

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held in the Committee Room and virtually on Zoom on 11 March 2025

PRESENT:

Councillor Douglas Fowlie (Chair)
Councillor Sonia Williams (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Geraint Bebb, Aled M. Jones, John Ifan Jones, R. Llewelyn Jones, Llio Owen, Keith Roberts, Ieuan Williams, Arfon Wyn.

Co-opted Member: Mr John Tierney (The Catholic Church)

Portfolio Members

Councillors Gary Pritchard (Leader), Neville Evans (Portfolio Member for Leisure, Tourism and Maritime), Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Corporate Business and Customer Experience), Nicola Roberts (Portfolio Member for Planning, Public Protection and Climate Change), Alun Roberts (Portfolio Member for Adults' Services and Community Safety), Dafydd Roberts (Portfolio Member for Education and the Welsh Language), Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance and Housing)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive (for items 1 to 3)
Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer (for items 1 to 4)
Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer (for item 3)
Director of Social Services
Director of Education, Skills and Young People
Head of Highways, Waste and Property (HP)
Head of Housing Services (NM)
Head of Democracy (DS)
Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation (CE) (for item 3)
Corporate Planning Programme and Performance Manager (GP) (for item 3)
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)
Webcasting Officer (FT)

APOLOGIES:

Councillors Jackie Lewis, Alwen Watkin, Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Highways, Waste and Property), Mr Christian Branch (Head of Regulation and Economic Development)

ALSO PRESENT:

N/A

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 19 February 2025 were presented and were confirmed as correct and progress against the actions agreed at the meeting was outlined and was noted.

3 MONITORING PERFORMANCE: CORPORATE SCORECARD Q3 2024/25

The report of the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation incorporating the Corporate Scorecard for Quarter 3 2024/25 was presented for the Committee's consideration. The scorecard report portrays the current end of Quarter 3 position against the strategic objectives outlined in the Council Plan.

Councillor Carwyn Jones, Portfolio Member for Corporate Business and Customer Experience presented the report which showed that 87% of the indicators with targets monitored during the quarter had performed well against those targets and had a Green or Yellow RAG status which is a positive result reflective of a strong performance overall across the Council. Councillor Carwyn Jones referred to the areas where the Council's performance had improved and/or is excelling which were in relation to Social Services, schools with no school in the Estyn follow up/statutory categories, responsive maintenance repairs, letting of council business units, condition of A, B and C roads and Welsh language skills requirements in recruitment. He also highlighted areas identified in the report as needing improvement to bring them to target which were being monitored by the Leadership Team. Those areas related to the number of children undertaking swimming lessons throughout the year (Môn Actif), the delivery of major disabled facilities grants and re-letting of lettable units in Housing, number of mooring contracts, waste recycling percentages and responses to FOIs within timescale. The report set out the context to those issues and outlined the mitigating actions both planned and implemented.

The following were matters of discussion by the committee in reviewing the Q3 corporate scorecard report –

- Whether the Leadership Team is able to provide assurances that its input and intervention as regards underperforming areas are successful and whether consideration has been given to applying different methodologies to improve performance such as Vanguard, Total Quality management and continuous improvement.

The Chief Executive confirmed that he was satisfied that the approaches taken to areas of underperformance are appropriate and thorough and involve the Leadership Team regularly reviewing the draft quarterly scorecard reports with a focus on areas where the outcomes do not meet the set targets and/or where the trend is downward, holding discussions with heads of service and managers to identify any underlying issues and/or mitigating circumstances and agree on remedial actions. Some PIs require resource allocation or further changes to be made which link into actions in the Council Plan and occur in tandem with performance management and monitoring. The Chief Executive said that he did not think the Council is in a position financially to be introducing new systems across the board and that there is a risk in the short term that transitioning to a new system could cause disruption thereby affecting service delivery and performance especially in service areas where the pressures are already high. Notwithstanding, alternative methodologies could be trialled in a more limited way to see whether they make a difference. He further clarified that PIs and targets will be reviewed at the end of Quarter 4 to ensure they are relevant and appropriate in preparation for drafting the 2025/26 scorecard.

- The performance of Housing Indicator 03 – the average number of calendar days to let lettable units of accommodation excluding DTLs which is Red at 47 days against a target of 35 days. Questions were asked about the extent to which the Housing Service is confident that the changes introduced will have an impact on reducing the number of days to re-let lettable units and there was some debate about the achievability of the 35 day turnaround target.

