

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 13 November 2024

Time: 4.00 pm

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

1 Apologies for Absence

None.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Adan declared an interest under Item 5, as governor at St Andrews Primary School.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes from 16 October were accepted as a true record.

4 September Revenue Budget Monitor

The Leader explained the current forecast position on the Council's revenue budget and the risks and opportunities that presented themselves within the September update. Against a net budget of £400m, the forecast reflected a relatively balanced position with a £786,000 underspend, including the contingency budget and the in-year underspend against capital financing budgets.

A small underspend was projected however, service areas were collectively forecasted to overspend by £6.2m, excluding schools.

The key service area overspending was within Housing and Communities, due to the demand for temporary accommodation, and within Education, due to increased costs of Additional Learning Needs (ALN), special school transport, and expenditure on local ALN provision. These key areas were outlined in the report.

Comments of Cabinet Members:

- Councillor D Davies referred to the forensic focus that officers had on budget and finance within Newport schools with only a small number of schools anticipating a deficit. Newport schools were in a better position than most in Wales.
- Councillor Drewett noted the school balances position and welcomed the introduction of additional funding for secondary schools.

- Councillor Forsey referred to the decarbonisation programme, highlighting that it was important not to be left behind.
- Councillor Lacey explained that the children's services overspend was due to circumstances beyond the Council's control and that social services were in a more comfortable position now than six months ago.. The WCCIS project was progressing well, and it was hoped that Welsh Government would also provide additional finance.

Decision:

Cabinet -

- Noted the forecast position, outlined in the report (Sections 1 and 2).
- Noted the overall shortfall in the delivery of savings accepted as part of the 2024/25 revenue budget.
- Noted the schools' forecast position, and the position on the individual and total school reserves (Section 3), acknowledging the risk that further individual deficit positions could emerge by the end of the financial year.
- Noted the forecasted movement in reserves.
- Approved the recommended reserve transfers as set out in 4.3.
- Noted the risks identified throughout the report, such as continued demand issues being faced by services in housing and social care.

5 Capital Programme Monitoring and Additions - September 2024

The Leader introduced the Capital Programme monitoring and additions report. The report provided an update on the level of available capital headroom and detailed the additions to the programme identified and sought approval for these additions.

Cabinet was asked to approve the slippage identified. Any further slippage identified throughout the year would only be subject to approval as part of the final outturn report, once the final position was known.

The Headroom stood at £12.715m, following the additions detailed in the report.

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

Comments of Cabinet Members:

- Councillor D Davies referred to the completion of work to St Andrew's Primary School due in September 2025 and thanked Headteacher, Jo Giles, for managing both sites as well as thanking the Governing Body.
- The Leader also thanked the Finance team for their hard work in handling the finance reports presented to Cabinet.

Decision:

Cabinet -

1. Approved the additions to the Capital Programme requested in the report (Appendix A).
2. Noted the predicted capital expenditure outturn position for 2024/25.
3. Noted the amendments and indicative slippage for the capital programme

6 2025/26 Budget Proposal

The Leader provided Cabinet with an update on the Council's 2025/26 budget process and presented the first tranche of savings proposals.

It was expected that the Council would need to find savings to balance its budget for 2025/26. The first tranche of savings was included in the report, with further proposals to follow in January.

A small number of the proposed savings required public consultation and were listed in Appendix 1a and Appendix 2. The majority of the proposals did not require public consultation, as listed in Appendix 1b.

Implementation costs relating to those proposals that did not require public consultation totalled £776,000, and Cabinet were asked to approve the use of the Transformation Reserve for this. The available balance in the reserve was currently £3.292m.

Comments of Cabinet Members:

- Councillor D Davies urged residents to contribute to the public consultation process before the final budget was agreed in February 2025, adding that Cabinet would consider their comments.
- Councillor Lacey thanked officers especially in social services who showed that their services could be used throughout other authorities within Gwent.
- Councillor Drewett also thanked officers for their creative ways of generating income in areas such as CCTV and pest control as well as the way funding was transferred to grant funding.
- Councillor Adan echoed Councillor Drewett's comments regarding officer's innovation in delivering services to the public and also thanked officers from the housing, planning, and transformation team.
- Councillor Clarke added that these were tough times but hoped that Newport City Council would work together.

