

Minutes



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Date: 30 January 2024

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors P Hourahine (Chair), B Davies, C Baker-Westhead, S Cocks and M Evans

In Attendance: Rhys Cornwall (Strategic Director - Transformation and Corporate Centre), Tracy McKim (Head of People, Policy and Transformation), Robert Green (Assistant Head of Finance) and Samantha Schanzer (Scrutiny Adviser)

Apologies: Councillors G Horton, P Bright and L James

1 Declarations of Interest

None.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- The Committee requested that the wording regarding the City Contact Centre response be reworded for clarity. The Head of People, Policy and Transformation (PPT) informed Committee that there was a customer engagement review currently underway, but would update the action.
- The Chair informed Committee that future mentions of the University of South Wales would be omitted from the minutes unless they were substantial.

The minutes of the previous meeting held **1st December 2023** were **accepted as a true and accurate record**.

3 2024-25 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan

Invitees:

- **Rhys Cornwall (Strategic Director for Transformation and Corporate)**
- **Tracy McKim (Head of People, Policy and Transformation)**
- **Robert Green (Assistant Head of Finance)**

The Assistant Head of Finance gave an overview.

The following was discussed:

- The Committee asked what school budgets being protected meant in real terms, for more detail on school's grants received after the budget had been set and the impact this had. The Assistant Head of Finance informed Committee that no budget savings were being requested from schools, but the budget must increase to cover increased

costs and larger numbers of pupils. They informed Committee the formula for schools is prescribed by pupil numbers which was a key factor in allocating the overall budget. They informed Committee that individual school allocations such as grants are channelled through the regional consortium to local authorities (LA). They noted that Welsh Government (WG) have an 2024-25 agenda to reduced and consolidate grants and it would be difficult to determine the exact budget for schools until they received more information, which was likely to be after the budget was set.

- The Committee enquired how these grants were split between the LA and Educational Achievement Service (EAS). The Assistant Head of Finance informed the Committee that each consortium would top-slice each grant to manage their provision. They informed Committee that this could change in future following the new WG changes, but each LA had an input in these decisions taken by EAS as they are stakeholders.
- The Committee queried whether hardening grants into future budgets would provide greater clarity for schools when budgeting. The Assistant Head of Finance informed Committee that WG were not looking to change the temporary nature of grants and the risk of them being cut or removed in future would remain. They highlighted that WG were looking to streamline grants.
- The Committee enquired whether LAs were likely to benefit from the additional funding announced by UK Government to WG and when would WG inform LAs about this. The Assistant Head of Finance noted that there was unlikely to be an announcement from WG regarding this until certainty from UK Government was received. They informed Committee that they could not rely on this funding, but it may be seen in the next financial year.

The Head PPT gave a verbal update on the budget consultation process.

The following was discussed:

- The Committee asked for more information on the Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment (FEIA) process. The Head of PPT informed Committee that an FEIA is carried out on anything that has the potential to impact communities, residents, or staff. They informed Committee that the full list of FEIAs is available on the Newport City Council website, and these were produced early in the process and continuously updated. They noted that FEIAs are produced by people close to the proposal and signed off by Heads of Service.

Conclusion of Committee Reports

The Committee were content with the budget setting and consultation processes.

The Committee were content to acknowledge the minutes from the Performance Scrutiny Committee – People and the Performance Scrutiny Committee - Place and Corporate for forwarding to Cabinet.

4 Scrutiny Adviser Reports

a. Actions Arising

The Scrutiny Advisor noted that there were no new actions.

b. Forward Work Programme

The Scrutiny Advisor noted the date of next meeting to be 8th March 2024

5 Scrutiny Topic Referral Feedback

The Committee discussed the feedback. The Committee agreed with the content of the report and recommended that some reformatting be done within the report for clarity.

The meeting terminated at 10.32 am

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