

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2017

- PRESENT:** Councillor Aled M. Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dylan Rees (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors Richard Griffiths, Carwyn Jones, Alun Roberts,
J. Arwel Roberts, Shaun Redmond
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process Transformation)
Head of Function (Resources) and Section 151 Officer
Head of Adults' Services (for item 4)
Head of Learning (for item 3)
Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager (for item 3)
Head of Profession (CE) (for item 3)
Service Manager (Housing, Commissioning Strategy & Policy (ELI) (for item 5)
Empty Homes Officer (GO) (for item 5)
Project Lead (HR & Payroll) (ATR)
Deputy Business Manager (Adults Services) (EJE) (for item 4)
Interim Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Trefor Lloyd Hughes, MBE, Richard O. Jones, Nicola Roberts, Mr Keith Roberts (Co-opted Member)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Llinos Medi Huws (Leader & Portfolio Member for Housing & Social Services), Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Corporate Services), Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community & Service Improvement), Head of Democratic Services, Mr Gwilym Bury (Wales Audit Office)
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1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES OF THE 10TH APRIL, 2017 MEETING

The minutes of the previous meetings of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on the dates noted below were presented –

- 10th April, 2017 which were accepted and noted as pertaining to the previous Council
- 31 May, 2017 which were accepted and approved

3 PERFORMANCE MONITORING - CORPORATE SCORECARD Q4 2016/17

The report of the Head of Transformation incorporating the Corporate Scorecard which portrayed the Council's position against its operational objectives at the end of Quarter 4 2016/17 in relation to Performance Management, People Management, Financial Management and Customer Service was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The Portfolio Member for Corporate Services reported that the scorecard as at Appendix A portrays a mixed picture overall at the end of 2016/17. Whilst the vast majority of indicators performed well against their targets for the year there were areas of underperformance and in the case of four indicators, the performance reflects a year on year decline. Two indicators, the one in Adults' Services and the other in Children's Services show as Amber or Red against their annual targets for the year. Details of these are set out in paragraphs 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 of the report along with an explanation in mitigation of the underperformance and an outline of proposed improvement measures. Although the majority of indicators are ragged Green or Yellow, this does not mean that the Authority's position on a national basis would improve as a result. The Authority's position relative to that of other authorities in Wales will become known once the 2016/17 national data is published by the Welsh Government.

With regard to People Management, the Authority's sickness absence rates at the end of 2016/17 has achieved the corporate target at 9.78 days sick per FTE against the target of 10 days sick per FTE and is Green on the scorecard. This is a significant improvement on the 2015/16 performance when 11.68 days sick per FTE was recorded and represents a total of 4,737 days less sickness than in 2015/16. Whilst there remains some issues with sickness absence in Children's Services and in Highways, Waste and Property Services, the sickness absence rates for 2016/17 in those services still reflect an improving picture. The Wales Audit report on absence management within the Council is positive in its tenor and finds that the Council has made significant improvements in its corporate arrangements for managing attendance, having made it a matter of priority. The report further finds that the Council is now proactive in holding schools to account for attendance management. The report makes two proposals for improvement in relation to how the Council supports schools with their attendance management arrangements.

In relation to Customer Service the percentage rate of responses made within timescale in relation both to complaints and to FOI requests has improved on the 2015/16 performance. The findings of the Mystery Shop exercise undertaken during the year confirms that the standard of customer care within Anglesey has improved since the last audit in 2015/16 but notwithstanding this, the report on the exercise recommends that there is scope for further improvement as outlined in paragraph 2.3.8 of the report.

Mr Gwilym Bury, Wales Audit Office, reported in detail on the findings of the audit of the Council's management of attendance. The review found that the Council has significantly improved its corporate arrangements to manage sickness absence by introducing more robust absence policies and procedures. Its comparative position nationally would now place it in an above average position; to be considered a good performing authority it would need to achieve 8 days sick per FTE; to be considered an excellent performing authority it would need to reach a target of 6.6 days sick per FTE. However, it is external audit's view that the Council does not need to do more currently with regard to its general staff other than to continue to implement the policies and procedures it has developed and has put in place which is what a good authority would be expected to do. This should see the sickness absence rates come down gradually to nearer 8 days sick per FTE. With regard to schools, whilst it is the responsibility of the school's governing body to have oversight of attendance management arrangements for staff in schools, the Council does have a statutory duty to promote high standards in schools, and effective resource and staff

absence management plays a key role in the delivery of high standards. In promoting high standards, the Council should monitor, challenge and support its schools. Although the majority of the Island's schools have a very low rate of staff absence a minority of schools have consistently very high absence rates both among teaching and non-teaching staff which has an impact on educational standards. There needs to be the same focus and discussion on school staff attendance as there is on pupil attendance because education is a partnership between pupils, parents and the school. The report proposes measures for further improvement including setting a pattern of regular quarterly reporting on school's attendance performance to both the Executive and to Scrutiny.

