

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 22 May 2019

Time: 4.00 pm

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

In Attendance: W Godfrey (Chief Executive), Ms B Owen (Corporate Director – Place), J Harris (Corporate Director – People), G Price (Head of Law and Regulation) and M Rushworth (Head of Finance)

1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 April were confirmed as a true record.

4 Wales Audit Office Report on the Council's Well-being Step to Maintain our Focus on regenerating the City Centre to become one of the UK's top cities

The Leader presented the report, the purpose of which was to present Cabinet with the Wales Audit Office (WAO) report and management action plan on how the Council is embedding the Well-being for Future Generations Act in the delivery of the Council's Well-being Objective '*To promote economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment*' and the Step to '*Maintain our focus on regenerating the city centre to become one of the UK's top cities.*'

The Leader set out the background to this and highlighted the following points:

- In 2015 the Welsh Government delivered the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act enabling all public bodies in Wales to create a Wales, and Newport, that we all want to live in now and in the future. This administration has an ambition to be one of the top cities.
- As an effective Cabinet and Council there is a need to ensure that the decisions made today consider the impact of current and future generations.
- The Well-being Act also places a duty on the Council to have regard for sustainable development and ensure throughout all of the Council's activities and decisions made that the principles of the five ways of working are considered: Long Term; Collaboration; Involvement; Prevention; and Integration.

- The Corporate Plan 2017-22 has four Well-being Objectives and the Steps that will be taken to deliver these objectives in support of the delivery of the Public Services Board's Well-being Plan 2018-23 and the Well-being Act.
- The review undertaken by the Wales Audit Office examined the extent to which Newport City Council has acted in accordance with the Well-being Act and how the Council has adopted the five ways of working in delivering the Well-being Objectives and Steps in the Corporate Plan.

The Leader set out the summary of findings contained in the report, namely:

- *'In taking steps to regenerate the city centre the Council has many positive examples of how it has taken account of the sustainable development principle (SDP). However, the Council recognises that there is more to do for it to consistently embed all of the five ways of working across its ambitions for the regeneration of the city centre.'*

The Leader noted the huge pressures imposed on staff to implement this within the authority and the Leader welcomed the findings of the report; in the decade of austerity to receive such a positive outcome is testament to members and officers alike.

In their report, WAO acknowledged the work taken to embed these principles of the five ways of working into decision-making processes, notably:

- How the Council's Economic Growth Strategy will enable an opportunity to extend a longer term vision for the city 20 years and beyond;
- The way that the Council uses current and forecasted data to improve its understanding of preventative measures and how this can be used to improve its long term environmental aspirations for the city centre;
- The Council is using its position to collaborate and integrate with other public sector, third sector and private sector partners to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan and the opportunities that the Council has to build on these arrangements;
- The improvements the Council has made to involve citizens, businesses and other stakeholders in the decision making process and the need to build on its approach to ensure the full diversity of the city is captured in these processes.

As a result of the findings the report identified ten '*areas for development*' to help further embed the five ways of working principles into the governance and delivery of the Corporate Plan.

The Leader noted that management responses have been provided to the Wales Audit Office on how the Council will action and deliver improvements as outlined in the report, which has also been considered by Scrutiny.

In conclusion, the Leader asked Cabinet to note the outcomes of the report from the Wales Audit Office and to ensure as Cabinet that regular updates will be provided on the implementation of the management actions and delivery of the Corporate Plan in all service areas.

The Cabinet reinforced the Leader's positive comments and commended the report.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed the outcomes of the report and asked to be provided with regular updates on the progress of the service area implementing the necessary management actions.

5 Corporate Safeguarding Report

The Leader introduced the report and confirmed it is the second annual Safeguarding report for Newport City Council detailing the current performance within social services in relation to

safeguarding practice and wider safeguarding partners including the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Legislation and requirements for the Council.

The report asked Cabinet to review the progress of key priority work plans for both corporate safeguarding arrangements and safeguarding specific teams. It was noted the work highlighted in the report will enable the Council to grow and ensure that safeguarding is 'everybody's business' and part of every Council service delivered to the citizens of Newport.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services gave credit to the Safeguarding Team and confirmed that whilst this message is now embedded through the Council the message now has to be relayed to the public. Mention was made of the Pilot Hub and the good results coming from joined-up services and good working practices.

