

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 14 March, 2023

- PRESENT:** Councillor R. Llewelyn Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dyfed Wyn Jones (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors Geraint Bebb, Douglas Fowle, Jackie Lewis, Llio A. Owen, Dafydd Roberts, Keith Roberts, Alwen Watkin, Arfon Wyn
- Portfolio Members**
- Councillors Llinos Medi (Leader and Portfolio Member for Economic Development), Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Corporate Business and Customer Experience), Gary Pritchard (Portfolio Member for Children, Youth and Housing Services), Alun Roberts (Portfolio Member for Adults' Services and Community Safety), Nicola Roberts (Portfolio Member for Planning, Public Protection and Climate Change), Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Highways, Waste and Property), Ieuan Williams (Portfolio Member for Education and the Welsh Language).
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer
Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer
Director of Social Services
Head of Regulation and Economic Development
Head of Highways, Waste and Property
Head of Democracy (DS)
Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation
Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager (GM)
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Aled M. Jones, Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance), Mr Dylan Williams (Chief Executive), Mr Arwel Owen (Head of Adults' Services)
- ALSO PRESENT:** None

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 PERFORMANCE MONITORING: CORPORATE SCORECARD Q3 2022/23

The report of the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation incorporating the Corporate Scorecard for Quarter 3 2022/23 was presented for the Committee's consideration. The scorecard report portrayed the Council's position against its wellbeing objectives at the end of Quarter 3, 2022/23.

Councillor Llinos Medi, Leader and Portfolio Member for Economic Development in presenting the report said that with 97% of the Council's Performance Indicators performing well overall this represents the best performing third quarter against the performance management section target since the creation of the scorecard report. She referred specifically to the performance against the three well-being objectives highlighting that only three PIs are underperforming the reasons for which are documented in the report as are the proposed improvement measures. The report also provides a number of examples of notable performance against the well-being objectives including in Adults' Services, Housing Services with regard to homelessness and the number of empty homes brought back into use; waste management, and in the Learning Service in relation to the percentage of pupils assessed in Welsh at the end of the Foundation Phase which stands at 100%. Although the Council's attendance PI is Amber against its target at this stage the data does include coronavirus related absences for the first time without which the performance would have been ragged Yellow. Also Quarter 3 which covers the months leading into winter can be a challenging period.

- The Committee welcomed the encouraging picture at Quarter 3 and wanted to know what arrangements were in place to recognise the successes. The Committee was advised that as well as monitoring underperformance, the Strategic Leadership Team also recognises areas of good performance. Y Ddolen – The Link is used for internal messaging including promoting good practice and communicating successes and as regards reporting to a wider audience, Elected Members have a role to play in publicising the Council's achievements and what it is doing well so as to provide assurance to the Island's residents that improvements are being made.
- The Committee in noting that some indicators were underperforming at the end of Quarter 3 sought further information about the progress monitoring arrangements for those indicators to bring performance back on track. The Committee was advised that the Council has well-established and proven performance management arrangements; this includes the Corporate Scorecard and associated report which consist of a combination of locally and nationally set indicators. The scorecard highlights how the Council's day to day activities are being delivered and provides the intelligence to enable a proactive approach to be taken to performance management including mitigating actions agreed by the Strategic Leadership Team to deliver improvement. Additionally, Heads of Service monitor performance within their service on an ongoing basis.
- The Committee noted that the Council's performance against the attendance at work performance indicator was Amber at the end of Quarter 3 and queried how this compares with the Council's previous performance. The Committee was advised that the performance for the quarter is a decline on that of the last three years for the same period. However, coronavirus data has been included for the first time and has influenced the outcome. Despite its inclusion it remains a better performance overall at this stage compared to 2021/22 and also the pre-coronavirus period from 2019/20. Quarters 3 and 4 are also traditionally challenging periods with regard to attendance. A factor also is the role undertaken by staff especially if they are frontline care staff who come into contact with vulnerable clients. The Committee was further informed of the measures the Council has in place to support attendance and promote staff well-being including flexible and hybrid working arrangements and prompt referral to Occupational Health as appropriate. Although the Council's attendance performance is good when benchmarked against that of other authorities as attested to by recent data, it must not be complacent in terms of attendance monitoring and is committed to further improving the performance of the indicator. In response to a further question, the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation provided additional information about the Council's hybrid working arrangements and how they are operating in practice.
- The relationship between the new Council Plan 2023-28 and the Corporate Scorecard was discussed and the Committee asked about the arrangements to ensure that they are

