

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 26 September, 2022

- PRESENT:** Councillor R. Llewelyn Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dyfed Wyn Jones (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors Neville Evans, Aled M. Jones, Jackie Lewis, Llio A. Owen, Dafydd Roberts, Keith Roberts.
- Co-Opted Member – Mr John Tierney (The Catholic Church)
- Portfolio Members**
- Councillors 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), Councillor Ieuan Williams (Portfolio Member for Education and the Welsh Language)
- 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
Director of Learning, Skills and Young People
Head of Adults' Services
Head of Housing Services
Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation
Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager (GM)
Business Manager (Highways, Waste and Property) (GP)
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Geraint Bebb, Llinos Medi Huws (Leader), Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Economic Development, Leisure and Tourism), Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance, Corporate Business and Customer Experience)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Mr John R. Jones (Chair of the Standards Committee), Mr Rhys Davies (Member of the Standards Committee (present as observers))

The Chair welcomed everyone present this hybrid meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny and he extended a particular welcome to Mr John Tierney who was present for the first time as representative of the Catholic Church.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Llio Angharad Owen declared a personal but not prejudicial interest with regard to item 4 due to the nature of her employment.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on the 20 June, 2022 were presented and were confirmed as correct.

3 MONITORING PERFORMANCE: CORPORATE SCORECARD Q1 2022/23

The report of the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation incorporating the Corporate Scorecard for Quarter 1 of the 2022/23 financial year was presented for the Committee's consideration and comment.

The Chief Executive in presenting the report said that the scorecard monitoring report is used to monitor the performance of the Council's identified key performance indicators – a combination of local and nationally set indicators - in delivering its day to day activities. It provides the intelligence to enable the Council to take a proactive approach to performance management and equips it with the information it needs to make changes and to implement mitigating actions agreed by the Leadership Team to drive and secure improvements into the future. The performance monitoring KPIs are aligned with the Council's three current wellbeing objectives as set out in the report and they will be developed and aligned with the new Council Plan for 2023 to 2028 when that is adopted later in the year. The outcomes within the scorecard are cumulative meaning that the trends column will inform performance trends from quarter to quarter starting from Quarter 2.

The Chief Executive in saying that the scorecard reflects an encouraging picture overall highlighted that there are areas in which the performance can be further improved and that those improvements have to take place in a climate of uncertainty where demand is rising in some service areas but capacity and resources are not. The financial management section of the report identifies the financial risks and challenges facing the Council and these will be closely monitored as the year unfolds. The report also brings to the fore areas of positive performance including the number of visits to leisure centres; the number of empty homes brought back into use; the homelessness indicators; three of the four waste management indicators exceeding target; Adults' Services indicators all performing above target for the quarter and continuing improvement in the road condition of the Island's A, B and C roads. The Council will continue to be alert to and monitor risks and/or areas where performance can be bettered for example, the number of child assessments completed within time. However, the scorecard at Quarter 1 provides assurance that the Council's day to day activities in managing its people, finances and its customer services are delivering against their expectations to an appropriate standard.

The Officers and Portfolio Members responded to points raised by the Committee and advised as follows -

- Acknowledged that maintaining this positive level of performance amid increasing challenges and uncertainties could be difficult especially in light of growing demand for the Council's services as more people face cost of living pressures. Individuals as well as children and families who might not previously have needed to access Council services are coming to the Council for advice and support which in turn puts pressure on services in meeting those needs. Maintaining the performance percentage levels set out in the report will therefore be a challenge given that extra funding is not always forthcoming and in any case does not always lead to extra capacity with recruitment being made more difficult by a challenging labour market. Whilst it is therefore becoming more difficult to maintain performance at current levels the real impact of the cost of living crisis on people and the Council is expected to become clearer in Quarters 2 and 3.

The Committee recognised that it is important to remember that there are people behind the statistics and whilst numerical data provides a snapshot of results and outcomes,

people's experiences are important in providing an insight into what is working and what needs to be improved.