The Head of Learning confirmed that the Education Service has for many months been focussing on addressing schools' attendance management and that the improvements achieved have been significant in a small period of time. Additional resources have been channelled into discussions with every school both in the primary and secondary sectors and certain schools have been specifically targeted and these efforts have resulted in the improvements seen. Approximately 2,263 days have been gained and £250k saved by the Council in this period.

The Committee considered the information presented both in the internal report and the external audit report regarding the Council's performance at year end and highlighted the following matters –

- The Committee noted the marked improvement in sickness absence rates within the Council for 2016/17 as attested to by the Corporate Scorecard and the WAO report. It acknowledged the work and commitment at corporate and service levels that had gone into strengthening the processes to better manage attendance across the Council.
- The Committee sought clarification of the extent of the impact – if any, of the introduction of smarter working arrangements on attendance within the Council especially in terms of improving staff satisfaction and helping staff achieve a better work/life balance through measures such as enhanced flexible and home working, hot desking etc. The Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager said no review of any potential correlation between smarter working arrangements and improved attendance figures has been undertaken. However the improvements that have come about as reported are due to the processes put in place through the Chief Executive and Human Resources.
- The Committee sought further clarification of the take-up and feedback from staff in relation to smarter working initiatives. The Head of Profession said that where it is advantageous to their work, then staff have taken advantage of the alternative and flexible ways of working which smarter working promotes; the position is a variable one with a number of staff still choosing to attend the workplace and working at home to undertake specific pieces of work. The Heads of Service – Learning, Adults' Services and Highways, Waste and Property reported on the take-up of smarter working arrangements from the perspective of their own services.
- The Committee noted with regard to Financial Management that although the trend is downwards, the expenditure on agency staff remains an area that is ragged Red. The Head of Function (Resources) and Section 151 Officer said whilst the distinction between agency and consultancy staff is an issue in terms of attributing costs, the expenditure on agency staff within the Council especially within the Finance Service has decreased significantly. Where there is a need for agency staff e.g. within Children's Services, the process for engaging agency staff is signed off by the Chief Executive.

The Committee, having noted the generally encouraging picture of the Council against its operational objectives for Quarter 4 2016/17 as portrayed by the Q4 Corporate Scorecard, and having been satisfied that underperforming areas have been identified and are prioritised and targeted, RESOLVED –

- **To note and support the areas which the Senior Leadership Team is managing to secure improvements into the future as summarised in paragraphs 1.3.1. to 1.3.4 of the report.**
- **To note and accept the mitigation measures outlined in relation to the areas set out in the aforementioned paragraphs.**

NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING

4 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATUTORY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2016/17

The Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services for 2016/17 was presented for the Committee's consideration and comment. The report provides a review of how well social services were delivered on Anglesey in 2016/17 including the key achievements in both Adults' and Children's Services as well the challenges that need to be addressed in the coming year.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process Transformation) and Statutory Director of Social Services reported that 2016/17 was a challenging year in terms of the context in which social services were delivered. The planning and delivery of services were transformed to meet the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 (SSWB). In addition, continued austerity and pressures on budgets as well as an awareness of likely future trends and demands are necessitating a radical re-thinking of how services are provided in order to ensure they are sustainable for the future.

The Officer said in relation to Children's Services that much of the work was driven by the recommendations contained within the report by CSSIW on its inspection of Children's Services. These recommendations are being implemented through the Children's Services Improvement Plan and will be monitored by the Children's Panel reporting back on progress to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. The focus consequent upon the CSSIW report has been on developing a workforce strategy centred on recruitment and retention; improving supervision for social workers; improving the quality of practice in relation to child protection; strengthening partnership and collaborative working both within the Council with other services and outside with partner agencies; undertaking a review of residential placements and seeking to reduce the reliance on agency staff.

