



POLICY AND RESOURCES (PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT) SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON THURSDAY, 16TH JUNE 2011 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor J. Taylor - Chairman
Councillor Mrs M.E. Sargent - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

H.A. Andrews, L. Binding, J.B. Criddle, D.T. Davies, L. Hughes, G. Jones, D.V. Poole,
D. Rees, A.S. Williams

Also Present:

Cabinet Members Councillors C.P. Mann (Corporate Finance, Procurement and Sustainability) and J.E. Fussell (Human Resources)

Together with:

N. Barnett (Deputy Chief Executive), P.S. Evans (Head of Information, Communications and Technology Services), P. Lewis (IT Development Manager), R. Mathews (Communications Manager), C. Jones (Head of Performance and Property Services), J. Pearce (Performance Officer), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), R. Thomas (Committee Services Officer)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.C.W. Bailie, D. Bolter, Mrs. V. Jenkins, K.V. Reynolds, Mrs M.A. Tucker

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

2. IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES 2011/12 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Head of Performance and Property Services introduced the report and advised Members that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 requires all local authorities in Wales to set and publish a set of priorities that improve the life of citizens. These priorities are called

Improvement Objectives and must be made known to the public every year. The Wales Audit Office will assess the Authority and write an “Annual Improvement Report” of the Council, in which the results will be made publicly available in December each year.

Members were informed that the Improvement Objective (IO) for the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee is to “Review how we deliver our services by improving how we engage with our citizens and through listening to what our customers tell us about our services”. The purpose of the meeting is to consider the relevance of the objective whilst a further meeting in six months time will allow Members to scrutinise the action plan and the delivery of the IO.

Improvement Objective 1

The Head of Information, Communications and Technology Services confirmed the transfer of the citizen engagement team to his service area in November 2010. The realignment of responsibility will enable citizen engagement to sit along side other customer service functions. In addition to his service area, IO 1 also includes complaint handling which the Head of Legal and Governance is responsible for.

The Communications Manager gave Members a summary of the good practices and initiatives currently in place and of the challenges faced by the service area. The use of new technology was also highlighted.

An update regarding the Information Sharing Project was given by the Head of Information, Communications and Technology Services, and he added that the Head of Legal and Governance was carrying out a review to improve the complaints procedure. Services may be modified to reduce the need to complain.

The Information Technology Development Manager informed Members of the Nationality Checking Service and updated them on the progress made in regard to the proactive ‘Tell Us Once Service’. It is anticipated the latter service will go live on 27th June, subject to the Department of Work and Pensions tests.

Officers also reviewed new initiatives such as the development of social media networks and the Risca Customer Service Centre. In closing, Members were asked to give any comments on the document and the targets within.

Members thanked the officers for their presentation and a full discussion followed, in particular in regard to the definition of a complaint and the way in which complaints and/or service requests are recorded and reported back to Scrutiny Committees. A Member asked for a further report to outline the systems in place to measure and scrutinise complaints across the local authority, together with the cost of doing this. In addition, it was agreed that complaints were to be seen as positive contact as they allowed the Council to improve, however the need to be proactive was stressed.

A Member raised a concern that there seemed to be differences between the corporate participation strategy and the Youth Participation Strategy. It was requested that officers ensure there was continuity throughout the lifetime of a citizen, and that effective strategies were joined for the benefit of citizens. Clarification was also sought as to how officers were to engage with hard to reach groups and how the Council’s viewpoint panel membership was selected. Members were asked to note that a review of the viewpoint panel, and how it is used, was to take place.

The need for the evidence/performance targets to be reviewed to make them challenging yet obtainable was highlighted. In closing, Members asked officers to amend the web service request application to reduce the amount of data required for Councillors to submit a service request. Officers agreed to take both requests forward.

The meeting closed at 6.05 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 19th July 2011, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN