

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2024 in the Committee Room and on Zoom

PRESENT: Councillor Douglas Fowle (Chair)
Councillor Dyfed Wyn Jones (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Geraint Bebb, Aled M. Jones, R. Llewelyn Jones, Jackie Lewis, Llio A. Owen, Keith Roberts, Ieuan Williams, Sonia Williams, Alwen Watkin, Arfon Wyn.

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

Portfolio Members

Councillors Llinos Medi (Leader and Portfolio Member for Economic Development), Gary Pritchard (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Member for Housing, Children and Youth Services), Robin Williams (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Member for Finance), Neville Evans (Portfolio Member for Leisure, Tourism and Maritime), Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Corporate Business and Customer Experience), Dafydd Roberts (Portfolio Member for Education and the Welsh Language), Nicola Roberts (Portfolio Member for Planning, Public Protection and Climate Change), Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Highways, Waste and Property).

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
Head of Democracy (DS)
Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation (CE)
Corporate Planning Programme and Performance Manager (GP)
Chief Property and Asset Officer (MH)
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)
Webcasting Officer (FT)

APOLOGIES: Wenda Owen (Co-opted Member - The Church in Wales), Gillian Thompson (Co-opted Member – Parent Governor in the Primary Schools Sector) Councillor Alun Roberts (Portfolio Member for Adults' Services and Community Safety).

ALSO PRESENT: Scrutiny Officer (EA)

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Jackie Lewis declared a personal interest only when item 5 was discussed on account of her employment with Menter Môn to which reference is made in the Delivery Document.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meetings of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 27 February, 2024, 12 March, 2024 and 21 May 2024 (election of Chair and Vice-Chair) were presented and were confirmed as correct.

3 MONITORING PERFORMANCE: CORPORATE SCORECARD Q4 2023/24

The report of the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation incorporating the Corporate Scorecard for Quarter 4 2023/24 was presented for the Committee's consideration. The scorecard report portrays the 2023/24 end of year 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 best performing Q4 scorecard report since the scorecard was introduced as a performance management tool with 92% of the performance indicators performing above or within a 5% tolerance of their targets for the year. He referred to specific instances of notable performances including within Adults' Services, Children and Families' Services and Homelessness Service where the performance had met or exceeded the targets for the year. Other examples of good performance were to be found in relation to the percentage of pupils assessed in Welsh at the end of the Foundation Phase (100%), the number of properties brought back into use (71 against a target of 50) and the NERS programme where 81% of the clients attending the programme felt that it had benefited their health. Planning and Waste Management indicators had also achieved their targets. The report highlights some remaining challenges with regard to FOI processing and responses, the percentage of Year 11 leavers who are classed as NEET and the average number of days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) where targets had not been met. These areas will be monitored by the Leadership Team to ensure improvements into the future.

The Committee thanked Officers and staff for their contribution towards a positive end of year scorecard report and Members noted the examples of standout performances during the year. In scrutinising the report the following were points of discussion by the Committee –

- The underperformance of Indicator 3 (NEET) which at 4% was below target and represented a decline on the performance of the previous two years. Questions were asked about the context to the indicator, the reasons for the missed target as well as the mitigation measures in place to halt the decline and improve the performance in this area.
- The arrangements for bringing positive influence to bear on those indicators where the current performance is on target but where the trend is downwards.
- The performance of indicator 09 (the percentage of FOI requests responded to within timescale) which at 80% was 10% off target. Suggestions were made regarding possible approaches to be taken to improve performance by way of focusing on proactive disclosure, clarity and accessibility, communication and feedback and handling basic requests efficiently, and two publications were cited as sources of information/case studies which could be looked at to improve the way FOI requests are addressed and to clear the backlog.

- The continued underperformance of indicator 28 (delivery of DFGs) and whether performance is being impacted by the unavailability of contractors and budget constraints. Questions were also asked about engagement and communication with business organisations and the publicity given to opportunities for being included on the list of contractors for adaptations work and whether the process is open to smaller as well as large contractors.
- The excellent performance of waste management indicators 31- 34 was noted and that 97.5% of the streets surveyed were clean of any waste, and fly tipping incidents continued to be cleared within a day. Appreciation of the work of the street cleaning and waste collection/recycling services was expressed with a request that the Committee's thanks be conveyed to the relevant staff. Reference was also made in the context of waste management to the poor condition of many recycling boxes and wheelie bins with some being damaged with jagged edges which could lead to accident or injury and a suggestion was made about renewing waste receptacles for Anglesey households.
- The increase with regard to the rate of older people (aged 65 or over) whom the Authority supports in care homes per 1,000 population aged 65 or over at 31 March (indicator 18) and the consequent pressure on the service. Questions were asked about the arrangements in place to manage the pressures from the perspective of staff and budgets.
- The increased demand and pressures on some service areas above others and how these are considered as part of the Council's performance management arrangements.
- The forecasted underspend of £1.740m on the 2023/24 budget and the extent to which this underspend will assist the Council in the 2024/25 financial year.

Officers responded to the points raised as follows –

- That the NEETs indicator was published by Careers Wales after taking a snapshot of school leavers who were NEET as of 31 October 2023 and were Year 11 leavers in July 2023. Of the 645 Year 11 leavers, 26 were identified as NEET with 10 of those young people on a Careers Wales course and 16 presenting as not ready for education because of personal and/or medical reasons. The Authority has a strong understanding of the number of Year 11 leavers not in education, training or employment and a robust system to monitor all NEET young people aged 16-18. The work of the Engagement and Progression Co-ordinator and her team of outreach advisors has had a positive influence on the figures and is encouraging. The focus is on early identification of young people who are NEET ahead of Careers Wales's snapshot publication coupled with timely intervention which is supported by early intervention panels to whose attention young people who are NEET are brought.
- That seasonal factors can influence performance reporting on a quarterly basis e.g. indicator 32 (the percentage of waste reused, recycled, or composted) where the Q4 performance is Green but the trend is down on Q3 which covers the winter months and is traditionally a better performing period for waste recycling because of the nature of the waste generated during this period especially at Christmas. The corporate scorecard contents and format are being reviewed for 2024/25 which might result in trends being measured against annual targets rather than quarterly via the downward/upward arrow to provide a clearer picture of the direction of travel.

The Committee requested that it be provided with the performance statistics against annual targets to enable it to better compare year on year trends.

- That last year 854 FOI requests were reported to the Governance and Audit Committee with just shy of 5,000 questions within those requests. Whilst there has been a gradual increase in the number of requests since the legislation was introduced, for 2023/24 the increase in the number of FOI requests to 1,002 and in the number of questions to 6,300

is significant. Some services are the subject of many more FOI requests than others because they have an impact on people's lives and these need to be targeted which approach the Governance and Audit Committee has endorsed. Mitigating actions being taken include the upscaling of the Corporate Information and Complaints Officer post which is currently being advertised with interim arrangements in place to collect the relevant data in the meantime, along with the development of the CRM. Whilst the focus of the CRM project currently is the complaints process, when resources allow work will begin on FOIs the aim being to create a dashboard available to each Information Manager i.e. Directors and Heads of Service, so that they will be able to access on a daily basis a scorecard which will show requests, timescales, progress, and late responses. The dashboard will be agreed by the Leadership Team who will be in possession of all the data and can identify any pinch points. Capacity has been considered as the work of collating information and drafting responses currently falls to officers within the services and is in addition to their day-to-day duties. Proactive disclosure of information is something the Council has been undertaking with services on the recommendation of the Governance and Audit Committee and involves analysing requests, identifying common themes, and assessing whether data that meets those information needs can be published routinely. Whilst proactive disclosure does not stop FOI submissions, it may help in reducing the number of requests by directing people to information that is accessible by other means.

- That a shortage of contractors has been one of the main factors in the underperformance of indicator 28 (timely delivery of DFGs) be that the undertaking of smaller repair jobs or major adaptations work. The Housing Service has reviewed the procurement framework and has engaged with local contractors leading to an expansion of the list of contractors the service works with from 7 to 14 for minor works and from 8 to 14 for major works which it is hoped will help expedite the delivery of DFG funded work and improve performance. Early indications for the first quarter of 2024/25 are that the number of days taken to deliver DFGs has reduced from that recorded at Q4 2023/24. The Corporate Planning Programme and Performance Manager advised with regard to the approach to engagement with businesses and contractors that that is a matter which the Housing Service would be able to report upon separately.
- That the Council is currently engaged with WRAP Cymru with regard to analysing the waste and recycling approach and performance with a view to making further improvements which will set the direction for the Council's future plans. Whilst the point made about the hazards of damaged waste/recycling containers is noted, current budgetary constraints mean that providing every household with new containers is not possible. The Council is however committed to repairing/replacing broken waste and recycling containers upon request in line with the waste collection policy. The Council's waste collection and street cleaning service is undertaken under contract by Biffa and the Committee's thanks should be directed to its staff.
- That Care Inspectorate Wales sets standards for staffing ratios in care homes to ensure that there is enough staff to meet the needs of a care home's residents. The data shows that the number of people entering and leaving residential care has increased significantly since the pandemic with more people entering care but for shorter periods than has previously been the case which impacts the performance figure. Appropriate staffing levels are in place to respond to those needs.
- That with regard to managing the demand and resource pressures on services, consideration in being given to taking a more integrated approach to budgets and efficiencies which takes account of demographic changes and the socio-economic conditions on the Island including local variations. Levels of demand are routinely considered in discussions about performance with Heads of Service as maintaining performance can sometimes be challenging due to the demand factor. Illustrating changes in demand and trends in its documentation is something the Council has

recognised it needs to do more clearly and is an element that will be incorporated in the new 2024/25 scorecard which will aim to show how demand levels change and how that in turn influences both short-term performance and long-term trends in key areas such as homelessness, adults' care, and education.

- That the projected underspend of £1.740m on the 2023/24 budget means that the Council's general balances will increase by that amount. The Director of Function (Resources) /Section 151 provided an overview of the Council's current general balances position which having taken account of movements in and out of the balances stands at approximately £11m which is available to the Council to mitigate risks. The Section 151 Officer advised that the Council's balances which it is recommended be maintained at 5% of the net revenue budget, will provide the Council with more scope/options when setting the 2025/26 budget which is expected to be challenging and could be used to balance the budget if necessary. Whilst it is recognised that drawing on general balances to address a budget gap is not a long-term solution to a funding shortfall, the balances help strengthen the Council's financial position and its ability to deal with funding challenges in the short-term.

Having reviewed the Corporate Scorecard for Q4 2023/24 and having noted the responses of Officers to the points of discussion raised it was resolved –

- **To note the Corporate Scorecard report for Q4 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, the percentage of Year 11 leavers who are NEET and the average number of days taken to deliver a DFG.**
- **To recommend the scorecard report and mitigating measures outlined therein to the Executive.**

Additional actions –

- **The Committee to be provided with the performance statistics against annual targets to enable it to compare year on year trends.**
- **To ask the Chief Executive on behalf of the Committee to write to the Chief Executive and Area Manager of Biffa to convey the Committee's appreciation and thanks for the work carried out on Anglesey by Biffa's street cleaning and waste collection staff.**

4 ANNUAL CORPORATE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2023/24

The report of the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation incorporating the Council's annual self-assessment report for 2023/24 was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The report was presented by Councillor Carwyn Jones, Portfolio Member for Corporate Business and Customer Experience as the third self-assessment report produced by the Council under the Local Government and Elections Act 2021. The report provides an evidential basis of how the Council has performed over the year using its available resources whilst managing and mitigating associated risks. Of the seven key areas which are the focus of the self-assessment, four areas (service planning, financial planning, workforce planning and performance management) are assessed as exceeding expectations while three areas (asset management, procurement and contract management, and risk and audit management) are assessed as meeting expectations. Additionally, the report identifies several areas as presenting opportunities for improvement and monitoring throughout 2024/25.

In considering the report, the following were points of discussion by the Committee –

- The action plan and timescales to ensure continued improvement with regard to asset management which is an area assessed as meeting expectations (yellow).
- Whether assurances can be given that the three key areas assessed as meeting expectations will continue to improve.
- With regard to procurement and contract management, clarification of the specialist law contract at a value of £3m was requested.

Officers responded to the points raised as follows –

- That a new Asset Management Strategic Plan for 2024 to 2029 was approved by the Council in May 2024 which focuses on four key priority areas in relation to the suitability of the Council's assets, the sustainability of its assets, collaboration in planning and managing assets as a corporate resource, and asset planning that is data driven. These identify numerous steps to be taken to improve the Council's asset management arrangements. Implementation of the Plan which spans the medium term, is in its infancy and timescales for the identified actions are being determined with the priority being to establish a sound asset information database which will drive subsequent actions in the other priority areas.
- That an external procurement specialist has been engaged to look at the Council's current procurement arrangements and its readiness for the significant changes to be introduced to public sector procurement in October 2024 by the new Procurement Act which will also apply in Wales. They have developed a two-year action plan for improvements focused on creating a new procurement strategy and its integration into service plans, governance, and the incorporation of the new regulations within the Council's Constitution, the creation of a procurement handbook for staff, definition of roles and responsibilities, the structure and skillset of the Procurement team, data collection and performance reporting of procurement activity. The external procurement specialist has also been re-engaged to provide support in delivering the action plan.
- That risk management which is currently located within the Internal Audit Service includes arrangements for reviewing corporate and service risk registers and ensuring they are kept up to date as well as regular reporting to the Governance and Audit Committee by the Head of Audit and Risk. The Risk Manager post is currently vacant following the departure of the post holder to another post in the Council and the vacancy has provided an opportunity to review where the risk management responsibility sits within the Council structure.

The Chief Executive advised that integrating budget review work, demand monitoring and performance management with the Council's risk management processes as a naturally occurring part of day-to-day operational activity is essential as circumstances can change rapidly as a result of legislation or funding conditions. Integrating those processes will require further work but will pay dividend in better and more timely decision making.

The Committee requested that it be provided in six months' time with the action plans for the three key areas assessed as meeting expectations to see the extent of progress made and that the Corporate Self-Assessment for 2024/25 demonstrate how the actions taken have brought those three key areas to a position where they too exceed expectations.

The Chief Executive in acknowledging the importance of the Committee's receiving assurance that progress is being made advised that the Council will in the second half of 2025 be subject to a panel performance assessment whereby an independent panel arranged by the Council will assess the extent to which the Council is meeting performance requirements. The corporate assessment work as well as subsequent progress updates will provide important evidence to the panel that the Council is committed to improving performance on an ongoing basis.

- That the procurement activity in relation to the specialist law contract refers to legal work commissioned with regard to large scale, complex strategic developments such as the Anglesey Freeport or Wylfa Newydd which require specialist input over and above the capacity/expertise of the Council's legal services. Such specialist service is procured in line with the Welsh Government procurement framework but if the required specialism is unavailable under the Framework, the Council will procure the work externally which the client service would undertake supported by the Council's legal services. In response to a question by a member of the Committee about the availability of information about the work commissioned and details of the costs incurred the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer confirmed that that information is available and is provided as part of the service challenge process. A Member can request access to the information which would then be considered under FOI provisions as it is likely to include sensitive commercial information pertaining to the companies commissioned. In response to further questions about the justification for the £3m cost, the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer advised that the Council would unlikely be able to recruit expert legal professionals on a permanent basis on the basis of public sector pay rates and that commissioning external legal support to meet specific specialist requirements represents the best way forward.

Having scrutinised the documentation, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee resolved to endorse the Annual Corporate Self-Assessment 2024 for further consideration by the Executive.

Additional actions –

- **The Committee to be updated in six months on the progress made on actions in relation to the three key areas assessed as meeting expectations (as opposed to exceeding expectations).**
- **The Corporate Self-Assessment report for 2024/25 to show how the actions taken have helped those three key areas exceed expectations.**
- **That information about the work commissioned and costs incurred in relation to external legal fees be made available to Councillor A.M. Jones as an FOI request and a copy provided to the Committee's members.**

5 ANNUAL DELIVERY DOCUMENT 2024/25

The report of the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation incorporating the Annual Delivery Document for 2024/25 was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The report was presented by Councillor Carwyn Jones, Portfolio Member for Corporate Business and Customer Experience as setting out the Council's key work streams for 2024/25 which will contribute towards achieving the strategic objectives of the Council Plan 2023-2028.

In considering the contents of the Annual Delivery Document, the following were points of discussion by the Committee –

- The ways in which the proposed Delivery Document aligns with the Council Plan.
- The rationale for setting a target of immersing 96 pupils with little or no Welsh skills through language centres.
- Given the extension of voting rights to 16-year-olds in Senedd and local elections in Wales and the Council's commitment to ensuring that there are opportunities for children and young people's voices to be heard, the ways in which the Council proposes to better engage young people in local democracy and use their vote, and whether schools should be educating young people about the different forms, tiers, and evolution of democracy.
- The risks and challenges in seeking to achieve the priorities set for 2024/25.

- Whether the commitment to develop thirty new homes is sufficiently ambitious.
- How the Council proposes to reach and influence communities with regard to its climate change ambitions.
- The publicity given to the Anglesey Local Development Plan Delivery Agreement document and the extent of its distribution/circulation for public awareness.
- In light of the magnitude and strategic importance of nuclear development to the Island's economy and wider afield, it was suggested and supported by Committee that a specific and separate line of reference to Wylfa be included under the Delivery Document's economic commitments. Likewise it was suggested and supported by Committee that a specific reference to the Council's commitment to engaging with the business sector be also included in the same section of the Document.

Officers responded to the points raised as follows –

- That the Delivery Document has been crafted to align with the strategic priorities of the Council Plan and sets out the activities which the Council will undertake in 2024/25 and how those reflect what the Council has committed to achieve by 2028 in the Council Plan. The Council's performance will be reviewed at the end of 2024/25 to assess the extent to which it has achieved its objectives for the year and how those have contributed towards realising the priorities of the Council Plan.
- That the Director of the Education, Skills, and Young People would be asked to clarify the basis of the target for immersing 96 pupils with little or no Welsh skills through language centres and the information circulated to the Committee's members.
- That there is within the Council an officer post whose responsibilities include promoting and highlighting the importance of voting among 16-year-olds and a work programme has been developed to support those endeavours chiefly through current networks and through collaboration with the colleges and school sixth form classes. With regard to teaching about democracy in schools, the Assistant Chief Executive advised that the Children and Young People' Forum has been re-established and that he would convey the message to the Learning Service.
- That many of the work streams set out in the Delivery Document are dependent for their achievement on external grant funding which in some instances is as yet unconfirmed. This is a risk and will be subject to continued monitoring throughout the year and may necessitate some adaptation of the document in line with circumstances.
- That the target of developing thirty new homes is achievable from the perspective of the Council's capacity, land availability and resources but is unlikely to be enough in terms of meeting local housing needs and homelessness. It is essential that the Council and others continue to develop new homes otherwise the gap between demand and provision will widen and the Council will face increasing homelessness pressures.
- That the Local Development Plan Delivery Agreement is currently the subject of a six-week consultation and will inform the process of preparing a new Local Development Plan for Anglesey. The consultation has been undertaken in the same way as all other Council consultations and has been scrutinised by the Consultation and Engagement Board. The Chief Executive recommended that the question be referred to the Planning Policy Committee so that Members can consider whether the public is sufficiently aware of planning policy and its significance and how they can have a say in its development and whether a plan is required within communities. It was further confirmed that copies of the Anglesey Local Development Plan Delivery Agreement have been distributed to Anglesey libraries and other public locations although information about the exact number of copies made available was not immediately to hand. It is not Council policy to print and circulate paper copies unless requested.

- That the Council has committed to becoming a net zero organisation by 2030 and has established challenging targets to reduce its carbon emissions. In terms of what is happening at community level the Council is progressing household waste recycling rates, flood mitigation work, active travel routes as well as preparing to implement a programme to install EV charging points across the Island. Responding to the climate change crisis with limited resources is a significant challenge and while the immediate focus is on the Council itself, as much support as possible is being given to safeguarding communities via Council projects, processes, and systems.

Having scrutinised the documentation, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee resolved to endorse the Annual Delivery Document 2024/25 to the Executive with the recommendation that the document include specific and separate reference to Wylfa under the economic commitments section as well as a reference to the Council's commitment to engaging with the business sector.

Additional actions –

- **To ask the Director of the Education, Skills, and Young People to clarify the basis of the target for immersing 96 pupils with little or no Welsh skills through language centres and circulate the response to the Committee's members.**
- **That the publicity afforded the Anglesey Local Development Plan Delivery Agreement document and public awareness of the document be referred to the Planning Policy Committee for consideration. The Chief Executive to confirm the number of copies produced and distributed.**

6 SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP: LETTING OF COUNCIL ACCOMMODATION (KPI 29) – FINAL REPORT

The report of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee established to examine the performance of indicator 29 (the average number of calendar days taken to let a lettable unit of accommodation excluding Difficult to Let units) with a view to improving the performance was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The report and Panel findings were presented by Councillor Ieuan Williams, Chair of the Panel who provided an overview of the scope, methodology and objectives of the Panel along with its conclusions and recommendations as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. The Panel had made four recommendations to the Executive as a means of improving the local performance against Key Performance Indicator 29. Councillor Ieuan Williams also referred to the lessons learnt from the task and finish project including whether a group of this nature undertaking a time limited exercise is the most effective way of investigating performance. Suggestions were made regarding possible alternative mechanisms for improving productivity and performance.

The Committee thanked both the Panel for its time and work, the Officers who reported to the Panel and those who supported the Panel in conducting its business.

The Chief Executive added his thanks for the work undertaken and recommended a minor amendment to the wording of recommendation (1) to include reference to the year to which the performance target would apply to the effect that *the local performance target for KPI 29 for 2025/26 be set at 35 calendar days to relet lettable units of accommodation (excluding difficult to let units).*

It was resolved –

- **To approve the final report of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group together with its key findings and 4 individual recommendations as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report with the amendment to the wording of recommendation (1) as outlined.**
- **To agree that the final report be submitted for approval by the Executive.**

7 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Scrutiny Manager incorporating the Committee's Forward Work Programme for 2024/25 was presented for consideration.

It was resolved to agree the current version of the Forward Work Programme for 2024/25 as presented.

**Councillor Douglas Fowlie
Chair**

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