

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 13 September 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Aled Morris Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dylan Rees (Vice-Chair)

Councillors John Griffith, Gary Pritchard, Bryan Owen, Alun Roberts, J. Arwel Roberts

Portfolio Members

Councillors Llinos Medi Huws (Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services), Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Major Projects and Economic Development), R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth), Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Corporate Business), Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance)

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer
Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer
Director of Education, Skills and Young People
Head of Service (Regulation and Economic Development)
Head of Service (Highways, Waste and Property)
Head of Adults' Services
Head of Profession (HR) & Transformation
Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager (GM)
Service Manager (Older People) (IR)
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Richard Griffiths, Richard O. Jones, Nicola Roberts, Mr Keith Roberts and Mrs Anest Frazer (Co-opted Members), Councillor Ieuan Williams (Portfolio Member for Transformation and the Welsh Language)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Dafydd Roberts (Chair of the Finance Scrutiny Panel), Head of Democratic Services

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and he extended a particular welcome to Councillor Gary Pritchard as a new member of the Committee, and to Mr Arwel Owen as the Council's new Head of Adults' Services.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Gary Pritchard declared a personal but not prejudicial interest with regard to item 3 on the agenda on the basis of his daughter's occasional employment by Môn Actif.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 8 July, 2021 were presented and were confirmed as correct.

3 MONITORING PERFORMANCE: CORPORATE SCORECARD Q1 2021/22

Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas, Portfolio Member for Corporate Business presented the report by the Head of Profession (Human Resources) and Transformation incorporating the first corporate scorecard for 2021/22. The scorecard portrays the position of the Council against its operational objectives as outlined and agreed earlier in the year; the year's first scorecard should be considered within the context of the additional pressures emanating from the Council's response to the coronavirus pandemic during Quarter 1.

The Portfolio Member for Corporate Business reported that at the end of Quarter 1, 88% of the Corporate Health Performance indicators monitored are performing well against targets (i.e. Green or Yellow RAG) as detailed in section 3 of the report and 85% of the Performance Management indicators are performing above target or within 5% tolerance of their targets (section 4 of the report refers). Where below target performance is reported in relation to aspects of Public Protection (planned food hygiene inspections); Adults' Services (the percentage of adults who completed a period of re-ablement and have no package of care and support 6 months later); Waste Management Service (percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted) and the Planning Service (percentage of all planning applications determined in time), Covid-19 continues to be an influencing factor. Additionally, where underperformance has been identified, the mitigation measures as set out have been put in place to support and improve performance going into Quarter 2. Customer Service indicators continue to perform well apart from indicator 04b – the total percentage of written responses to complaints within 15 days in Social Services where the performance is 50% against a target of 80%. In mitigation, it can be reported that 13 of the 14 complaints received in the quarter were discussed with the complainant within 5 working days and for 5 of the 7 late responses, a time extension had been previously agreed.

A workshop with Elected Members was held on 13 July, 2021 where it was agreed that three new indicators be introduced for the 2021/22 scorecard reporting year – customer satisfaction with the Council's telephone system; managing climate change and use of social media accounts.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised by members of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee –

- The performance with regard to Indicator 32 – the percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted which is Red and at 64.55% is below the target of 70% for the quarter; this performance is also down on that of the previous two years at Q1. Reference was also made to the decrease in green waste tonnage following the introduction of the new chargeable Green Waste Service in April, 2021. The Committee expressed some concern regarding the situation given that Anglesey has in recent years excelled in its recycling rates; members were keen to understand the reasons for the decline and they also sought further details about the role of the new steering group established to identify how best to improve performance in order to meet Welsh Government targets.

The Head of Service (Highways, Waste and Property) explained that the total volume of recycling being processed is higher than it has been and that the same applies to general household waste (black bin waste) only that a percentage of that

is due to the change in green waste. He cited the coronavirus pandemic has having had an impact on waste management and collection in terms of increased black bin waste due to people working from home and the temporary closure of the Household Waste Recycling Centres. Packaging from increased use of takeaway outlets and online purchases over lockdown may also have found their way into black bin waste instead of being recycled. Other reasons include the difficulty in obtaining outlets to recycle some materials which is also a concern for all the North Wales councils. The Council's two household waste recycling centres have now reopened and the Penhesgyn site has since been dealing with up to 400 visits per day from Anglesey alone. The risk that some green waste would be disposed of with general household waste and that there might be a reduction in the tonnage collected as a result was recognised when it was agreed to introduce the chargeable green waste collection service; some green waste may also have been used for garden composting purposes. Whilst there has therefore been an impact on the percentage of waste reused and/or recycled, the project has brought in income to the value of £500k. Although the impact has been more pronounced in Anglesey this pattern has been replicated across the region hence the establishment of the new steering group comprising of WLGA and WRAP Cymru experts to examine the situation in Anglesey, to identify trends and to look for any lessons to be learnt from the approaches taken by other authorities. Additionally the group will be considering whether the recycling boxes are currently being put to best use in terms of the mix of materials in each box. As the Council emerges out of the worst of the pandemic, it will allow staff who have been engaged with responding to Covid-19; managing the introduction of the chargeable green waste collection and the commencement of the new waste contract, to focus on addressing the current issues and to work to restore recycling rates to pre-Covid levels.

The Leader commented that the Committee may wish to consider nominating a Scrutiny representative to serve on the new steering group. The Chair thought that the Committee should be apprised of the group's membership in the first instance after which it would consider making a nomination. The Chief Executive confirmed that in recognition of how seriously the matter is being taken, the Deputy Chief Executive and the Section 151 Officer are both members of the steering group. She assured the Committee that the Deputy Chief Executive would arrange for details of the group's membership to be circulated among the Committee's members after this meeting.

- The performance with regard to Indicator 35 – the percentage of planning applications determined in time which is Red with performance at 73% against a target of 82%. The Committee sought assurance that the Planning Service has sufficient capacity to manage the volume of planning applications and that it is also sufficiently resilient to deal with the increasing complexity of applications.

The Head of Service (Regulation and Economic Development) confirmed that work is afoot to strengthen Planning capacity through the Planning Improvement Plan and an improvement in the performance of this indicator will be realised once the increased capacity is in place. The Planning Function has secured a Trainee Planning Officer placement and although no appointment has been made thus far it is anticipated that this additional capacity will be in place by March, 2022. Capacity issues are not confined to Anglesey and are being experienced regionally and nationally. The departure of two experienced officers, whilst leaving a gap does also provide opportunities for existing staff and interest has been expressed and interviews arranged. The Head of Service said that he was confident that the core posts can be filled whilst consideration is also given to creating new posts to be funded from service reserves to further strengthen capacity in order to respond to

the increase both in the volume of planning applications and in the number of technical and/or contentious applications.

Following on from the above the Committee wanted to know whether exit interviews are carried out when staff leave the employment of the Council. It was suggested that the Council should take a proactive approach to recruitment including by directly engaging with schools and promoting Planning for example as a career prospect. The Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation confirmed that the Council does have an exit policy and procedure whereby exit interviews are conducted; the interviews are held on a voluntary basis and are designed to establish the reasons why an employee is leaving the Council. The Council also has a recruitment drive planned across all council services and it has an established link with Coleg Llandrillo Menai. Recruitment issues are being experienced across the local government sector in Wales as a result of which the WLGA has determined to investigate the matter. The pandemic has changed the nature of the jobs market with remote working leading to a high number and range of opportunities for job seekers that may not have been available and/or feasible pre-Covid 19.

- With regard to attendance at work, whether any cohort is occasioning concern and if so, what support measures are being provided?

The Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation referred to the Council's arrangements through the Occupational Health provision for supporting staff who are absent due to illness and these have been well publicised within the Council. Reports in the media have also highlighted the difficulties which people have been experiencing because of delayed surgery and these are now filtering through into attendance at work figures. However, as the report attests, the Q1 performance is almost identical to the pre-pandemic levels seen in Q1 2019/20 which proved to be the best performing quarter prior to the onset of Covid. The Council consistently monitors sickness absence data and any issues arising therefrom are dealt with in accordance with existing policies and procedures.

Having considered the Quarter 1 2021/22 scorecard report and the updates provided by Officers at the meeting, the Committee resolved to accept the report, to note the areas which the Senior Leadership Team is managing to secure improvements into the future and to recommend the mitigation measures as outlined to the Executive.

4 MONITORING PROGRESS: SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor Llinos Medi, Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services presented the report by the Director of Social Services setting out progress to date within Adults' Services and the Children and Families' Service along with a synopsis of the topics covered by the Social Services Improvement Panel across its 4 meetings held during the period March to July, 2021.

The Portfolio Member referred to the ongoing Foster Carer recruitment drive which has resulted in an increase in the Authority's foster carers thereby enabling more children to be cared for on Anglesey and to remain part of their extended families and local communities. Further targeted recruitment is planned regionally for 2021/22. Two of the Council's small family style homes (Cantrefi Clyd) are open and fully operational, the third which will provide short breaks for children and young people with learning disabilities has been completed and registration has been submitted to CIW. A fourth family style home is in the offing. Young Carers ID cards have been designed and are being rolled out. In Adults' Services work on planning for a new extra care housing provision continues. The Covid 19

pandemic has impacted on the Shared Lives programme to support people living with dementia and their carers and a review of the programme is due to take place in December. Likewise opportunities for people with mental health needs will increase as Covid19 restrictions are eased – individual support sessions have resumed in some cases. Work to establish three Community Resource Teams has been undertaken during the year. Substantial progress has been made in the first two quarters of the year in the development of the WCCIS (Welsh Community Care Information System) Prototype on the Island – further details provided in the report. Whilst the Adults' Learning Disability Day Opportunity Strategy is in place, formal consultation on the development of a greater range of high quality day opportunities for individuals in their communities will not take place until spring, 2022.

The Social Services Improvement Panel has continued to meet regularly despite the challenges and restrictions linked to the pandemic. The Panel continues to receive evidence of improvement and developments in both the Children and Families' Service and in Adults' Services which provides assurance on progress made thus far which is also confirmed by CIW's local authority assurance check findings for Anglesey.

The Committee raised the following issues on the report presented –

- Whilst welcoming the completion of the Adults' Learning Disability Day Opportunity Strategy, the Committee expressed some disappointment that consultation on developing a wider range of day opportunities for individuals will not happen for some time until spring 2022. The Committee as well as wanting to know the reasons for the delay sought further information about the kind of community options being looked at in the meantime.

The Portfolio Member for Social Services clarified that smaller providers in particular had made it known that because of Covid-19 they would find it challenging to participate and respond fully to a consultation at this time; she acknowledged that the conditions in which to undertake a consultation need to be right for example being able to ensure an advocacy provision to enable all individuals to have their say. The involvement of People Too who work with local authorities to deliver transformation programmes meant that the Authority wanted to hear their feedback to confirm the direction it was taking was the right one and additionally more time was required to allow the newly appointed Head of Adults' Services to have an input. For these reasons it was felt that it would be fairer for everyone to delay the consultation until spring, 2022. Community services have been, and are available, and decisions have been taken in order to meet the specific needs of individuals including by arranging placements where appropriate. The support provided by voluntary sector groups has been valuable many of which have adapted to provide different kinds of opportunities. Families and service users themselves have also responded positively.

The Older People Services Manager added that rather than providing the same provision for everyone via a central day care centre, the Service has sought to understand people's individual needs and to tailor opportunities accordingly within the community in a way that benefits them and expands their interests and capabilities e.g. opportunities with the Lifeboat Service in Holyhead or gardening work; this is the model which the Service is working towards and hopes to extend across the Island.

Following on from the above, the Committee wanted to know whether the pandemic had led to an increase in mental health needs and how the Service had responded. The Older People Services Manager confirmed that the numbers are closely

monitored and that provision has been centred on providing outdoor opportunities e.g. walking, cycling, camping and canoeing to help individuals with mental health issues shift their focus and look outwards. The process has been a creative one and has been appreciated by service users.

- Reference was made to the shortage of home carers with the Committee wanting to know what kind of steps the Service is taking to address the issue.

The Portfolio Member for Social Services acknowledged that whilst the pandemic has accentuated the matter home carer recruitment issues pre date Covid -19 and have been recognised as a risk. Links have been established with Coleg Llandrillo Menai to publicise opportunities among the student cohort and a recruitment drive was held during winter, 2020. The general shortage of carers has also been escalated as a risk and a challenge within the WLGA. The Authority maintains close contact with the independent sector to monitor resilience and to establish the level of support required by the sector. The Head of Adults' Services advised that a national recruitment drive is commencing this week in recognition of the challenge nationally of attractive staff to the care sector. Professionally, he was keen to look at the type of contracts provided in order to try to make the work more attractive and more stable and with the help and collaboration of partners across Wales, to raise its profile nationally highlighting the real difference that carers can make in the lives of individuals. This also means recognising that the work of care sector staff the challenges of which the pandemic has underlined, needs to be appropriately acknowledged and remunerated.

- Reference was also made to the Council's small family homes (Cartrefi Clyd) specifically how their purchase was funded and whether Welsh Government provided some of the finance required.

The Portfolio Member for Social Services clarified that whilst the initial intention was to source the homes from the Council's housing stock, CIW's standards regarding the physical environment with regard to the size of rooms meant that this was not feasible. The Authority has been fortunate in being able to access grants under the Intermediate Care Fund whereby grants are allocated on a regional basis and are earmarked via the Regional Partnership Board. The Authority has purchased 3 properties to date which will form part of the housing stock thereby adding value to the stock, generating savings that would have been spent on high cost out of county placements and providing the best possible care for children whom the Authority looks after in familiar surroundings within their communities.

