

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 12 March, 2024

- PRESENT:** Councillor Dyfed Wyn Jones (Vice-Chair) (In the Chair)
Councillor R. Llewelyn Jones (Vice-Chair for this meeting only)
- Councillors Geraint Bebb, Keith Roberts, Ieuan Williams, Arfon Wyn.
- Co-opted Members: Mr John Tierney (The Catholic Church), Wenda Owen (The Church in Wales), Gillian Thompson (Parent-Governor – Primary Schools Sector),
- Portfolio Members**
- 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).
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer
Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer (for item 3)
Director of Social Services (for item 3)
Head of Highways, Waste and Property (HP)(for item 6)
Head of Housing Services (NM)
Head of Democracy (DS)
Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation (CE)
Corporate Planning Programme and Performance Manager (GP)
Chief Property and Asset Officer (MH) (for item 6)
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)
Webcasting Officer (FT)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Douglas M. Fowlie (Chair), Aled M. Jones, Jackie Lewis, Llio A. Owen, Sonia Williams, Mr Dylan Williams (Chief Executive).
- Portfolio Members - Councillors Llinos Medi, Neville Evans, Gary Pritchard, Dafydd Rhys Thomas, Robin Williams.
- ALSO PRESENT:** Scrutiny Officer (EA) (Observer)

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Douglas Fowlie, the meeting was chaired by the Vice-Chair, Councillor Dyfed Wyn Jones. Councillor R. Llewelyn Jones was elected to serve as Vice-Chair of the Committee for this meeting only.

The Chair welcomed Mr Gwyndaf Parry to his first meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee as Corporate Planning, Programme and Performance Manager.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 13 February 2024 were presented and were confirmed as correct subject to noting that Councillor Geraint Bebb was present at the meeting.

3 MONITORING PERFORMANCE: CORPORATE SCORECARD Q3 2023/24

The report of the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation incorporating the Corporate Scorecard for Quarter 3 2023/24 was presented for the Committee's consideration. The scorecard report portrays the current end of Quarter 3 position against the Council's well-being objectives.

The report was presented by Councillor Carwyn Jones, Portfolio Member for Corporate Business and Customer Experience as the most positive end of Quarter 3 corporate scorecard since the scorecard was introduced as a performance management tool with 91% of all Performance Indicators performing above or within a 5% tolerance of their targets. With regard to Performance Management indicators specifically, 97% of those are above or within 5% of target with only one indicator showing as Red on the scorecard. Some notable areas of achievement are highlighted at paragraph 4.3 of the report with strong performances also recorded in Adults' Services, Children and Families' Services and Homelessness Services as outlined in section 4.5 of the report. All waste management indicators and planning services indicators are showing as Green against their targets. Some areas of underperformance are noted relating to the number of FOI requests responded to within timescale, customer complaints management, the time taken to deliver Disabled Facilities Grants and the time taken to re-let units of accommodation. Performance in relation to attendance management is also slightly off-target with long term sickness absence being the main factor. Financial pressures are still being experienced and the demand for services remains an ongoing risk. The areas identified as underperforming are being monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and mitigating/ remedial steps as described in the report are being implemented to improve the performance in those areas.

The Committee acknowledged the positive performance and progress and thanked everyone that had contributed to the Q3 outcomes. In scrutinising the report the following matters were discussed –

- The mitigation measures in place to avoid a further decline in the performance of those indicators currently showing as Green on the scorecard but where the trend is downward.
- Whether complaints management is being used positively and the lessons learnt from complaints used to improve process and practice.
- The position with regard to amending the current scorecard to ensure it aligns with the Council Plan for 2023-28 and the timetable for implementing the new scorecard.

Officers and Portfolio Members responded to the points raised as follows –

- Advised with regard to those PIs where the trend is downwards that in relation to PI 10 (Percentage of NERS clients whose health has improved as a result of the exercise programme) a new database is being implemented that records data differently which accounts for the decline in the direction of travel. However, a change in the way this information is collected may mean that this PI will not be included on the new scorecard for the 2024/25 financial year. Although waste management indicators are Green against their targets, the performance of Indicator 32 (Percentage of waste reused, recycled, or composted) is down on that of the previous quarter and is explained by the fact that recycling rates tend to be lower over the Christmas and the winter period. The Waste

Management Service is currently working with Welsh Government on improving recycling rates. The Director of Social Services advised that achieving Green status for Social Services PIs has involved much hard work in the context of significant demand and that he was not overly concerned by the trend downwards for PIs 15,18 and 23 because as they deal with people the demand can fluctuate from quarter to quarter and notwithstanding, the performance remains within a safe zone for those indicators.

