on an annual basis and are public documents on the Council's website. To tie in with all the good work that has already been undertaken, the ward profiles will be further developed and refined to become community well-being profiles. This will incorporate the previous valuable work undertaken within the ward profiles but meet the needs of the Act.

The report outlined the detailed guidance, and what would be included in the profiles.

The Deputy Leader was pleased to report progress in other areas including new scrutiny arrangements, including policy review group; Member training held on 1st November 2016; progress on the local Assessment of Wellbeing underway as outlined in the report; progress on the engagement programme and the revision of key documentation and processes, including Cabinet report template.

The Deputy Leader stated that further updates will be reported to Cabinet, including the draft wellbeing objectives and statement, planned for January 2017, ahead of budget and other timelines.

Decisions:

To approve the Action Plan

5 **Revenue Budget Monitoring**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources introduced a report informing the Cabinet that as at September 2016, the Councils revenue budget is more or less 'on budget' (compared to the position in July which showed £1.18m overspending). Although the position is balanced overall, there remain significant overspends within the service areas. These areas were identified in full in the report.

Cabinet was informed by the Cabinet Member that the over-spend had been offset by non-service underspends on Council tax benefit rebates), Council tax surplus and Teachers pension savings.

The reported position excluded schools, which are currently reporting a deficit position of £2.5m. The overall service position (including Schools) is £4.26m overspend, however, Schools have nil effect on the overall Council position as any variance against base budget is matched by a corresponding reserve transfer to or from schools balances.

The Cabinet member stated that the net position assumes, as always at the early stages of the year, that the contingency budget of £1.47m is 'committed'. There are no known commitments on this currently and if this remained the case at year-end, the position would be £1.5m underspend.

The Cabinet Member informed colleagues that although the position has improved by £1.2m since that reported in July, as required by Cabinet; officers must continue to focus on specific action to address each of the overspending areas and ensure the emphasis remains on improving the position where possible and manage within budget. Non-service budgets will not necessarily be able to mitigate against service area overspending in the future.

Cabinet Members considered the Cabinet member had presented a positive report but recognised the need for management action and the 2017/18 budget needs to resolve the underlying service areas budget issues robustly.

Decisions:

- I. To note the forecast 2016/17 revenue budget position and the key risks that have been identified at this stage;
- II. To ask Cabinet Members, Directors and Heads of Service to maintain on-going strong financial management, and People and Place directorates to confirm a comprehensive set of actions to reduce their overspending;
- III. To endorse the planned reserve movements and revised balances at the end of the year.

6 Capital Programme Monitoring and Additions

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources introduced a report informing Members of the current position in relation to the Capital Programme

The Cabinet Member stated that the report sought approval from Cabinet to add 4 additional budgets into the capital programme: Three of these already exist in the programme but now have an increased budget due to additional grant award; the other was a new allocation for fit-out of the developer-built Jubilee Park Primary School, to be funded via borrowing and as advised to Cabinet in the Education report presented at the September meeting.

The Cabinet Member stated that the Cabinet that the capital budget for 2016/17 currently stands at £48.1m, with expenditure as at the end of September totalling £8.1m. He stated that at this stage, this was not a concern as the trend is for expenditure to be higher during the second half of the financial year, particularly in quarter 4. The Cabinet Member suggested, however, that another review – like the one undertaken this time last year – of phasing of budgets was required. This would help ensure that slippage is kept to a minimum and timing of spend is realistic.

The main area of slippage reported was within the Education service area due to delays in progressing with significant schemes. The 21st Century Schools programme featured three ongoing schemes that are subject to the recent request for additional grant funding from Welsh Government, which could not be delayed, meaning that expenditure continues. It was reported that the outcome of the grant increase request should be known by January 2017, at which point the necessary budget increases will be made to the capital programme.

Some of the other schemes were reported as making up the total slippage, these included asset maintenance and the Gypsy / Traveller Site, along with some Section 106 funded schemes

Cabinet was also provided with an update on the capital receipts position as at the end of September – currently at around £7.9m which exceeds the original target of £7.5m. The Head of Finance stated that there is now a need to secure at least £9.5m in order to minimise borrowing requirements on the Council's share of 21st Century Schools cost pressures.

Decisions:

- I. To approve the additions to the Capital Programme requested in the report.
- II. To note the capital expenditure forecast position as at September 2016 and to note and approve the 'risk' in spending on approved 21st Century Schools projects before confirmation of Welsh Government match funding is confirmed.
- III. To note and approve the allocation of in-year capital receipts.

7 Work Programme

The Corporate Assessment suggested to the Council that it should consider strengthening committee work programming arrangements to ensure they are timely, meaningful, informative, and transparent, balanced, monitored, and joined up.

In response to that suggestion, Cabinet had previously agreed that the Head of Democratic Services will regularly ask Chief Officers to update the Cabinet work programme and an update will be reported to Cabinet each month.

An updated work programme suggested by Chief Officers was discussed. This was, of course, a working document and will be subject to change.

Decision:

To adopt the suggested programme and provide an update at the next meeting

The meeting terminated at 12:55