- Advised that with regard to recruitment, some areas are proving more challenging than others particularly in home care. The Council is trying different approaches to support recruitment including working with Coleg Menai to provide students on the Care and Welfare course with experience within the Council. The factors influencing recruitment in the care sector are varied and include pay and status, the increasingly specialised nature of the work and unsocial hours. However, the Isle of Anglesey Council does have processes in place to assess the value of care jobs which has enabled it to provide salaries that are very competitive for this type of work. The Council as an organisation works with schools to share information about potential local authority career paths and it has implemented a robust recruitment drive across the range of services which is now beginning to yield results. Additionally, the impact of the pandemic on recruitment cannot be underestimated and has led employees to re-evaluate their priorities and what they want from work in terms of flexibility, hours and balance. Although there remain areas where recruitment is challenging for example in care which is an area that has consistently faced challenges both locally and nationally, enquiries have shown that overall the Council is in a much better place than many of its peers when it comes to recruitment.
- Provided assurance that the progress and timeliness of child assessments the performance of which is currently below target, are being closely monitored. As well as an increase in the number of child assessments, cases have become more complex. Performance in Quarter 1 has suffered due to gaps in staffing as a result of a combination of absence and increased referrals. The staffing issues have now improved supported by grant funding which has allowed the recruitment of two additional Social Workers which is expected to lead to an improvement in performance in Quarter 2. Should the level of demand remain high going into the winter than grant funding is available to retain agency social workers on an over-establishment basis to help meet requirements.
- Confirmed that children are only removed from the Child Protection Register (CPR) when it is safe to do so. The Indicator dates back to a time when a high number of children were on the CPR for a length of time; that number has since reduced and it is expected that half of this cohort will be safely de-registered in the coming weeks. The Committee was also advised that whilst there are a number of reasons for changing a looked after child's placement e.g. because of changing needs, the Council is committed to reducing the number of children experiencing placement changes still further supported by an improved range of services and support options on the Island.
- Clarified that the data does not provide the complete story about performance and although the RAG ratings as presented provide assurance about the Council's performance, anecdotal evidence and customer feedback are important in providing a context to quantitative data especially in areas where there have been complaints e.g. telephone response times. Whereas performance data held by the Council indicates that response times are good, it is important that Councillors provide any evidence they have of issues with regard to call waiting times so that the information can be correlated against the Council's own figures to provide a better understanding of the customer experience and how it can be further improved.
- Confirmed that the Council re-lets 260 houses per annum within a turnaround time of 24 weeks. Former council houses that have been bought back by the Council can take longer to let to allow for refurbishment works to be undertaken and completed to bring those properties up to Welsh Quality Housing Standards. The Committee was further advised that while 170 days is the national benchmark for delivering a Disabled Facilities Grant, many adaptations are completed within a shorter timeframe. Where cases take longer to deliver it is usually due to their complexity with time required to consider and agree how best to meet the needs involved.

The Chair asked that DFG delivery times be looked at with a view to reducing them still further.

- Clarified that the Housing Service works closely with private owners to persuade them with the help of grant funding and/or loans to bring properties that have been empty for over 6 months back into use. Where properties are empty long-term then they are subject to the empty homes premium. Although enforcement is an option, the Service prefers to work constructively with private owners to encourage them to take action with regard to empty properties with the annual target being to bring 70 empty properties back into use.

The Chair said that it would be helpful to be provided with information about the number of private properties that are empty for six months or longer.

Having considered the Quarter 1 2022/23 scorecard report and the clarifications and assurances provided by Officers and Portfolio Members verbally at the meeting, and having acknowledged the positive performance attested to by the number and range of Green RAG ratings, 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 measure with regard to child assessment to the Executive.

Additional action – that the Committee be provided with information by the Housing Service about the number of private properties empty for six months or longer.

4 SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRESS REPORT

The report of the Director of Social Services setting out progress and developments to date in Children and Families' Services and in Adults' Services was presented for the Committee's consideration. The report also provided an outline of the business undertaken by the Social Services Scrutiny Panel over the course of Quarter 1 2022/23 including a summary of the issues considered at its meetings held on 18 July and 12 September, 2022.

The Director of Social Services in presenting the report said that the work of developing services continues in tandem with fulfilling day to day statutory responsibilities. He referred to some of the initiatives currently in development and progressing as follows -

- Successful recruitment to the new post of Service Manager – LAC Education, Youth Services and Children and Young People's Wellbeing which straddles Children and Families' Services and the Learning Service. The role will also include realising the vision of becoming a Trauma Informed Island across schools, Early Years, Youth Services, Fostering Services and the Social Work Teams.
- Working to implement an integrated approach – the Virtual Schools Model – to improving educational outcomes for looked after children in line with the recommendations of Sir Alasdair Macdonald's review of ways to improve the educational outcomes of looked after children through implementing an integrated approach across Wales.
- Extension of the Welsh Government's Flying Start Early Years Programme to include an additional 49 children in Anglesey during 2022/23 as the first phase. Social Services will be working closely with childcare providers and parents/carers in the new Flying Start area.
- Achieving Maethu Cymru Môn's target for recruiting foster households in 2021/22 whilst also focusing efforts on retention which is seen to be improving meaning that the

number of Fostering Households approved and registered to the Council is on a steady increase.