Councillor Robin Williams, Portfolio Member for Finance and Housing said that the performance against the target has to be considered in the wider context of work pressures, the existing condition of properties with those requiring more extensive repairs taking longer to re-let, the availability of resources, skilled labour and materials which are all factors that can affect the timeframe. There may be grounds therefore for considering whether the target is realistic in those circumstances. The Chief Executive said that he understood that there are arrangements to look at PI indicator 03 to ensure it is effective and/or whether some adjustment is needed.

- The underperformance of Education Indicator 07 Môn Actif – the average number of children undertaking swimming lessons throughout the year which is Amber at 1,773 against a target of 1,900. Questions were asked about the steps being taken by the service to address the missed target.

Councillor Neville Evans, Portfolio Member for Leisure, Tourism and Maritime provided assurance that the service regularly reviews data on usage and collects feedback from service users across the three leisure centres and he confirmed that Môn Actif markets and publicises its activities widely. Cost of living pressures as well as the availability of alternative activities may be factors in the decline in demand for swimming lessons. Additionally, the target is based on historical information and may need to be reviewed to ensure it reflects true performance. Councillor Neville Evans said that he was pleased to be able to say that Môn Actif had received national recognition for its Swim Safe Programme and that a new video promoting swimming and the Council's pools would be issued in April.

- The prospects for achieving the 70% target for the percentage of domestic waste reused recycled or composted (Climate Change PI 02) were discussed with current performance recorded as Red at 66.05%. Questions were asked about kerbside collection arrangements and whether those need to be reviewed to make it easier for residents to recycle as well as encouraging clean recycling so that the items collected are free from contamination and can be more easily sold on to generate revenue for the Council. A query was also raised on the 48% of waste reused, recycled or composted from Council buildings with the performance having remained static over the past three quarters.

Councillor Gary Pritchard, Leader, highlighted that Anglesey's recycling rates are high when compared to UK rates and that Welsh Government has set a challenging recycling target for councils in Wales which the Executive is keen to achieve and has been discussing how best to do so in recent months including by trialling changes to recycling bins and cardboard collection in two areas of the Island. There are some barriers to overcome including the number of holiday lets not recycling which may be due unfamiliarity with local recycling practices. The Executive is also aware of two specific areas on the island where it is difficult to determine the source of waste because both general waste bins and recycling boxes are collected and emptied from one central point making it difficult to educate those residents not recycling. The Head of Highways, Waste and Property advised that Welsh Government has issued a collections blueprint for how it wishes to see household waste being collected across Wales and that Anglesey's arrangements are in

line with the blueprint. He further advised that improving recycling rates and ensuring that recycling is done properly is a matter of continually reminding residents of the importance and benefits of recycling, educating residents on how to do it correctly and ensuring resident buy-in. The Council also encourages residents to provide feedback and is happy to hear their ideas for improvement.

Councillor Gary Pritchard confirmed that the Executive has discussed ways in which children and young people in schools can be taught about the value of recycling so that they can then share the message at home with their family, as well as integrating recycling education into the new curriculum. The committee was further advised that more work needs to be done with regard to improving recycling rates across the Council's buildings including schools, leisure centres and headquarters and that the legislation requiring workplace recycling only came into effect in April 2024.

The Head of Highways, Waste and Property also responded to a specific matter raised by a member in relation to issues encountered when attempting to recycle a plastic oil tank and confirmed that he would look into the matter. Councillor R. Llewelyn Jones wanted to express his thanks to waste collection and recycling staff for their work throughout the year in all weathers.

- The impact on income generation of the below target performance with regard to the number of annual moorings sold. Questions were asked about whether this is a long-term concern and whether it indicates a permanent decline in demand.

Councillor Neville Evans clarified that he understood that there has been a downturn in demand for mooring contracts generally across North Wales in the last three years. Improvements at other moorings may be a factor in the number sold on Anglesey as well as differences in the system operated by the Council. A detailed review of the maritime service is being conducted which includes fee levels, income collection processes and infrastructure. Additionally the PI target is based on historical information and also needs to be reviewed.

- The missed target for responding to Freedom of Information requests (FOIs) within timescale was discussed and questions were asked about the volume of requests, whether this had increased and if so why and whether there were any detectable patterns to requests.

The Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer clarified that the 90% target has been set by the Information Commissioner's Office and is challenging. The Council's performance against this target over the past nine years has varied from 67% to 80% as reflected in the SIRO's annual report for 2023/24 to the Governance and Audit Committee. The Monitoring Officer referred to the limited resources available to handle FOI requests highlighting that there is only one corporate information officer post to co-ordinate and advise on responding to FOIs and that this post has been vacant for some time despite attempts at recruitment. The bulk of the searching and review of records work involved in responding to FOIs is undertaken by service staff in addition to their day to day workload which can be challenging especially where the request for information is complex and includes a series of questions. The number of FOI requests received annually is in the region of 1,000 with the number of questions totalling in the region of 6,500. The Council will from April, 2025 be using a CRM system to help it manage FOIs and while this will make it easier to track the status of requests providing information in real time it will not increase the resources to be able to respond to them. In response to further questions about anonymous requests, requests made under a false name and requests that are deemed vexatious/repetitive and a suggestion that the new CRM system be used to extract this specific information for the benefit of the service, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that

such requests are already identified and she explained how they are dealt with confirming that requests that are deemed vexatious can be rejected and appealed to the ICO and that there is no duty on the Council to respond to anonymous requests. In cases where it is thought the sender has used a false name, a request to prove identity has been made.

- The availability of support to improve the percentage of all jobs advertised by the Council as requiring Welsh level 4 and above (34%) was discussed and the absence of a target was noted.

The committee was advised that each post is assessed individually and objectively and managers are provided with guidance on how to assess Welsh language skills for each post and have access to specialist advice within the Council. Council guidelines are in keeping with the Council's new Welsh Language Policy and external guidance can also be sought through the Welsh Language Commissioner. Welsh language skills within the Council are good with high rates of levels 4 and 5. The committee was further advised of the resources available for staff to improve their Welsh Language skills including tutor support and liaison with the National Centre for Learning Welsh. Additionally 66% of staff have received training with improving their Welsh language skills. It was confirmed that as this KPI is new to the scorecard, there was no previous data available for setting a target. The Leader suggested that members might wish to consider whether an explanation of what each of the Welsh Language skills levels entails would help them in assessing the Council's position and progress.

- The position with regard to Council operated electric vehicle chargers was discussed and questions were asked about why the infrastructure has not progressed over the last three quarters.

Councillor Nicola Roberts, Portfolio Member for Planning, Public Protection and Climate Change referred to some of the challenges faced by the Council in taking the infrastructure forward including a limited budget and dependency on grant funding. The Council is also keen to avoid duplicating private EV charging points in areas where those have been installed. There are also thirty-six charging points outside Council buildings and residential care homes and while there are plans to extend the provision the Island does compare relatively well in terms of the number of charging points available. The Head of Highways, Waste and Property confirmed that the Council tries to balance the provision with demand mindful of the private sector provision and mindful also of the ongoing costs of maintaining the charging stations after installation. While the focus in 2024/25 has been on Council buildings the installation of further charging points is planned for 2025/26 mainly in coastal areas and to come to a leasing agreement with the external provider on sharing the risk in the event of reduced usage. The Officer further confirmed that the Council monitors where private EV charging points have been installed to avoid overlapping and clarified that although profit is not the Council's main priority it does seek to ensure that its pricing is sufficient to meet costs and to produce enough surplus to cover the costs of charging stations in more rural locations where usage and therefore revenue may be less.

- A member asked for clarification of Social Care and Wellbeing Indicator (06) – the average length of time for all children who remain on the Child Protection Register as at the end of the quarter. The Director of Social Services clarified how the Council manages and administers the register and its objectives in trying to ensure that children do not remain on the register for longer than necessary. He referred to the support provided to children on the register and to their families to improve their circumstances and to work towards removing children from the register once all risks have been addressed.

Having reviewed the Corporate Scorecard for Q3 2024/25 and following a full discussion it was resolved -

- **To note the Corporate Scorecard report for Q3 2024/25 including the areas which the Leadership Team is exploring and investigating to manage and secure further improvements into the future. These were in relation to areas under Education (Môn Actif), Housing (delivery of Major Disabled Facilities Grant and Housing Voids), Economy (Moorings), Climate Change (Waste recycling) and Whole Council Health (FOI requests), and**
- **To recommend the scorecard report and mitigating measures outlined therein to the Executive.**

4 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN 2025-2055

The report of the Head of Housing Services incorporating the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan for 2025 to 2055 was presented for the Committee's consideration. The HRA Business Plan sets out how resources will be spent to maintain, improve, and develop the Council's housing stock.

The report was presented by Councillor Robin Williams, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Member for Finance and Housing who explained that councils in Wales with a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) are required to prepare a HRA Business Plan for submission to Welsh Government in order to qualify for a Major Repairs Allowance. The Plan sets out the Council's strategies for maintaining and improving its housing stock as well as demonstrating its commitment to the Welsh Housing Quality Standards 2 2023. The Portfolio Member said that formulating a viable Plan this year had been more challenging due to the fact that rental income has not kept pace with costs and is now insufficient to meet all the Council's housing expenditure arising from the requirements of WHQS 2 2023 and other expenses.

The Head of Housing Services in confirming that the Plan to be submitted for Executive approval at the end of the month will incorporate all the relevant financial details, referred to highlights within the Plan in terms of housing development and investment in existing housing saying that over the 30 year period the Council is aiming to develop 1,400 additional units with £252m of expenditure on the current housing stock. Over five years, £38m will be spent on responsive repairs, 225 additional units will be developed including the planned extra care provision in Menai Bridge and £49m will be spent on upgrading the stock to comply with WHQS 2 2023. This level of expenditure will entail borrowing of £70m.

The main points of the ensuing discussion were as follows –

- Suggestions were made about linking the Council's social housing policy to the Welsh language and specifically integrating the language within the definition of "local" in order to preserve and promote the language and Welsh speaking communities on the island.

The Head of Housing Service advised that among the qualifying criteria for social housing specified in the current housing allocations policy is a connection with Anglesey which includes but is not limited to having been resident or employed in the area for five years. Applicants with a community connection would have priority over those with no connection in line with the policy thereby helping to preserve communities. The Portfolio Member for Finance and Housing said that he would be willing to look at any evidence of communities having been affected from a language perspective by the application of the current allocation policy.

- The ways in which the HRA Business Plan enables the Council to realise the priorities of the Council Plan 2023-2028

The Portfolio Member for Finance and Housing explained that the HRA Business Plan in setting ambitious targets for housing development, bringing empty homes back into use and buying back former council houses seeks to fulfil the vision of the Council Plan for Housing that ensures that everyone has the right to call somewhere home.

- The risks involved in implementing the Council's proposed expansion programme to increase its housing stock and the affordability of the programme.

The Portfolio Member for Finance and Housing cited increasing costs as one of the main risks which applies to the acquisition of land, construction materials and labour. Another challenge is the Welsh Government's cap on rent increases with the maximum rent uplift for 2025/26 across the housing stock set at 2.7% leading to a growing disparity between the Council's rental income and its housing costs and expenditure needs. The Head of Housing Services in referring to the risk of not being able to develop the right type of houses in the right places provided assurance that the risk is mitigated by the housing needs assessment undertaken lately which identifies the housing needs in different areas of the island.

- Whether the Council has considered leasing privately owned properties from/on behalf of property owners particularly in cases where a person may have acquired a property through a relative and is not in a position to renovate meaning the property is empty and may be subject to Council Tax premium. A suggestion was also made in relation to turning around void properties that in cases where extensive works are required the Council should be aiming to ensure that the work is completed in one co-ordinated effort ("one hit") within the 35 day timescale rather than task by task by separate tradespeople.

The Head of Housing Services advised that the Council is one of the authorities taking part in Leasing Scheme Wales which enables property owners to apply to lease their property to their local authority for a guaranteed rent for the length of the lease with grants available to bring properties up to standard. He confirmed that seventeen such properties are part of the scheme in Anglesey and that information about the scheme is available on the Council's website. With regard to void properties, the Head of Housing confirmed that two contractors have been added to the contractor framework who will be able to undertake kitchen and bathroom refurbishment on void properties where required in addition to carrying out those works as part of the planned upgrading and WHQS programme.

It was suggested by committee that the Leasing Scheme Wales needs to be publicised more widely to reach potential participants who may not be aware that it exists. It was further suggested that the scheme be also included as a topic at a Members' Briefing Session to bring it to all members' attention.

- The achievability of the priority of working towards the Welsh Housing Quality Standards 2 2023.

The Portfolio Member for Finance and Housing confirmed that the Council is committed to achieving the WHQS 2 2023 and that given the challenges involved, the endeavour has to be prioritised. The Portfolio Member restated that one of the main barriers is the rent cap which limits the income the Council is able to generate from rents which in turn reduces the revenue available to fund the upgrades needed to meet the WHQS. While no one wants to increase rents, rent levels should reflect the work done to improve the properties. In response to further questions, the Portfolio Member clarified that it could make more

financial sense to buy new build properties on developments by housing associations rather than renovating older council properties which require major works to bring them to standard.