Decision:

Cabinet -

- Agreed the following draft proposals for public consultation:
 - Budget savings proposals in Appendix 1a (summary table) and Appendix 2 (detailed proposals).
- Approved:
 - Implementation of the delegated decisions in Appendix 1b.
 - The use of the Transformation Fund to fund the implementation costs of the proposals listed in Appendix 1b totalling £776,000.

7 Summary Of Estyn Inspection Outcomes - January 2022 To July 2024

The Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years presented to Cabinet the report on Newport schools' Estyn inspection outcomes, between January 2022 and July 2024. Twenty-five judgements were available comprising of twenty-two primaries, two secondaries and one special school.

The Cabinet Member highlighted two schools: Jubilee Park Primary and Langstone Primary, that had received no specific recommendations for improvement relating to their inspections. It was believed that Newport was one of the only Local Authorities in Wales to have two schools in this position.

Comments of Cabinet Members:

- Councillor Lacey reflected on the Estyn inspection at Jubilee Primary School. It was a new school and was the first to receive 'no recommendations'. There were eleven out of 25 schools in Newport that had best practice, which showed that Newport was leading the way.
- Councillor Clarke recalled as a school governor how much work had teachers and officers had put into getting schools out of special measures such as Malpas Park Primary School and Newport High School., by
- Councillor Drewett noted the excellent report including case studies which reflected Newport's dedication to schools and had been disseminated to other schools in Wales. Councillor Drewett congratulated all the hardworking pupils, teachers, school governors, the Head of Education, Sarah Morgan, and Councillor D Davies.
- The Leader echoed the comments of his Cabinet colleagues.

Decision:

Cabinet accepted the report for information.

8 Gwent Regional Partnership Board Area Plan/Gwent Regional Partnership Board Annual Report

The Cabinet Member for Social Services highlighted the RPB Annual Report for 2023/2024 which was attached for information (Appendix A) and provided a strategic overview of the work of the Regional Partnership Board in delivering against their agreed priorities.

Whilst it was a regional report, most of the work undertaken was cross cutting and relevant to Newport. Key developments were also set out within the report. The use of grant funding was included for information in (Appendix B). The Annual Report was also submitted to Welsh Government.

Decision:

Cabinet reviewed progress made against the objectives and provided feedback/comments.

9 Air Quality Action Plan Adoption

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity advised Cabinet colleagues on the updated Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for the five-year period 2024 to 2029 which set out how to achieve sustainable compliance.

Newport declared 11 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) for breaches in the annual air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide and had a statutory duty under the Environment Act 1995 and guidance to produce an AQAP where it declared AQMAs.

Once sustained compliance was being achieved, the Council would be able to systematically revoke its AQMAs and produce a city-wide Air Quality Strategy setting out how sustained compliance would be maintained to strive for the best achievable air quality for Newport.

Comments of Cabinet Members:

- Councillor R Howells highlighted that poor air quality had a huge impact on quality of life and added that Newport City Council was leading the way with the decarbonising of its fleet, with 31% of vehicles having zero emissions.
- Councillor D Davies welcomed the opportunities to have frank discussions on how air quality can be improved within Beechwood ward and thanked Senior Scientific Officer, Steve Manning for going over and above in his work.
- Councillor Lacey also thanked Councillor Forsey for her dedication and commitment towards air quality in Newport. Many of her Cabinet colleagues concurred.

Decision:

Cabinet considered and noted the contents of the report and approved the Newport City Council 2024-2029 Air Quality Action Plan and agreed for the plan to be taken to Council for a decision on its adoption.

10 One Newport Summary of Business

The link to the One Newport Summary Document was included in the Agenda papers for information.

11 Work Programme

This was the regular monthly report on the work programme.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed the Work Programme.

12 View the meeting by clicking on the link below: