

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 20 June 2022

PRESENT: Councillor R. Llewelyn Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dyfed Wyn Jones (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Geraint Bebb, Neville Evans, Douglas Fowlie, Aled M. Jones, Jackie Lewis, Llio A. Owen, Dafydd Roberts, Keith Roberts, Alwen Watkin, Arfon Wyn

Portfolio Members

Councillors Llinos Medi Huws (Leader), Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Economic Development, Leisure and Tourism), Alun Mummery (Portfolio Member for Housing and Supporting Communities), Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member Highways, Waste and Property), Gary Pritchard (Portfolio Member for Children - Social Services, and Youth Services), Alun Roberts (Portfolio Member for Adults' Services – Social Services)

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer
Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer
Director of Social Services
Head of Adults' Services
Head of Housing Services
Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation
Chief Planning Officer (DFJ)
Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager (GM)
Business Manager (Highways, Waste and Property) (GP)
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Ieuan Williams (Portfolio Member for Education and the Welsh Language), Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance, Corporate Business and Customer Experience)

ALSO PRESENT: Bethan E. Griffith (Business Support Manager – Democratic Services)

The Chair welcomed everyone present to the first Corporate Scrutiny Committee meeting of the new Administration and Officers and Members were introduced. The Chair thanked Councillor Aled M. Jones, his predecessor in the role for his and the Committee's work over the course of the previous five years.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

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

- 28 February, 2022
- 7 March, 2022
- 31 May, 2022

It was resolved –

- **To receive the minutes of the meetings of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 28 February and 7 March, 2022.**
- **To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 31 May, 2022.**

3 MONITORING PERFORMANCE: CORPORATE SCORECARD Q4 2021/22

The report of the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation incorporating the Corporate Scorecard for Quarter 4 of the 2021/22 financial year was presented for the Committee's consideration and comment. The report portrayed the position of the Council against its operational objectives as outlined and agreed earlier in the year.

Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas who was Portfolio Member for Corporate Business during this reporting period presented the Corporate Scorecard for Quarter 4 which was the fourth and final scorecard report for the 2021/22 financial year and the first of the new Administration. He was pleased to be able to report that 90% of Performance Indicators are at or close to target, and that looking back at the Scorecard over the past five years and how it reflects the Council's performance he could confirm that performance has gradually improved during that time notwithstanding the challenges posed by austerity and dealing with the pandemic. Specific examples of good performance seen during the year have been provided in the report relating to Adults' Services, homelessness prevention and the number of empty properties brought back into use.

In acknowledging the positive tenor of the report overall and the solid performance by the Council which it reflected, the Committee also identified the following areas of below target performance which it challenged recognising that these areas will likely influence the approach in the coming year –

- Indicator 32 – Percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted which was Red with a performance of 62.39% against a local target of 70% and a national statutory target of 64% for the year. This performance is also slightly down on the 62.96% seen at the end of 2020/21.

The Highways, Waste and Property Services' Business Manager confirmed that the performance for this indicator has fallen short of the 2021/22 statutory target of 64% due partly to the introduction of a paid for green waste collection service which has resulted in a 2,000 ton reduction in the green waste collected and also an increase in black bin waste over the past two years. Officers anticipated concerns around meeting interim and longer term (70% by 2024/25) targets over 12 months ago and for this reason WRAP Cymru (The Waste and Resources Action Programme) was invited to assist the Council with analysing operational performance and making recommendations to help meet required targets. WRAP Cymru is visiting the Island to undertake practical assessments during Q1 and Q2 2022/23 and the results of its analysis are expected to be available during Q3 2022/23. In

response to further questions about penalties and/or sanctions for the non-achievement of statutory recycling targets and the part played by increased tourism over the past two years in declining recycling rates/rising rates of black bin waste, the Officer advised that although it is possible for Welsh Government to impose penalties for missing statutory recycling rates it does take into consideration the plans which a local authority has to improve performance and to meet recycling targets in future and in this respect the Council's collaboration with WRAP Cymru to increase recycling rates on the Island places it in a strong position. Additionally, part of WRAP Cymru's work will involve analysing the impact of tourism on recycling rates.

The Chief Executive advised that the immediate priority is to conclude the work being undertaken by WRAP Cymru which involves analysing the waste being collected and how much is being recycled which will provide the Council with baseline information. Further research may be necessary to ascertain how the private market has performed including how the commercial sector has adapted to increased tourism levels given that the population increased to an estimated 300,000 visitors during the previous two summers compared with the resident population of c.70,000. Whilst this is likely to have had an impact on recycling performance firm data is required to show to what extent if any increased tourism has had a negative impact on waste management and recycling levels. Once WRAP Cymru's work has reached a sufficiently advanced stage, its conclusions can be brought to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee for detailed examination and scrutiny.

The Committee agreed that Council's performance with regard to reusing, recycling and composting waste needs to be scrutinised closely on an ongoing basis as it also linked to combating climate change to which the Council is committed. The Committee welcomed the suggestion that the outcome of WRAP Cymru's work be brought to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee for examination.

- Indicator 36 – Percentage of planning appeals dismissed which was red with a performance of 50% against a target of 65%.

The Chief Planning Officer in confirming that there were three new decisions on appeals during the final quarter of the year where two of the appeals were dismissed bringing the overall percentage for the year from 46% to 59%, advised that this indicator deals with very small numbers and the underperformance is the result of 5 out of 10 planning appeals being upheld – 8 of those appeals were applications determined by officers and 2 were applications determined by Committee. The Chief Planning Officer advised that the 10 appeals arising is a very small number when considered in the context of the 1,000 plus applications on average which the Local Planning Authority deals with in the year. There is also an element of interpretation/ subjectivity pertaining to planning applications and analysis of appeal decisions has shown them to be varied in nature with no obvious pattern having been identified that would require a different interpretation of local planning policies. Although planning appeals are heard and determined by the Planning Inspectorate and are therefore out of the control of the Local Planning Authority, the Authority continues to strive to improve performance and to that end the Planning team has been strengthened and new appointments made and a programme of training introduced for both Officers and Elected Members. The Local Planning Authority also continues to monitor appeal decisions for any emerging trends and so that lessons can be learned in order to continue to improve the effectiveness of decision-making. The Officer further advised that despite the unavailability of comparative data during the Covid pandemic period he was aware that the regional position was similar.

The Committee accepted the reasons for why planning performance in respect of appeals had missed the target and was reassured by the Officer's explanation.

- Indicator 04b –The total percentage of written responses to complaints within 15 days (Social Services) which was red with a performance of 66% against a target of 80%.

The Director of Social Services provided assurance that although a written response to complaints had not been provided in all cases, he could confirm that 39 of the 41 complaints received were discussed with the complainant within 5 working days, and 7 of the 13 late written responses were agreed with the complainant in advance of being identified as late as noted in the complaints protocol. The complicated nature of the complaints received and the complexity of the issues raised often require multi-agency input meaning that cases can take longer than 15 days to investigate and resolve. Additionally, the responsibility for responding to complaints is now shared between service managers the objective being to expedite complaint responses.

The Committee noted and accepted the explanation.

- Indicator 23 – The average length of time for all children who were on the CPR during the year and who were re-registered during the year which was Amber with a performance of 318 days against a target of 270 days.

The Director of Social Services advised that there are clear procedures for the registration and de-registration of children on the Child Protection Register. He confirmed that at the time of the report's drafting there were 14 children (out of 48 on the register) who had been on the register for over 7 months; these cases are complex and many of these children are subject to the Public Law Outline which sets out the process to be followed when care proceedings for a child are issued. The Director of Social Services clarified that the fact that 14 children have been on the register for longer than 7 months is not necessarily a reflection of poor performance as removing children from the register is a multi-discipline task requiring a number of strict criteria to be met. De-registering children prematurely or outside of this process would entail a risk to the Council. The Performance Indicator was introduced originally when the number of children on the CPR was higher and an element of drift had been identified in some cases and it is therefore a historical indicator. The situation has since improved and the Service has moved forwards. In response to a question about resources being a factor, the Director of Social Services advised that the availability of resources is one element but of more significance in the cases under question is the complexity of these children's needs and the fact that they have been placed on the register for a number of reasons.

The Committee in accepting the explanation, acknowledged that evaluating performance for this Indicator is a complicated matter and that the number of children on the CPR and the length of time they have been on the register does not tell the whole story about the nature and severity of their needs and the risks involved in removing them from the register too soon.

In further questioning, the Committee sought assurance that the positive performance in relation to PI 26 – the percentage of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless (80.95% against a target of 70%) – can be sustained into the future should Welsh Government funding reduce or be withdrawn.

The Head of Housing Services confirmed that the number of people in emergency accommodation is much higher than it has been historically and that Welsh Government has provided significant funding to support that position. Whilst Welsh Government has committed to maintain the current level of funding for 2022/23 which has contributed to the Service's robust performance in relation to this Indicator, there is no certainty that the same support will be made available in the subsequent years. The Service is doing

its best within current resources to ensure staffing levels in the longer term and it is the Service's intention to apply to utilise service reserves to maintain staffing levels for 2023/24. The developing situation in the Ukraine and growing number of refugees as a result of the conflict may also add to the demand for emergency accommodation.

Having considered the Quarter 4 2021/22 scorecard report and the clarifications and assurances provided by Officers verbally at the meeting with regard to the points raised, 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 NOMINATION OF SCRUTINY MEMBERS TO SERVE ON BOARDS AND PANELS

The report of the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer and the Scrutiny Manager inviting the Committee to nominate representatives from among its members to serve on the Social Services Scrutiny Panel/Corporate Parenting Panel; Finance Scrutiny Panel and the Education Scrutiny Panel was presented for consideration. The report detailed the scope, function and remit of each panel and set out their reporting arrangements.

It was resolved to nominate the following members to serve on the Panels as noted below –

- **Social Services Scrutiny Panel/Corporate Parenting Panel (4 members from the Corporate Scrutiny Committee)**
Councillors Neville Evans, Jackie Lewis, Llio A. Owen and Alwen Watkin
- **Finance Scrutiny Panel (3 members from the Corporate Scrutiny Committee)**
Councillors Geraint Bebb, Dyfed Wyn Jones, Dafydd Roberts
- **Education Scrutiny Panel (4 members from the Corporate Scrutiny Committee)**
Councillors Dyfed Wyn Jones, Keith Roberts, Alwen Watkin and Arfon Wyn

5 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Scrutiny Manager setting out the Corporate Scrutiny Committee's indicative Forward Work Programme for 2022/23 was presented for consideration.

The Scrutiny Manager referred to the Committee's next meeting in September, 2022 and confirmed the items to be considered at that meeting. In response to questions about the process for scheduling items on the work programme she advised that this is done in line with a corporate process with the objective being to ensure strategic alignment and cross reference between the Executive's and Scrutiny's Forward Work Programmes to enable Scrutiny to consider items that are of strategic importance to the Council prior to their being determined by the Executive. The monthly meetings of the Scrutiny Chairs/Vice-Chairs Forum also provides an opportunity to discuss those matters.

It was resolved –

- **To agree the current version of the Forward Work Programme for 2022/23.**
- **To note the progress thus far in implementing the Forward Work Programme.**

**Councillor R. Llewelyn Jones
Chair**