It was resolved –

- **To confirm that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee is satisfied with the pace of progress and improvements mad to date in Social Services.**
- **To recommend to the Executive that progress and pace of improvements in Social Services are adequate.**

5 FINANCE SCRUTINY PANEL PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor Dafydd Roberts, Chair of the Finance Scrutiny Panel provided a verbal report of the matters discussed at the Finance Scrutiny Panel's 9 September, 2021 meeting as follows –

- **Revenue Budget 2021/22 Quarter 1 update**

The Panel having received a verbal presentation by the Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer on the 2021/22 Quarter 1 position, noted the following –

- That it was premature to come to a conclusion about service budget performance on the basis of Qt1 data as much can change in the coming months. Elements likely to generate in year savings include schools' out of county placements; green waste income and the school meals contract.
- Budget pressures in Adults' Services and the need also to keep an eye on the Children and Families Service's budgets although these are currently underspent.
- Concern about the condition of roads and highways and in light of the Highways Service's positive financial position the need to consider completing essential road maintenance work this year.
- That the Authority continues to be compensated by the Welsh Government for loss of income under a number of headings including parking and leisure centre fees.

The Panel in noting that the 2021/22 Revenue Budget is underspent at Quarter 1, resolved to recommend to the Scrutiny Committee that in light of the Highways Service's positive financial position, consideration be given to completing essential road maintenance work this year.

- **Capital Budget 2021/22 Quarter 1 update**

The Panel having received a verbal presentation by the Director of Function (Resources)/ Section 151 Officer noted that the capital budget Q1 performance reflects the previous pattern of underspend with slippage most likely under the following headings –

- The Council's housing development programme
- WHQS council housing modernisation programmes
- Disability adaptations in schools
- The Schools' Modernisation Programme
- Flood prevention schemes

The Panel in noting the underspend on the 2021/22 Capital Budget at Quarter 1, noted also the likelihood that in future years the capital budget could be implemented to a different timescale so that it is set earlier in the year thereby enabling projects to commence sooner thus avoiding a significant underspend by the end of the year.

- **Medium Term Financial Review**

The Panel having received a verbal presentation by the Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer, raised the following points –

- That a number of factors may impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan including the increase in NI contributions, inflation and pay rises thereby adding to the Council's costs.
- That savings are assumed under headings in relation to education out of county placements; green waste income, school meals income and those deriving from working differently.
- The significant challenges in trying to forecast cost pressures in the care sector
- The challenges also in trying to project the financial provision required for the next 3 years

The Panel having considered the information presented, noted the latest position with regard to completing the Medium Term Financial Review.

- **Council Tax Premium on Second Homes – Consultation on the Level of the Premium**

The Panel having received a comprehensive verbal presentation by the Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer which set out the main messages from the recent consultation on the level of the Premium on 2nd homes., noted the following –

- That there had been a total of 1,397 responses to the 6 week consultation – 1,069 by Anglesey residents and 261 by second home owners.
- That a total of 1,256 of respondents stated a post code local to Anglesey.
- That Welsh Government is also arranging a national consultation on the challenge of second homes.
- That a number of responses recognised the challenge as significant and one that would be addressed by raising the Council Tax Premium alone. As there is a high risk that a number of second homeowners will seek to flip their properties over to business rates, there needs to be clarity around the financial implications of raising the Premium in terms of potential loss of income to the Council via Council Tax.
- That it was recognised however that any financial loss to the Council from properties switching to business rates would not be long-term because of the way Welsh Government calculates each local authority's SSA through a funding formula that takes account of income collected via Council Tax.

The Panel having considered the information presented, noted that any proposal to change the level of the Second Homes Premium would be scrutinised as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process and it recommended to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee that the Panel should respond to Welsh Government's consultation on the challenge of second homes including by bringing pressure to bear on Welsh Government to close the current loophole whereby second homes are able to switch from the Council Tax system to business rates.

It was resolved to accept the report of the Chair of the Finance Scrutiny Panel on the matters discussed at the Panel's latest meeting, to note the points brought to the Committee's attention and to thank Councillor Dafydd Roberts for the feedback.

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's forward work programme to November, 2021 was presented for consideration.

It was resolved –

- **To agree the current version of the forward work programme for 2021/22.**
- **To note the progress thus far in implementing the forward work programme.**

Councillor Aled Morris Jones
Chair