aligned. The Committee was advised that the discussion on reviewing the indicators on the Corporate Scorecard to ensure they are appropriate and relevant and link into the new Council Plan's objectives is underway and that the process is open and inputs are invited.

- The Committee also noted a pattern of underperformance with regard to indicator 09 – the percentage of FOI requests responded to within timescale, and sought assurance that steps are being taken to improve the performance of this indicator. The Committee was advised that the number of FOI requests has increased and although the Council was able to meet the timescale for responding before the pandemic that has changed post Covid. FOI data is collated centrally and published quarterly on the Council's website on a service by service basis and because of the downward trend in performance, a more detailed report is now also presented quarterly to the Strategic Leadership Team. The data shows that the services experiencing the most difficulty in responding within timescale are the Learning and the Resources Services. With regard to the former it is understood that a focus on work undertaken by Estyn in Quarter 1 has impacted on FOI related work and that the underperformance may therefore be an anomaly which can be rectified to bring performance back on target. In the Resources Service prioritising the delivery of the cost of living support schemes/grants has created a backlog of FOI requests.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the Director of Education, Skills and Young People has put arrangements in place to address the issue of FOI response times in the Learning Service. The Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer clarified that the Officer within the Resources service who deals with FOI requests has been assisting with administering the cost of living support scheme and grants; that work is now coming to an end meaning the Officer can re-focus on FOI related work to clear the backlog and restore the normal pattern of operation. He confirmed that no additional capacity is required for the task.

- In noting that 35% of performance indicators are seeing a declining trend, the Committee raised the issue of monitoring trends as well as targets. The Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager in confirming that the direction of travel over time is as important as one-year targets in terms of the Council's performance management explained the process behind two specific indicators – (26) Percentage of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless and (27) Percentage of households (with children) successfully prevented from becoming homeless, to illustrate the point.
- The decline in the number of reports received by App Môn and number of visitors to the Council's website compared to 2021/22 was noted. The Committee was advised that App Môn has now been replaced by the CRM system and that visitor numbers to the Council's website are subject to fluctuation depending on different periods of the year with increased traffic during the pandemic in 2020/21 and 2021/22 having possibly skewed the data at that time.

Having scrutinised the data and noted the additional information provided at the meeting it was resolved –

- **To note the Corporate Scorecard report for Quarter 3 2022/23.**
- **To note the areas of improvement along with the areas which the Strategic Leadership Team is managing to secure further improvements into the future and**
- **To note the mitigating measures outlined within the report and to recommend the same to the Executive.**

3 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN 2023-2053

The report of the Head of Housing Services incorporating the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2023-2053 was presented for the Committee's consideration.

Councillor Gary Pritchard, Portfolio Member for Children, Youth and Housing Services presented the Business Plan as reflecting the Council's vision that "everyone has the right to call somewhere home." The HRA finances all of the Council's operations in its role as registered social landlord and provides a financially viable plan for the Council's housing stock. An important element of the HRA is the commitment to expanding the Council's housing stock to meet differing housing needs across the Island which as the Portfolio Holder he was proud to endorse.