The Head of Adults' Services provided an overview of activities in Adults' Services in the period since the last update including –

- The appointment of a Transformation and Development Manager to work on a number of projects including the Learning Disability Programme.
- The completion of a positive Internal Audit review of Direct Payments
- Development of a range of community activities in Holyhead working alongside Boston Centre Stage.
- Implementation of pooled funding arrangement with BCUHB to support care packages for people with learning disabilities.
- Establishment of a Dementia Centre offering bespoke dementia services for individuals and carers
- Merger of Adults' Services' Single Point of Contact and Teulu Môn into one integrated front door access point.
- Stepping up the recruitment effort for home care and care home workers with an advertising campaign on Council vehicles, promoting a career in Social Care.

The Committee welcomed the report as testimony of progress made and highlighted a number of aspects for special praise specifically the success of the Foster Carers recruitment drive, the pooled funding initiative with the Health Board and the creative and resourceful approach to addressing issues and overcoming difficulties. The Chair emphasised that all schemes/changes need to be fully costed and cost efficient and improve quality and effectiveness.

The Director of Social Services advised that whilst finance is always a factor, the Service takes a prudent approach to expenditure utilising resources within the community where it can. Although many of its responsibilities are statutory meaning that only Social Services can undertake them, it does endeavour to seek creative solutions to the challenges it faces including being winter prepared but knowing also that issues can arise unexpectedly such as a severe flu season with its potential implications for staff absence. The Service is collaborating with the Health Board to ensure that measures are in place and to provide assurance that the services it plans for can be delivered. Social Services also work closely with the Finance Service with regular meetings between the respective Officers.

Councillor Gary Pritchard, Portfolio Member for Children and Youth Services highlighted that the Council has often been in the vanguard of developing new ideas and initiatives in Children and Families' Services many of which are focused on prevention and as such are cost saving in reducing the need for children to enter the care system in the first place.

Councillor Alun Roberts, Portfolio Member for Adults' Services said that a political solution is needed for the issues in health and social care and that more emphasis needs to be placed on social care in terms of political attention and investment especially given the challenges ahead.

Having considered the report, it was resolved –

- **To confirm that the Corporate Scrutiny is satisfied with the pace of progress and improvement made to date in Social Services, and that**
- **The Committee recommends to the Executive that progress and pace of improvements in Social Services are adequate.**

5 FINANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

The report of the Scrutiny Manger outlining the progress of the Finance Scrutiny Panel during Quarter 1 of 2022/23 was presented for the Committee's consideration.

Councillor Dafydd Roberts, Chair of the Finance Scrutiny Panel reported that the Panel met on three occasions during this period, the first of which took place on 4 July which agreed the terms of reference and context to the Panel's work which is considered especially pertinent in the current economic climate. Planning the work programme for the next six months was also discussed. The 28 July meeting focused on the Budget setting process for 2023/24 including the annual consultation process. A scrutiny workshop led by CIPFA Wales formed part of the Panel's 8 September meeting whilst the Panel also looked in detail at the latest budget monitoring information for Quarter 1 2022/23.

Councillor Roberts explained that as the majority membership of the Panel comprises of Members newly elected in May, 2022, it will be necessary to create the conditions for all Members to fully take part in the Panel's scrutiny work including making full use of the forward work programme to ensure appropriate and timely inputs to support members of the Panel.

It was resolved to note the initial progress to date of the work of the Finance Scrutiny Panel.

6 WASTE STEERING GROUP WITH THE WASTE AND RESOURCES ACTION PROGRAMME (WRAP) CYMRU NIMAIN

The report of the Scrutiny Manager seeking the Committee's agreement to nominate a Committee Member to serve on the Waste Steering Group with WRAP Cymru was presented for consideration.

The report noted that the Steering Group has been established to mitigate the current underperformance with regard to the percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted by the Council as evidenced in the Quarter 4 2021/22 Corporate Scorecard report discussed at the Committee 20 June, 2022 meeting. Membership includes senior Members, senior Officers and partners from the Welsh Local Government Association and WRAP Cymru and group's terms of reference are as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

It was resolved to nominate Councillor Llio Angharad Owen as this Committee's representative on the Steering Group with WRAP Cymru.

7 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

The Scrutiny Manager referred to the Committee's next meeting in October, 2022 and confirmed the business to be considered at that meeting.

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**

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