Adults' Services have seen a period of stability which has enabled the service to focus on the future and to consolidate progress in relation to the development and construction of Hafan Cefni; the expansion of the capacity to care for those with dementia on the Island; re-tendering the contract for home care; developing prevention initiatives such as the Môn Enhanced Care Team and the Night Owls Service; increasing take up of Direct Payments and strengthening the Single Point of Access Service. Priorities for the year ahead will include modernising services for those with learning disabilities and developing co-production with providers on the Island.

As regards Social Services as a whole there has been an emphasis on workforce development and training and on preparing for the introduction at the Council over the next few months of a national IT system (WCCIS) which will enable the service to work more effectively. Improving engagement with service users especially in terms of listening to the views of users through having the What Matters conversation at the point of initial assessment, and also in having regard to their experiences in shaping services and provision continues to be a key area. There is an ongoing need across social services to develop the preventative agenda – taking preventative action will improve the lives and wellbeing of individuals and will also help the Authority to manage the increase in demand and to use its resources more efficiently and to better effect. Partnership working will remain a priority as will a renewed focus on carers and their needs.

The process of preparing the 2016/17 report has differed considerably from that of previous years and has resulted in a change of format and style. This is due to new guidance issued by the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru which has been used as a basis for the Anglesey report in order to capture the changes made within Social Services following the implementation of the SSWA 2014.

The Portfolio Member for Housing and Social Services emphasised the progress made as well as the challenges ahead and she asked the Committee to consider whether the improvement priorities identified within the report are appropriate to the challenging environment in which Social Services are operating.

The Committee considered the Annual Report and the context in which the self-assessment had been made and it raised the following points –

- The Committee noted the improvements both planned and implemented as a result of the CSSIW inspection of Children's Services and as documented in the Annual Report. The Committee noted that CSSIW would be re-visiting the Authority to review progress against the recommendations made and sought assurance that the Authority has sufficient time to implement the programme of improvements before it is re-assessed by CSSIW. The Statutory Director of Social Services said that CSSIW intends to follow up on its inspection within 12 to 18 months subject to the demands of the regulatory programme both nationally and regionally, the resources available and subject also to the regulator being satisfied by the rate of progress at Anglesey. Whilst Social Services are working towards a revisit in March, 2018 the key consideration throughout the programme of improvement is to ensure that improvements made are sustainable in the long-term particularly as budgets continue to reduce.
- The Committee noted that in a context of limited resources, partnership and collaborative working will take on increasing significance. The Committee therefore sought clarification of the scope for the further development of shared services. The Statutory Director of Social Services said that Social Services already has a number of teams across Adults' and Children's services working on a joint basis; whilst these are predominantly with BCUHB, there are examples of joint working with Gwynedd Council (the Integrated Family Support Service Team) and the Gwynedd and Anglesey Youth Justice Service which includes other partner organisations. The Children's Out of Hours Duty Team is also a joint service. The Authority's joint working arrangements extend beyond its immediate neighbours particularly with regard to the development of processes and policies which are often on a regional basis. In entering into joint arrangements the Authority has to be mindful of its statutory responsibilities and it will seek to retain sole responsibility for significant elements particularly within Children's Services. There is however scope for further effective collaboration e.g. in fostering where the recruitment of foster carers can be a challenge.

It was resolved that the Committee is satisfied with regard to the following –

- **That the Annual Report has captured the Council's current position with regard to delivering its Social Services.**
- **That the Annual Report accurately reflects the improvement priorities for both Adults and Children's Services for the forthcoming year.**
- **That the Annual Report reflects the Council's accountability and responsibility with regard to its Social Services**

NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING

5 EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2017- 2022

The report of the Head of Housing Services incorporating the Empty Homes Strategy for 2017 to 2022 was presented for the Committee's consideration and comment. The Strategy set out the achievements to date as well as how resources will be targeted going forward.

The Portfolio Member for Housing and Social Services commended the Strategy as a positive document in assisting the Authority to continue with the good work begun with regard to bringing empty homes back into use thereby helping to meet the housing need on the Island.