The Leader requested that some thought is given to providing Young Carer Awards.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed to continue to develop corporate safeguarding practice within all services across the Council in order to enable the Council to grow and ensure that safeguarding is 'everybody's business' and part of every Council service delivered to the citizens of Newport.

6 Revenue Budget Outturn 2018/19

The Leader presented the report which set out the year-end position on the 2018/19 revenue budget.

The Leader acknowledged the effort of the whole organisation in achieving the outturn in a timely fashion which had resulted in the accounts being closed in record time in order to ensure earlier publishing of the statutory annual accounts, which will provide the ability to consider the position and make decisions earlier than in past years.

The report confirmed an underspend of c£2.3m, this represents a small variance of just 1.3% on the net budget. The figure is slightly more than the £1.6m forecast due in part to late grants received from Welsh Government and some lower spend in a few areas (as detailed in the table in paragraph 1.2 of the report). The table also confirms c£1.8m of one-off, unexpected, non-service income from VAT and rate refunds which when taken into account produced a balanced position at year-end.

The report showed a pattern of overspending in the key demand led areas and underspending in the non-service budget areas, which is as a result of better income and use of contingencies. In addition, there were some issues to be resolved in a very small number of schools which are being addressed. The Leader confirmed the vast majority of the Council's activities are spending close to budget and the challenges are in a very small number of areas which are common to nearly all Councils across the UK.

Overspending in the demand led areas amounted to approximately £5m and investment similar to that amount has been put in for the current year in line with the administration's priorities.

Regarding the underspend of £2.3m - the report recommended how the underspend could be allocated – referred to in paragraph 6.1, of the report. A few items to highlight were:

- (i) Cabinet, having previously considered the Chartist Tower re-development and the need to provide further support to ensure the re-development is a success in terms of how the city centre looks, had agreed to use £950k from the underspend in order for cladding to be installed to enhance the look of the building;

- (ii) Commitment to support the regional SENCOM service whilst it is reviewed this year and the £250k funding recommended allows funding to continue at previous levels whilst that review is carried out. However, the Leader drew Cabinet's attention to the news that the Council's contribution has reduced this year, compared to last year, and this amount can now be reduced to £190k. The Leader recommended to put the £60k this releases into the Invest to Save Reserve.
- (iii) In order to keep up the momentum on attracting and hosting national and regional events in the city, such as the Marathon, the report recommended investing £150k into a reserve to spend on this kind of activity in the future.

The Leader congratulated the Deputy Leader for his achievements in the 10k race and raising £1K for charity.

The underspend from last year is being used as additional spend this year, for the benefit of the city and the services the Council provides.

Cabinet welcomed the report. It was noted that whilst the vast majority of demand is outside the Council's control and the huge financial significance attached to that, this report demonstrates good financial management when faced with enormous demand pressures whilst still managing to set out one of the lowest council tax rates in the UK.

The Leader once again thanked the officers for delivering good financial management in a challenging year.

Cabinet was asked to:

- a) Note the out-turn position, which is subject to audit and the major variances for the year (Section 1-3 of the report); whilst noting the slight change of reducing the SENCOM reserve to £190k and putting a further £60k into the Invest to Save;
- b) To approve the use of the underspend as set out in Section 6 of the report and note the resulting level of the Council's general and earmarked reserves;
- c) Note the school's outturn and the position on the individual and total school reserves and note/comment on the next steps in this area in section 3 of the report;
- d) Note the other areas of budget pressures and challenges in section 1 and 2 of the report and note/comment on the actions currently in place to manage these.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed to accept officers recommendations and transfer the underspend into specific earmarked reserves.

7 Work Programme

The Leader presented the Cabinet Work Programme.

Decision:

To agree the proposed programme.

8 Any Other Business

Newport County AFC

The Leader wished Newport County AFC best wishes and good luck in their play-off promotion game on Saturday. Cabinet agreed the club are great ambassadors for the City.

9 Date of next meeting: 19 June 2019 at 4pm in Committee Room 1, Civic Centre

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 19 June 2019, at 4.00 pm in Committee Room 1, at the Civic Centre, Newport

The meeting terminated at Time Not Specified