



## **POLICY AND RESOURCES (PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT) SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH  
ON THURSDAY, 24TH NOVEMBER 2011 AT 5.00 P.M.**

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### **PRESENT:**

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

### **Councillors:**

L. Binding, L. Hughes, D.V. Poole, D. Rees, K.V. Reynolds, Mrs M.A. Tucker, A.S. Williams

### **Also Present:**

Cabinet Member: Councillor C. Hobbs (Performance, Property and Asset Management)

### **Together with:**

C. Jones (Head of Performance and Property), P.S. Evans (Head of Information, Communications and Technology), J. Jones (Information Officer), R. Mathews (Communications Manager), J. Pearce (Performance Officer), D. Perkins (Head of Legal and Governance), G. Richards (Principal Solicitor), R. Roberts (Performance Manager), N. Scammell (Head of Corporate Finance), R.J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer)

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H.A. Andrews, P.C.W. Bailie, D. Bolter, J.B. Criddle, D.T. Davies, Mrs V. Jenkins, G. Jones and officers N. Barnett (Deputy Chief Executive), G. Hardacre (Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development) and S. Couzens (Head of Housing Services)

### **CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed Members to the Performance Management meeting and advised that Mr Nick Selwyn, Improvement Assessment Coordinator, Wales Audit Office, was due to attend but had not arrived.

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

## **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

Consideration was given to the following reports.

### **2. IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES UPDATE 2011/12**

Mr Colin Jones, Head of Performance and Property, introduced the report and reminded Members that from April 2010, each Authority had a forward-looking review of the corporate arrangements to support improvement and a retrospective assessment of improvement in services. The Improvement Objectives presented on the evening form part of the overall Improvement Assessment that will be undertaken by our regulators. CCBC currently have eight Improvement Objectives in total. Mr Jones highlighted that the objective for the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee was considered to be very important, as it concerned the reputation of the Caerphilly County Borough Council.

In spring, officers introduced and advised Members of the specific key areas chosen and that updates were now due. Members were asked to note this was not the complete picture, but an understanding of where the service areas are, at this point in time, and they were encouraged to scrutinise and challenge the reports presented.

In closing, the Head of Performance and Property stated it was disappointing that Mr Selwyn of the Wales Audit Office was not present to observe how the Authority challenged itself and held local decision and policy makers to account. Importantly if the Authority's scrutiny processes are sufficiently robust to be relied upon, there will be less need for auditors to scrutinise the Authority's improvement objectives, and this could result in a reduction in audit fees.

The Chairman thanked the officer for his introduction.

### **3. IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE (IO1) QUARTER 2 UPDATE**

The Communications Manager and Head of Legal and Governance introduced the report and reviewed the improvement objective entitled "Improve how we engage with our citizens and listen to what our customers tell us about our services".

A review of progress made since the spring was given and Members informed that the recent household survey indicated that 78% of respondents were satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council; an increase in comparison with the previous survey. However, the Upper Rhymney Valley had the lowest level of net satisfaction and officers needed to establish the reason for this.

A new public engagement strategy was under construction and other panels, similar in nature to the viewpoint panel, are to be created. Examples of best practice are being considered and officers are working with other organisations to improve participation and communication.

In the New Year there will be a new corporate complaints policy, with no more than two stages to the process. Best practices were being reviewed and the policy was to be line with the Public Service Ombudsman's requested process. A report would be presented to the Scrutiny Committee, prior to Cabinet and Council, and it was hoped the new policy would be implemented by the end of April 2012.

Members discussed the report and officers responded to general questions. Officers clarified the use of targets and confirmed that the improvement objective was a working document and if considered necessary, could be revised. Any amendment would have to be relevant, outcome focused and be agreed Council.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

#### 4. **QUARTER 2 PROGRESS SUMMARY**

The report gave Members a summary of progress made in the second quarter for each section within Corporate Services. Head of Services, where available, introduced their service area and welcomed comments from the Scrutiny Committee.

**Corporate Finance** Members noted the contents of the report.

**Human Resources and Organisational Development** Members commented that it had previously been agreed to separate the percentage of women in leadership posts between the actual number of women in leadership posts and the impact of senior management restructuring on this figure. The lack of a target was also highlighted. It was questioned, with gender equality, whether the target was still relevant. In the absence of Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development, officers advised they would need to clarify the indicator with HR and get back to Members.

**Housing Services** Members sought clarification of the comments detailed within the last key indicator listed under Building Services. The Head of Performance and Property advised that in the absence of the Head of Housing Services, officers would have to get back to Members. A Member also sought the definition of urgent, as detailed in the title of the same indicator.

**ICT, Public Engagement and Customer Services** Members queried the targets selected in regard to the IT Helpdesk, as these were set below results achieved 12 months ago and current levels being achieved. Officers advised that the targets had been increased at the start of the year, and it was confirmed mid-year alignments could be made. It was agreed to increase the end of year targets from 92% to 95%. In addition, Members discussed the amount of additional information required in the comment boxes to allow comprehensive scrutiny of the service area's performance. A Member requested that the title of "Value of advertisements placed" be amended to reflect that it also took into consideration the production of public notices, such as planning applications.

**Legal and Governance** Members noted the reduced attendance levels of Members at seminars and they asked if these could be held at different times to allow Members the opportunity to attend. A Member also queried the target level for agreements and statutory notices drafted in 10 working days, and asked for this to be amended as it appeared to be on the low side. Officers advised that the target had not been achieved previously and staff numbers had since reduced, however it was agreed to review the target following Members comments.

**Performance and Property** Members were advised that the Welsh Government had agreed the Authority would receive full payment as it had achieved all targets.

#### 5. **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION REQUESTS 1 JAN – 30 JUNE 2011**

The report informed Members of the demands placed on the Authority through requests for information received under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) and Subject Access Request (SARs) made under the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). High-level analysis of trends and performance in dealing with the requests were also highlighted, together with identification of current issues that may impact on the Authority.

The Authority continues to see an increase in the number of requests for information being received, with little seasonal variation being evidenced. At any one time the Corporate Information Unit can be dealing with in excess of 100 requests, this has risen from an average of 70 active requests in the previous year.

Improvements in performance have been achieved, despite the increase in the number of requests and the complex nature of many of these, which can be attributed to changes made to the process for dealing with such requests. In addition, information commonly requested under FOI is now being considered for inclusion on the Council's website.

It was previously reported that the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) was intending to target timeliness. As a result of the changes made to the FOI process and increasing staff awareness, it is hoped that the 85% target will be achieved by the end of the year.

Members were given a summary of the types and outcomes of requests, and further information given regarding the four data protection complaints received by the Authority.

Members thanked the officer for the informative report and following discussion on its content indicated their concern that officers would not be able to maintain the current level of service, due to increasing request numbers, without impacting on other service areas. Officers assured the committee that they were continuing to review the increase to ensure that any future growth did not mitigate against the authority in ensuring our legislative compliance.

The use of the Corporate Information Unit by Members to obtain information was debated, as was the ICO role in monitoring the additional pressures to all service areas. A request for a report on future costs as a result of the increasing workload was made. The Head of Information, Communications and Technology informed Members that concerns regarding this had already been given to the WLGA.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 6.20 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 24th January 2012, they were signed by the Chairman.

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CHAIRMAN