

# Minutes



## Cabinet

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Date: 11 December 2024

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors D Batrouni (Chair), D Davies, R Howells, S Adan, P Drewett, E Stowell-Corten, J Clarke, Y Forsey and L Lacey

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### 1 Apologies for Absence

None.

### 2 Declarations of Interest

None.

### 3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes from 13 November were accepted subject to:

Item 5: Councillor Adan's declared that he was LEA Governor for Pill Primary School (school now based at the old Whiteheads site) and not St Andrews Primary School.

### 4 Treasury Management Half Yearly Monitoring Report

The Leader presented the report, outlining the borrowing and investment activities during the year and the forthcoming year and medium term.

The Governance and Audit Committee had considered the report and provided no comments, the report would ultimately go to full Council for approval.

The Council complied with the Prudential Indicators set for 2024/25, except for the indicator designed to show the proportion of financing costs to the net revenue stream.

The outlook for the next few years highlighted that there was an underlying need to borrow further and refinance some large loans towards the end of the year. There was also a risk that the remaining lender option borrower option (LOBOs) needed redeeming.

Officers would monitor interest rates closely, to ensure the best rates were accessed for any new borrowing, in liaison with external treasury advisers.

#### **Decision:**

Cabinet noted the report on treasury management activities during the first half year period of 2024-25 with no feedback for the subsequent report to Council.

### 5 Long Term Provision of Internal Audit Services

The Leader introduced the report which highlighted the internal audit function. The small team of 6.5 posts, for various reasons outlined in the report, continuously struggled to recruit suitable staff.

In 2023, most of the team left in quick succession and interim arrangements were put in place temporarily, but more permanent arrangements were needed.

This Council historically preferred to work in partnership with services provided by outside organisations as opposed to a contractual-based outsourced model.

A consistent and robust comparison of the partnerships was undertaken, and it was recommended that Council seek membership to the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP).

The Governance and Audit Committee reviewed the report and supported the recommendation, with their comments and Head of Finance responses included in this report. Like them, the Cabinet would want to ensure the partnerships was entered on acceptable terms and that staff affected were fully involved in the process.

*Councillors D Davies, Clarke, Adan, and Lacey noted their support of the report. To access full recording and comments made please refer to Council's YouTube Channel: [Democratic meetings / Cyfarfodydd democrataidd](#).*

**Decision:**

Cabinet authorised the Head of Finance, in consultation with the Council Leader as Cabinet Member for Finance, to establish the Council as a full partner with the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) for the long-term provision of internal audit services.

## 6 **The Middle Tier Review (School Improvement)**

The Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years presented the report which asked Cabinet colleagues to make a decision on the future of Newport School Improvement Services based on three appraised options as outlined in the report.

Welsh Government requested that all local authorities reviewed their current School Improvement Services and consider if they met the revised national School Improvement guidance which was also released this year.

The Council's current school improvement service was the Education Achievement Service (EAS). Amongst the many benefits highlighted by the Cabinet Member, this model also meant that Newport schools benefitted from an additional £1.4 million worth of grant funding.

*Councillors Drewett and Adan noted their support of the report. To access full recording and comments made please refer to Council's YouTube Channel: [Democratic meetings / Cyfarfodydd democrataidd](#).*

**Decision:**

Cabinet agreed to:

1. Continue to commission school improvement services from the Southeast Wales Education Achievement Service (EAS) for the foreseeable future; and
2. Mandate the Chief Education Officer to work with partners to explore the potential for changes to the governance of EAS and to implement changes to the delivery of services by EAS which reflected stakeholder feedback and national school improvement guidance.

## 7 **Corporate Risk Register Update (Q2)**

The Leader presented the report, providing an overview of the Council's risks which may prevent the achievement of its strategic priorities and delivery of services to Newport's communities.

The Governance and Audit Committee was presented the Quarter 1 (Q1) update at the end of November.

In comparison to Q1, there were no changes to report with the Corporate Risk Register.

**Decision:**

Cabinet considered the contents of the Quarter 2 update of the Corporate Risk Register.

## 8 **Annual Report on Compliments, Comments and Complaints Management 2024**

The Leader presented the report, which outlined the Council's performance during 2023-2024.

The report was presented to Governance and Audit Committee on 28 November where valuable feedback and comments were received. These comments have been included in the report.

The Council made significant progress in improving its complaints handling and feedback processes. The planned improvements for 2024/25 would further strengthen the Council's commitment to transparency, responsiveness, and continuous service improvement.

*Councillors Forsey, R Howells and Adan noted their support of the report. To access full recording and comments made please refer to Council's YouTube Channel: [Democratic meetings / Cyfarfodydd democrataidd](#).*

**Decision:**

Cabinet endorsed the Annual Report on Compliments, Comments and Complaints Management 2023/2024 and proposed actions.

## 9 **Work Programme**

This was the regular monthly report on the work programme.

**Decision:**

Cabinet agreed the Work Programme.

## 10 **Part 2 Exempt or Confidential Items**

The next item of business included a discussion of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, namely information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

The Monitoring Officer advised that it would be appropriate for Cabinet to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the duration of this item of business, in accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The meeting concluded after Cabinet had considered the exempt item.