The Head of Housing Services advised that the Council is required to submit its application for Welsh Government's Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) along with the 30 year HRA Business Plan to Welsh Government by 31 March in order to secure the annual MRA which for 2023/24 is £2.688m. The Plan forms the primary tool for financial planning of the delivery and management of the Council's housing stock and demonstrates how the Council brings all its stock to Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS); how it intends to maintain and work towards the new WQHS to be shortly agreed by Welsh Government and the investment needed to finance the Council's new council house development programme. The Council is committed to continuing with its energy efficiency and decarbonisation work with £1m earmarked to target a further 250 multiple Solar PV system installations. In addition, £8.749m has been budgeted for in 2023/24 for the development programme of new council housing and acquisition of former council housing on the Island. The Business Plan assumes a development programme of 45 units in 2023/24 and throughout the period of the Plan. The Business Plan has been stress tested to take account of risks both individually and collectively and it remains viable over the 30 year period of the plan.

The Committee considered the contents of the HRA Business Plan and the following issues were discussed –

- The ways in which the proposed strategy enables the Council to realise the strategic priorities in the Council Plan for 2023-28. The Committee was advised that the vision at the heart of the HRA Business Plan is ensuring that everyone has the right to call somewhere home which accords with one of the strategic objectives in the Council Plan. Essential to realising this vision is ensuring the development of the right homes in the right place and in the right numbers which it is believed the Strategy enables. In response to questions about the reacquisition of former council houses that are now being used as holiday homes, the Head of Housing Services confirmed that the Council seeks to reacquire at least 15 former council houses per annum and will buy back in excess of that number if opportunity and resources allow. However, whilst the Council cannot buy private properties for council housing purposes as they would not meet WHQS standards, it does have schemes in place to help local people purchase open market properties.
- The affordability of the proposed council housing expansion programme in the current economic climate. The Committee was advised that the HRA Business Plan is supported by a 30 year financial model which will be submitted the Welsh Government and is also accompanied by a sensitivity analysis which demonstrates the robustness of the plan. These are based on key assumptions and parameters set by Welsh Government and predict the resources available and required to maintain WHQS, the capacity for the new build programme and aims to provide assurance on the long term suitability and financial viability of the HRA. Should inflation remain high or increase thereby affecting costs then the level of expansion may have to be reconsidered. While each individual housing development is assessed for viability in accordance with an agreed financial model there is Executive agreement that should there be an existing

need for a development then it can proceed on that basis rather than on the basis of cost. Having met the WHQS back in 2012 the Council has the capability to undertake housing development which will be funded in the first instance through the balance of the HRA and then through borrowing the cost of which will be met by HRA generated income. However, other factors to consider are the availability of land and contractors.

- The extent to which the HRA Business Plan seek to address the supply of accommodation for vulnerable adults and families. The Committee was advised that it is important that the needs of people on the Social Housing Register are met. There are currently 908 applicants on the Register with the majority requiring 1 and 2 bedroom general need properties and older person's properties. It is important also that the provision of affordable housing includes many different kinds of tenures and accommodation to meet the varying needs of different groups.
- Capacity issues both within the Housing Service and among private sector developers and contractors working alongside the Council to build new housing and whether risks have been identified and mitigation measures put in place. The Committee was advised that internal capacity/workforce can be developed and the procurement framework can be looked at to enable/facilitate private sector developers to collaborate with the Council on building new housing. While capacity is recognised as a risk, it is considered that the HRA Business Plan in setting as an objective the delivery of 45 units per annum achieves an appropriate balance between ambition and realism.
- The supply of social housing required to meet the demand on the housing register and the availability of assistance for first time deposits and/or contribution to rent deposit. The Committee was advised that the number of people presenting to the Housing Service as homeless is unprecedented including 85 households who are in emergency or temporary accommodation and the waiting list for social housing is significant. Although over 350 houses are on average let each year by the Housing Service and Housing Associations, the waiting list continues to grow making it difficult to quantify the supply required. However, the figures demonstrate an increasing need for affordable housing be that through standard rent, intermediate rent or help to buy. The Head of Housing Services confirmed that there are schemes to provide help with deposits subject to need and individual circumstances and in this context he clarified the difference between standard rent and intermediate rent housing.
- The need to publicise Housing Service's support and assistance schemes as well as the Service's poverty related activities. The Committee was advised that such publicity could be incorporated in the Annual Report on the delivery of the Business Plan which summarises what has been achieved in the year. Additionally the Service recognises that the support it provides to help people acquire their own homes needs to be marketed more widely and will be addressed as part of the Service's Delivery Plan and work programme for the first quarter of 2023/24.

