

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 16 November, 2021

- PRESENT:** Councillor Aled Morris Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dylan Rees (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors Richard Griffiths, Gary Pritchard, Alun Roberts, J. Arwel Roberts, Nicola Roberts
- Portfolio Members**
- Councillor Llinos Medi Huws (Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services)
Councillor Richard Dew (Portfolio Member for Planning and Public Protection)
Councillor R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth)
Councillor Alun Mummery (Portfolio Member for Housing and Supporting Communities)
Councillor R.G. Parry, OBE, FRAgS (Portfolio Member Highways, Waste and Property)
Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Corporate Business)
Councillor Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer
Director of Education, Skills and Young People
Director of Social Services
Head of Service (Housing Services)
Head of Service (Highways, Waste and Property)
Head of Service (Regulation and Economic)
Head of Adults' Services
Head of Democratic Services
Head of Profession (HR) & Transformation
Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors John Griffith, Richard Owain Jones, Mr Keith Roberts (Co-opted Member), Councillor Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Major Projects and Economic Development), Councillor Ieuan Williams (Portfolio Member for Transformation and the Welsh Language)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors Kenneth Hughes, Dafydd Roberts (Chair of the Finance Scrutiny Panel)

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 18 October, 2021 were presented and were confirmed as a correct record.

3 MONITORING PERFORMANCE: CORPORATE SCORECARD QUARTER 2 2021/22

Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas, Portfolio Member for Corporate Business presented the report by the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation incorporating the Corporate Scorecard which showed the position of the Council against its operational objectives as outlined and agreed earlier in the year at the end of Quarter 2 of the 2021/22 financial year.

The majority (70%) of the Corporate Health Performance indicators monitored are performing well against targets (Green or Yellow RAG) with the Council's digital strategy continuing to prove successful during the pandemic and Customer Service indicators maintaining performance apart from indicator 04b in connection with the percentage of written responses within 15 days to complaints within Social Services which at 58% is below the 80% target. The complicated nature of these complaints frequently require multi-agency input and achieving alignment of information within 15 days is a regular challenge. The performance is an improvement on that of Quarter 1 and 18 of the 19 complaints received in the quarter were discussed with the complainant within 5 working days. Although performance with regard to attendance at work at 4.09 days lost to absence per FTE is Amber at the end of Quarter 2, a more challenging target has been set for the year and considered in the context of the previous two years' Quarter 2 target of 4.25 days lost to absence per FTE, the performance would have been ragged Green had the target not been changed. The majority of the Performance Management indicators (84%) are performing above target or within 5% tolerance of their targets and for the first time two of the three Wellbeing Objectives had no indicators underperforming as amber or red against targets. The overall performance of the indicators for Wellbeing Objective 3 (Working in partnership with communities to ensure they are able to cope effectively with change and development whilst protecting the natural environment) has been mixed with 57% of those with targets underperforming. Four indicators in relation to aspects of waste management and planning are ragged Red or Amber with further details about mitigation in those areas provided in the report. The financial management section of the scorecard currently forecasts an underspend of £0.858m for the year ending 31 March, 2022. Financial performance is monitored via regular quarterly reports to the Executive.

The Portfolio Members and Officers responded to questions and points raised on the scorecard report as follows –

- With regard to concerns about the decline in performance for the percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted, specifically the reduction in the green waste tonnage collected compared to the same period in 2020/21 and a suggestion that the introduction of a green waste collection charge may have been counterproductive, the Committee was assured that the decline can be attributed to a number of reasons as outlined within the report. These are issues that are being overseen by the steering group with WRAP Cymru and the WLGA established in Quarter 1 which will look at all aspects and working practices in relation to waste recycling, and having now met for the first time since being established is in the process of analysing the available data and developing options on how best to meet the 70% target for 2025. The green waste charge has generated £500k income for the Council which was the last in the region to implement a chargeable green waste service. The charge formed part of the new waste collection contract with Biffa; not introducing the charge would have meant an extra 0.5% increase on Council Tax which would have affected everyone whereas the green waste collection charge applies only to those that choose to use it.

- With regard to continuing concerns about the responsiveness of the Council's telephone system and implications for customer satisfaction with communicating with the Council, the Committee was assured that new arrangements are to be out in place in Quarter 3 after which the Committee will be updated on satisfaction levels. Members were urged to provide details of any complaints received in relation to calls going unanswered and were reminded that this request has also been made in Group Leaders' meetings. Whilst it was acknowledged that there is always room for improvement the Council does receive a large volume of calls which are in the region of 8,000 to 9,000 on a monthly basis.
- With regard to concerns about increasing demand pressure in Children's Services going into the winter and being mindful of the ongoing risk posed by the pandemic, the Committee was assured that Scrutiny and the Executive are updated every six months on performance and progress in both Adults' and Children's Services. Rising demand following the easing of Covid related restrictions is a trend being seen across local authorities in Wales and referrals do involve cases of increasing complexity which can take time to address. However, following a programme of improvements over recent years, Children and Families' Services as confirmed by CIW reports are now in a more robust position to be able to respond to the challenges they face which also means that the children whom the Authority cares for receive a better service.

Having considered the Quarter 2 2021/22 scorecard report and the updates provided by Officers at the meeting, it was 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 FINANCE SCRUTINY PANEL PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor Dafydd Roberts, Chair of the Finance Scrutiny Panel updated the Committee from the Panel's 28 October, 2021 meeting which involved the Panel being provided with an overview of the following –

- The financial challenges in Adults' Services stemming mostly from the increasing demand for adult social care services both generally and in the wake of the pandemic which in turn is leading to budgetary pressure in Adults' services. The pressure on the Health Service to ensure the timely discharge of patients to free up beds is also driving demand for social care packages for very vulnerable people meaning increased costs for Adults' Service. Whilst acknowledging that the scope for alleviating the financial pressures in Adults' Services is limited as demand has to be met, the Panel considered that a more robust and community focused system is needed which is not so dependent on buildings that may no longer be fit for purpose and that when it comes to care provision, the quality of the service and the experiences of service users are more important than the building in which the service is delivered. The Panel will continue to look at this aspect along with other challenges in Adults' Services going forwards.
- Highways and road maintenance being mindful of there being many concerns about the condition of the Island's unclassified roads especially in harsh weather conditions. The process for prioritising and allocating capital spend on roads was considered and the Panel was assured by the information provided that this process is reasonable given that it is impossible with the resources available, to repair every pothole on every road. The Panel noted that funding in the region of £7.2m would be needed to bring the local road network up to the standards the Council would like, and it was acknowledged that insufficient funding is a limiting factor. The Panel was satisfied that the Highways Service is doing all it can with the budget it has, to maintain and to ensure the usability of the Island's roads.

It was resolved to note the update from the Finance Scrutiny Panel's 28 October, 2021 meeting and to thank Councillor Dafydd Roberts, Chair of the Panel for the information.

5 TRANSITIONAL PLAN

Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas, Portfolio Member for Corporate Business presented the report by the Deputy Chief Executive and the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation which incorporated the Transitional Plan. The plan set out the key priorities and aspirations during the immediate post pandemic recovery period and will bridge the time period between the current Council Plan and the revised/new Council Plan to be adopted by the new administration post May, 2022. It will also provide the operational parameters for Officers to deliver key work streams over the forthcoming 12 month period.

The Committee was advised that the Plan recognises that the Council is entering a transitional period and it is designed to help the Council plan for the next normal whilst retaining enough flexibility to allow it to adapt so that it can respond to opportunities and any setbacks that may arise. It should be acknowledged that in providing a framework and pathway for moving forwards from Covid-19, many of the issues that could impact the Council's ability to deliver the Plan's objectives are beyond its control and that this element of uncertainty will remain. It is the Senior Leadership's view however that it is timely to be putting in place a transitional plan as a reset and/or refresh to the pre-pandemic period having also considered the effects of the pandemic and the changes it has brought about in a number of areas, to ensure that the Council is up to date and current and can focus on the key issues between now and the end of the current Council's term. The framework will remain in place until the new Council is appointed in May, 2022 and is able to adopt a new corporate plan. The plan had been designated a transitional rather than recovery plan and is based on the assumption that no significant new funding will be made available to the Council for recovery activities so the best use of current resources has to be made including grant funded schemes and by continuing to distribute grant funding to other organisations. The Plan is designed to be uncomplicated and easily understood so that everyone is clear on the direction and leadership of the Plan and what the Council is trying to achieve through it, and residents, elected members, regulators, partners and staff understand the Council's intentions during what is expected to be a difficult and uncertain transitional period. The Plan is founded on 3 principal objectives around the economy, the environment and key community services under which are set out a number of ambitious and challenging tasks that are in addition to the Council's statutory duties and day to day business. Any comments on the Plan's content will be reflected and the Plan adapted accordingly before it is then presented to the Executive and to Full Council thereafter.

The Plan was welcomed by the Committee as providing a clear vision for moving through the process of crisis management towards a restart to a new normality. Points raised in relation to the Plan were responded to by the Leader and Deputy Chief Executive as follows –

- With regard to enabling the visitor and hospitality sector to capitalise on the Island's increased popularity whilst protecting its assets and communities, the need to manage tourism to the advantage of the Island and its economy and to strengthen the Council's tourism section. The Committee was assured that looking at ways of supporting tourism has been recognised as a principal undertaking along with strengthening capacity within the Council's tourism section although filling vacancies is a challenge in the current climate. There is regular contact with the Island's tourism sector which is keen to work alongside the Council to explore different ways of supporting the sector going forward.

- With regard to maintaining and modernising critical community services such as care and education across the Island, the risk to the provision of residential home care should Welsh Government decide at a future point to take the same approach as that in England where care home workers have by law to be fully vaccinated. The Committee was assured that Welsh Government has to date indicated that it does not intend to follow the route taken in England in requiring care home staff to be double vaccinated on the basis that to mandate the same in Wales is not necessary as the number of fully vaccinated health and care home staff in Wales is high.
- With regard to timeframes, whether the Transitional Plan takes the place of the Corporate Plan and whether its 12 month timespan therefore commits and/or ties the new Council to the objectives contained within the plan. The Committee was assured that the Transitional Plan is not a replacement for the Corporate Plan and that it has been designed as a bridging plan because of the unusual circumstances wherein the Council is transitioning from 18 months of dealing with the pandemic into establishing a form of normality covering all its business. Whilst the 12 month timeframe provides the Council with a framework within which to work and plan, the new administration post May, 2022 may or may not wish to continue with it. The plan provides all the Council's stakeholders with clarity about the Council's priorities over the coming 12 months until such time as a new Corporate Plan is adopted.

It was resolved to accept and to note the Transitional Plan and to recommend to the Executive that it be adopted. *(Councillor A.M. Jones abstained from voting).*

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

The report of the Scrutiny Manager incorporating the Committee's updated Forward Work Programme for 2021/22 was presented for consideration.

The Scrutiny Manager clarified that the date of the Committee's 2021/22 budget consultation meeting remains to be confirmed pending the receipt of information regarding the Council's 2021/22 provisional budget settlement.

It was resolved –

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

**Councillor A. M. Jones
Chair**