There was some debate in the committee about the achievability of WHQS 2 2023 and although accepting that they are aimed at improving the quality of social housing, members sought clarification of whether those councils in Wales with their own housing stock had raised concerns about the challenges of meeting the standards with Welsh Government. The Head of Housing Services confirmed that the message that it will be difficult to deliver the WHQS 2 2023 especially in relation to decarbonisation without additional support had been conveyed to Welsh Government via the Heads of Housing Services. In order to reinforce the message the committee asked the Portfolio Member to use political channels/networks to press Welsh Government for a dialogue on WHQS 2 2023 to consider ways of making compliance more realistic.

Having reviewed and scrutinised the documentation and noted the assurances provided in response to the issues raised, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee resolved to recommend the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2025-2055 for the Executive's approval.

Additional actions –

- **To ask the Housing Service to consider ways of publicising the Leasing Scheme Wales more widely in order to promote and raise awareness of the scheme with landlords/property owners.**
- **The Leasing Scheme Wales to be included as a topic at a Members' Briefing Session in order to bring the scheme to all members' attention.**
- **To ask the Portfolio Member for Finance and Housing to use political channels/networks to press Welsh Government for a dialogue on WHQS 2 2023 to consider ways of making compliance more realistic.**

5 FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

The report of the Head of Highways, Waste and Property incorporating the Flood Risk Strategic Plan was presented for the Committee's consideration and scrutiny.

The report was presented by Councillor Nicola Roberts, Portfolio Member for Planning, Public Protection and Climate Change on behalf of Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas, Portfolio Member for Highways, Waste and Property who had tendered an apology for absence. She reported that under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 the Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority, has a duty to develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management. The Flood Risk Management Strategic Plan sets out the Council's ambitions for managing flood risk in Anglesey for a six year period, consistent with the objectives, measures and related policies and legislation set out in the National Strategy.

In the subsequent discussion, the committee raised the following matters –

- Whether the Council has considered ways in which it can improve public engagement with the consultation process.

The Portfolio Member for Planning, Public Protection and Climate Change explained that the public consultation took place over six weeks and made use of multiple channels to ensure that it was accessible including drop in events, e-mail, social media, online

questionnaire and radio interview. The Head of Highways, Waste and Property confirmed that the consultation process was conducted in accordance with Council guidelines which are regularly reviewed for effectiveness. It may be the case that people who are not directly impacted by the subject matter are less inclined to participate.

- The ways in which the Strategic Plan aligns with the Council Plan and its relation to Planning Technical Advice Note 15 (Development, Flooding and Coastal Erosion)

The Head of Highways Waste and Property referred to the legislation which requires the Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority to develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management which then aligns with the Council Plan in terms of the Council's objectives for climate change. The Head of Highways Waste and Property highlighted the reference in the strategy to the SAB (Sustainable Drainage Approval Board) which is separate from the planning process and ensure that proposed development sites are suitable from the perspective of managing flooding both on site and within the wider community.

- Reference was made to the situation in Dwyran and in Menai Bridge and to the progress and status of plans and works in those areas, the responsibilities of the agencies involved and whether there should be enhanced efforts to expedite matters.

The Head of Highways, Waste and Property updated members on the position in the two specific areas and confirmed that the Council and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have different responsibilities with regard to managing flood risk and that they work collaboratively to protect communities against flooding. He confirmed that both the Council and NRW can apply for Welsh Government funding for flood alleviation works and he referred to the factors involved and explained that that there can be greater challenge in succeeding with business cases for schemes in rural rather than urban areas due to the higher density of the population in the latter.

A proposal was made and it was agreed, that in order to make the Strategic Plan complete it should also include the planned maintenance schedule as well as a copy of the capital plan for 2025/26 which shows the planned expenditure on flood relief schemes in the next financial year.

Having reviewed the scope and content of the Flood Management Strategic Plan the Corporate Scrutiny Committee resolved to recommend the Plan to the Executive for approval and adoption with an additional recommendation that it also include as appendices the planned maintenance schedule along with the capital plan for 2025/26 showing planned expenditure on flood relief schemes in the next financial year.

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Scrutiny Manager incorporating the Committee's Forward Work Programme to April, 2025 was presented for consideration.

It was resolved –

- **To agree the current version of the Forward Work Programme for 2024/25.**
- **To note the progress thus far in implementing the Forward Work Programme.**

Councillor Douglas Fowlie
Chair