The Committee considered the Strategy document and made the following points –

- The Committee sought clarification of the basis for the calculation that there are currently 840 homes on the Island which have been empty for six months or more. The Empty Homes Officer said that the Council Tax section holds data on empty property owners and second home owners and provides this information annually to the Empty Homes Officer; this information is used to update the empty homes database. The database is further updated every three months as empty homes come back into use and others become empty. One of the strategic objectives is to maintain and improve the accuracy of empty homes data. The reasons why homes become empty can vary from property to property.
- The Committee noted that bringing empty homes back into use is a concerted endeavour and involves co-operation between a number of services across the Council including the enforcement service. The Committee sought assurance that the Enforcement Team has sufficient capacity to be able to cope with increasing and varying demands. The Empty Homes Officer said that is her responsibility to co-ordinate the Council's approach to empty homes enforcement and this includes undertaking preparatory work in the form of collating evidence, drafting reports and outlining the steps that need to be taken. However enforcement action is not a quick fix and is always a last resort when all other options have failed to produce a satisfactory result. Homeowners on whom notice has been served have to be given time to respond and to address the issue.
- The Committee sought clarification of the process taken in seeking to bring an empty property back into use. The Empty Homes Officer said that Officers will always seek to work with the owners of empty properties in the first instance. This includes offering advice, assistance and options designed to help empty property owners as outlined in the toolkit described in section 6 of the report. Where negotiations have failed, and owners of long-term empty properties refuse or fail to return their property back into use, then firmer measures may be pursued. When such action is required, the Council undertakes to adhere to its enforcement principles which provide for fair and consistent enforcement.
- The Committee sought clarification of the impact of the proposed new nuclear power station on housing needs; the availability of housing and on the empty homes issue. The Portfolio Member for Housing and Social Services said that the matter is under consideration and that one of the many issues and potential benefits being explored in ongoing discussions with Horizon with regard to the development of Wylfa Newydd is the possibility of bringing more empty properties back into use.
- The Committee questioned whether it would be possible to extend the strategy to include disused chapel buildings which have the potential to be converted into residential dwellings e.g. flats. The Empty Homes Officer said that many chapel buildings are listed and that she understood that under the new proposed Joint LDP, it may well be more difficult for listed chapels to receive consent for conversion into residential use.

Having considered the information presented, the Committee resolved to support the Empty Homes Strategy for 2017-2022 and to recommend the strategy to the Executive for adoption.

NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING

6 MEMBERSHIP OF PANELS AND BOARDS

The report of the Interim Scrutiny Manager seeking nomination of Scrutiny Members to serve on panels and boards was presented for the Committee's consideration. The report set out the panels, corporate programme boards and service programme boards on which representation was required, their function and their reporting arrangements.

It was resolved –

- **To nominate the following to serve on the panels and boards listed –**

Children's Services Improvement Panel (1 Member) – Councillor Richard Griffiths

Finance Scrutiny Panel (2 Members) – Councillors Aled Morris Jones and Dylan Rees

School Progress Review Scrutiny Panel (4 Members) – Councillors J. Arwel Roberts and Alun Roberts (*nomination of the remaining 2 Members to be deferred to the Committee's 11th July meeting to allow those Members not present at this meeting to express an interest*)

Corporate Parenting Panel (1 Member) – Councillor Richard Griffiths

Governance and Business Process Transformation Board (1 Member) – Councillor Aled Morris Jones with Councillor Dylan Rees acting as deputy

Adults' Transformation Programme Board (1 Member) – Councillor Alun Roberts

Libraries, Youth and Heritage Programme Board (1 Member) – Councillor J. Arwel Roberts

(Nominations to the Schools Modernisation Programme Board and the Customer Service Excellence Programme Board to be made by the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)

Corporate Safeguarding Board (1 Member) - Councillor Aled Morris Jones with Councillor Dylan Rees acting as deputy.

- **To note the reporting arrangements for the panels and boards listed as outlined in section 4 of the report.**

7 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Interim Scrutiny Manager incorporating the Committee's draft Forward Work Programme for 2017/18 was presented for the Committee's consideration and comment.

The Interim Scrutiny Manager reported that the Forward Work Programme as presented represents a long list of potential items that were originally put forward under the previous Council. Consideration will now be given to ensuring that the work programmes of the two scrutiny committees are clearly aligned; this will be discussed in the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Forum. The objective is to reduce the volume of business to be considered at

each meeting to enable the Committee to focus in more detail and to greater effect on key issues. The Work Programme as presented represents the current draft and will be subject to ongoing review.

It was resolved to accept and to note the Forward Work Programme as an initial draft outline of the Committee's programme of business for the coming year.

ACTION ARISING: Interim Scrutiny Manager to review the Work programme in consultation with Chair and Vice-Chair with reference to the Executive's and the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee's respective work programmes.

**Councillor Aled Morris Jones
Chair**