- That the Council is looking at ways of using Complaints and Compliments data to improve services with the current focus being on working with the IT Service to use the CRM system to log complaints, responses and how they are dealt with as well as identifying any emerging trends, patterns and themes and using that information to improve processes and practices as part of the Council's commitment to continuous improvement.
- That the Corporate Scorecard is under review in terms of content and the KPIs to be included in the new scorecard for the coming financial year as well as format with a view to more closely aligning the scorecard and therefore performance with the six strategic objectives in the Council Plan the intention being to present the new scorecard to the April 2024 Members' briefing session.

Having reviewed the Corporate Scorecard for Q3 2023/24 and having noted the responses of Portfolio Members and Officers to the issues raised it was resolved –

- **To note the Corporate Scorecard report for Q3 2023/24 including the areas which the Leadership Team is exploring and investigating to manage and secure further improvements into the future in relation to FOI requests responded to within timescale, Customer Complaints Management, the average number of days to deliver a DFG and the average number of calendar days to let lettable units of accommodation (excluding DTLs).**
- **To recommend the scorecard report and mitigating measures outlined therein to the Executive.**

4 LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: HOUSING SERVICES

The report of the Head of Housing Services which updated the Committee on progress with the Housing Service's review of Performance Indicator 28 (the number of calendar days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant) was presented for consideration.

The report was presented by Councillor Nicola Roberts, Portfolio Member for Planning, Public Protection and Climate Change on behalf of Councillor Gary Prichard, Portfolio Member for Children, Youth and Housing Services who was unable to be present because of another Council commitment in relation to his portfolio duties. She referred to a statement prepared by Councillor Gary Prichard which confirmed that KPI 28 had been the subject of discussions between himself as the Portfolio Holder and the Head of Housing Services for some time due to concerns that the performance of the indicator was off target. The two main factors in the target not being met are changes in the eligibility criteria leading to an increase in the number of applications for a DFG for adaptations up to a value of £10,000 requiring no means testing, and a lack of contractors to undertake the adaptations work. In an effort to address the latter, a "Meet the Buyer" session for contractors was held in December 2023 and was well attended and expressions of interest were received. Although the performance of the indicator has not reached target in Q3 the trend is Green and the number of calendar days to deliver a DFG has reduced. The situation and data will continue to be monitored to ensure that progress is made and movement is in the right direction.

The Head of Housing Services in confirming the rise in applications for DFGs advised that cases are also becoming more complicated in terms of the nature of the adaptations required and are therefore taking longer to complete. Welsh Government is no longer focusing on the number of days taken to deliver DFGs but is instead looking at DFG

expenditure on adaptations. The Housing Service has been collecting information about the performance of other authorities in delivering DFGs so it can benchmark its position and performance against those of other councils.

The following matters were discussed by the Committee –

- The timeframe for completing the Housing Service’s review of Performance Indicator 28 and the elements of the work that remain to be addressed.
- Whether other councils are experiencing the same kind of issues in delivering DFGs
- The extent to which the performance against PI 28 requires a corporate solution.

The Head of Housing Services further advised as follows –

- That work to review and amend policy has been undertaken and a new revised home adaptations policy will be submitted for approval by the end of the month. The Service Level Agreement with the company acting as agent will be formalised and as part of the process a training event for Occupational Therapists in Social Services is planned in April to inform on changes to the policy. The Housing Services has allocated additional administrative resources to deal with DFG applications to improve performance against KPI 28. These are not new posts but involve a redistribution of duties among current staff within the service.
- That other authorities are also reporting an increase in the number of DFG applications and are experiencing similar capacity issues in undertaking the work. It is fair to say that the challenges faced by Anglesey are being felt across Wales. In terms of tackling the issue, whilst there were positive outcomes from the Meet the Buyer event in December 2023 as regards contractor interest in working with the Council, these will take time to come to fruition.
- That the main challenge lies in that part of the DFG process that involves assessing the client’s needs, formulating a care plan, obtaining a price for the works to be done and engaging a contractor to undertake those works. Without establishing an in-house team similar to the Housing Maintenance Unit linked to the Council’s own housing stock the scope for corporate intervention and solution is limited.

It was resolved to note progress to date with the Housing Services’ review of Performance Indicator 28 (Disabled Facilities Grants).

5 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUSINESS PLAN 2024-2054

The report of the Head of Housing Services incorporating the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan for 2024 to 2054 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 Nicola Roberts, Portfolio Member for Planning, Public Protection and Climate Change on behalf of Councillor Gary Prichard, Portfolio Member for Children, Youth and Housing Services. It was noted that the Council acts in accordance with the Housing Wales Act (2014) which places statutory obligations on Welsh Registered Social Landlords for the delivery, financial planning and management of the Council’s housing stock and is committed to meeting the Wales Quality Housing Standards (WQHS) 2023. The Council continues to provide quality housing for the residents of Anglesey and owns 3,981 social housing properties. It proactively promotes input by its tenants in improving the service and provision.

The following points were discussed by the Committee –

- The design approach to the Council’s housing stock and the extent to which character and visual quality are factors in developing new Council housing.

- The affordability of the HRA Business Plan in the context of reducing resources.
- Whether the Council's collaboration with its current Housing Association partners can be extended to include other housing associations in order to accelerate the rate of delivery of new social housing in accordance with the expectations of the 5-year plan.
- The rationale for the 30-year lifespan of the Business Plan.
- The achievability of the priority of working towards meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standards 2023.
- The percentage of the Council's housing stock that is suitable for the 21st century.

The Head of Housing Services and the Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer further advised as follows –

- That the Council has a programme for increasing its social housing stock and would like to think that it supports good design and that the houses it helps develop are visually attractive with the new estate in Llanfachraeth being an example of a visually appealing development in keeping with its context.
- That the aim of the HRA Business Plan is to plan ahead to ensure that a financially viable plan is in place for the Council's housing stock. The Council needs to ensure that the annual rental income from its housing stock is sufficient to deliver the priorities of the Business Plan including the maintenance of the current stock to WHQS standards and where capacity allows, investment in new council housing. The Section 151 Officer explained the process for testing the financial viability of the Business Plan and the factors considered, including the modelling of different options based on a range of assumptions around inflation, rent increase, interest rate and costs. While the HRA reserve has been used to develop new housing, it is envisaged that as the reserve reduces the HRA will have to borrow at a point in future and if costs remain high the rate of development may have to be tailored accordingly.
- That the Social Housing Grant provided by Welsh Government to fund social housing schemes is allocated on the basis of formula and would remain the same regardless of the number of Housing association partners the Council might choose to work with in delivering social housing schemes. Entering into partnership with more housing associations would mean the allocation is spread more thinly.
- That the 30-year lifespan of the Business Plan has likely originated in the borrowing arrangements between banks and housing associations to ensure that debts are paid over a 30-year planning timescale which have then become part of Welsh Government's processes after those councils which retained their housing stock bought out of the HRA Subsidy scheme. The HRA Business Plan is reviewed annually and is also condensed into a five-year plan which provides a better understanding of the Council's plans in the medium term
- That the Council is committed to achieving the WHQS 2023 and was the second council in Wales to achieve the WHQS 2012. The Housing Service has undertaken a full stock condition survey in 2022/23 to establish a baseline in preparation for the new standards and is satisfied that all properties wherever practically possible meet the original WHQS apart from those that are refused or which meet the acceptable fail criteria. The Service is also working on developing targeted energy pathways for homes to meet energy efficiency requirements. The Section 151 Officer advised that there may be a small number of the Council's housing stock which cannot be made to satisfy the new 2023 standards and any subsequent standards especially in relation to decarbonisation. In that case the Council will have to review its housing stock to establish whether it is possible or cost-efficient to invest in every single property in an attempt to bring them to the WHQS.

Having scrutinised the HRA Business Plan 2024 to 2054 the Corporate Scrutiny Committee resolved to recommend the Plan for the Executive's approval.

6 ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2029

The report of the Head of Highways, Waste and Property incorporating the Asset Management Strategic Plan for 224 to 20229 was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The report was presented by Councillor Carwyn Jones, Portfolio Member for Corporate Business and Customer Experience on behalf of Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas, Portfolio Member for Highways, Waste and Property who was unable to be present because of another Council commitment in relation to his portfolio duties. The purpose of the Asset Management Strategic Plan is to ensure that the Council has a financially and environmentally sustainable asset portfolio, rationalised to be fit for purpose and safe for the delivery of services. The Plan sets out key priority areas in relation to suitability, sustainability, collaboration, and data, identifies the risks to the delivery of the Plan and outlines the governance and accountability arrangements.

The Head of Highways, Waste and Property referred to the Plan as a corporate plan led by the Property Service working together with other services within the Council with asset interests in the form of schools, leisure centres and care homes wherein the budget for those buildings is held. The objective of the Plan is to ensure the Council's assets are well managed so that they are fit for purpose thereby driving efficiency and opportunities for rationalisation leading to buildings that are sustainable and which contribute to meeting the Council's decarbonisation and net zero obligations. The Council is currently facing a number of asset management challenges as recognised in the foreword to the Plan at a time of limited capital resources. The availability and use of accurate and up to date information and data are therefore essential in ensuring the Council makes effective decisions about its property assets and achieves its objectives.

The Chief Property and Asset Officer elaborated on the four priority areas and what they entailed highlighting the broad and varied nature of the Council's asset portfolio, the significant maintenance costs which the portfolio incurs and the gap between what the Council wants and is able to do, and the resources it has available to work with.

The main points of discussion by the Committee were as follows –

- Whether it would be helpful and appropriate in the table of the Council's assets to include additional information about each asset type's value, backlog maintenance requirements and planned maintenance costs to keep them up to standard in order to provide the public with a fuller picture of how much it costs to run a Council and maintain its physical assets.
- The arrangements for monitoring achievement and measuring success
- The responsibility for managing and maintaining listed buildings

The Committee was further advised as follows –

- That the task of collecting and assembling data to create as full as possible a picture of the Council's assets is in progress but has not been completed. As is noted in the Forward the Council's capital requirements to modernise and upgrade its existing assets and to deliver on its strategic objectives is estimated at in excess of £300m over the next 5 years. A long-term view needs to be taken of asset management to enable the Council to be clear about where it needs to invest in the years to come. The Asset Management Strategic Plan is closely linked to the Capital Strategy which sets out the principles to be used as guidance for capital priorities and resource allocation across the Council's services. The Asset Management Strategic Plan does not however include highways infrastructure which is the subject of a separate plan.

- That a number of delivery plans will sit below the Strategic Plan with timelines for the delivery of each element/project and their progress will be monitored via corporate processes. The terms of reference of the Land and Assets Group are being also being reviewed to ensure the group remains fit for purpose.
- That listing is a characteristic of some properties and must be considered in making changes to the building or undertaking repairs and maintenance works and may be subject to listed building consent. The responsibility with regard to managing development with regard to listed buildings lies with the Planning Service in conjunction with CADW whilst the Property Service must comply with the requirements in relation to listed building status when carrying out works.

Having scrutinised the Asset Management Strategic Plan 2024 to 2029 the Corporate Scrutiny Committee resolved to recommend the Plan to the Executive for adoption by the Full Council.

7 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Scrutiny Manager incorporating the Committee's Forward Work Programme to April, 2024 was presented for consideration.

The Scrutiny Manager in referring to the next scheduled meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 16 April 2024 advised Members that as the main programmed item for consideration at the meeting (Local Housing Market Assessment) is being rescheduled to a date to be confirmed, it is recommended that the Committee consider the propriety of cancelling the meeting. It is proposed that rescheduling the item be discussed with the Chair and Vice-Chair along with the latest version of the Forward Work Programme for 2024/25.

It was resolved –

- **To agree the current version of the Forward Work Programme for 2023/24 with the cancellation of the Committee's 16 April 2024 meeting.**
- **To note the progress thus far in implementing the Forward Work Programme.**

**Councillor Dyfed Wyn Jones
Chair**