Having scrutinised the HRA Business Plan and noted the additional information and assurances provided at the meeting it was resolved to recommend the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan for 2023-205 to the Executive.

4 PROGRESS MONITORING: SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRESS REPORT

The report of the Director of Social Services setting out the latest progress and developments within Adults' and Children and Families' Services was presented for the Committee's consideration.

Councillors Alun Roberts and Gary Pritchard, Portfolio Members for Adults' Services and Children's Services respectively provided a summary of the progress highpoints within the two services as outlined in the report and made particular reference to Care Inspectorate Wales' Performance Evaluation Report of Social Services on Anglesey which was published

in December, 2022 and which summarised the findings from the Inspectorate's inspection of Anglesey Adults and Children and Families' Services carried out in October, 2022. The report reflected positively on several areas and identified a number of strengths as well as areas for improvement. An internal working group has been established to address those areas. Recruitment challenges remain and are replicated nationally especially with regard to residential care home staff and domiciliary care workers. The Service continues to work closely with Coleg Menai and with colleagues within the Authority's HR function to attract people to the social care profession in Anglesey's Social Services.

The Director of Social Services provided information about the context of the progress report that has been presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and the Executive in the last few years firstly on a quarterly basis and latterly every six months saying that it was to provide assurance about the progress of Children and Families Services' performance following a critical CIW report back in 2016, and lately the performance of Adults' Services as well. The assurance which those progress reports as well as the Director of Social Services' annual report have provided about the improvement journey of Children and Families' Services has now been reinforced by the recent Care Inspectorate Wales report which also comments positively about Adults' Services. Both Children and Families' Services and Adults' Services are now producing new Service Development Plans consolidating and building on the progress made and these will be presented to and scrutinised by the Social Services Scrutiny Panel.

In considering the report, the Committee discussed the following –

- The arrangements in place to monitor progress against areas that need attention. The Committee was advised of the multiple ways in which progress is tracked and assurance provided including through the close and constant relationship the Service has with regulators; through corporate and democratic processes including Scrutiny and the Executive, through the Strategic Leadership Team which provides high level oversight, and through regular meetings, audit reviews, and performance monitoring internally within the service itself. Social Services also collaborate closely with partners in Health and other areas to identify challenges.
- The priority work streams for the Social Services Scrutiny Panel over the next period. The Committee was advised that these will be driven by the Care Inspectorate Wales report with regard to the areas identified for continued focus and by the Children and Families' Services and Adults' Services Service Development Plans.
- The intention not to report progress on Social Services improvements to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee hereafter but rather to the Social Services Scrutiny Panel which will continue to report to this Committee. The Committee indicated that it was satisfied with the capability of the Social Services Scrutiny Panel to challenge and monitor progress and development and to report thereon to the Committee.

It was resolved –

- **To confirm that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee is satisfied with the pace of progress and improvements made to date in Social Services.**
- **To recommend to the Executive that progress and pace of improvements in Social Services are adequate, and**
- **To support the intention not to report on progress on Social Services improvements to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee but to receive reports in future from the Social Services Scrutiny Panel.**

5 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Scrutiny Manager incorporating the Committee's Forward Work Programme to April, 2023 was presented for consideration.

The Scrutiny Manager advised that recent changes to the Executive has resulted in a vacant place on the Committee and on the Social Services Scrutiny Panel. Consequently, the business for the Committee's April, 2023 meeting will now also include an item to nominate a member of the Committee to serve on the Panel.

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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