



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT)

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 19TH JUNE 2012 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor H.W. David - Chairman
Councillor Mrs. J. Summers - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

D.G. Carter, Mrs. D. Ellis, J.E. Fussell, C. Hawker, Ms. J.G. Jones, G. Kirby, A. Lewis,
C.P. Mann, S. Morgan, R. Saralis, J. Taylor

Also Present:

Cabinet Members: Councillors D.T. Hardacre (Performance and Asset Management) and
Mrs. C. Forehead (Human Resources, Governance and Business Manager)

Also in attendance to observe: Councillors H.A. Andrews, A. Lewis, C. Durham, T.J. Williams

Together with:

N. Barnett (Deputy Chief Executive), P.S. Evans (Head of Information, Communications,
Technology and Customer Services), G. Hardacre (Head of Human Resources and
Organisation Development), C. Jones (Head of Performance and Property), D. Perkins (Head
of Legal and Governance), N. Scammell (Head of Corporate Finance), S. Couzens (Head of
Housing Services), R. Roberts (Performance Manager), J. Pearce (Performance Management
Officer), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), R.J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Binding, C.J. Cuss and D. Rees.

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and he paid tribute to Councillor J. Taylor for his Chairmanship of the Scrutiny Committee in the previous administration.

2. 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.

3. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT - THE ROLE OF SCRUTINY

Mr. Colin Jones, Head of Performance and Property, opened proceedings by saying that this was the first of two meetings held each year to carry out a forward looking review of corporate arrangements to support improvement and retrospectively assess improvement in services.

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, states each local authority has to have effective arrangements in place to secure improvement. A number of organisations monitor the progress made by each authority and the WAO publish an Annual Improvement Report, which tells the public how each local authority is performing. Previous feedback from the WAO had been positive.

Specific key areas are chosen, selected from both local performance measures and National measures. Data is collated using the Performance Information Measurement System (PIMS - Ffynnon), and extracted from the PIMS scorecard on a regular basis for analysis.

Members were informed that Cabinet identifies the key Improvement Objectives and publishes a 3 - 4 year Improvement Plan. This is revised annually to ensure its relevance. In addition, a 3 yearly Outcome Agreement is agreed with the Welsh Government. Improvements made ensured that the Authority received grants of £5.4m over a 3 year period, as all targets had been met in the last 6 years.

In closing, Members were introduced to Ffynnon and advised of their role in performance management.

The Chairman thanked the officer for his presentation. Comments and questions were welcomed from Members and it was agreed that copies of the presentation would be circulated to Members.

4. SERVICE PRIORITIES – CORPORATE DIRECTORATE

Handouts for each service area were made available to all parties present.

Mr. Nigel Barnett, Deputy Chief Executive, introduced the Corporate Directorate and he asked Members to consider the importance of the Scrutiny Committee, as it not only looked at Corporate Services but also had responsibility for the overall governance of Council policies, reviewed the Council's governance arrangements and had a vital role in considering the Council's financial reports to assist in the financial planning of the Local Authority.

Reference was also made to the working relationships with the audit committee and other scrutiny committees. In closing the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that due to the complex nature of the directorate, and the need to satisfy the Authority's auditors, at times reports would need to be lengthy in order to facilitate an informed debate.

Mr. Barnett then introduced Members to the head of each service area:

Human Resources and Organisation Development

Mr. Gareth Hardacre, Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development referred Members to the handout previously circulated and he highlighted the service profile and key services offered by his team.

A demonstration of the HR support portal on the intranet was given and Members were offered training, should they require it. The demonstration also illustrated to Members how to access the Authority's main policies and contact details of key personnel were given, should Members need assistance.

The Chairman thanked the officer and welcomed comments and questions from Members. Clarification was given that the iTrent self service system functioned as a web based payroll tool, and he advised Members that they would receive regular sight of workforce information reports which gave detailed information relating to employees and highlighted any trends.

Confirmation was also given that in addition to members of staff, Trade Unions were consulted with on all HR policies.

Performance and Property

Mr. Colin Jones, Head of Performance and Property referred Members to the handout and the key services offered by his team. He highlighted that in addition to performance management, which had already been discussed, he also managed the Council's property and land.

The structure of the team and key personnel contacts within were given and Members were invited to visit the section should they need to clarify or discuss anything.

The Chairman thanked the officer and welcomed comments and questions from Members. Clarification was given regarding the link between performance indicators/management and customer satisfaction and Mr. Jones advised that in a recent bi-annual customer survey, the authority had received a 76% satisfaction rate. The Head of Information, Communications, Technology and Customer Services also confirmed that exit surveys are carried out and these indicated that people were happy with the services provided by the Council.

In closing, Mr. Jones and Mr. Hardacre confirmed the need for agency staff within the team, due to the nature and specialism of the work carried out.

Legal and Governance

Mr. Dan Perkins, Head of Legal and Governance referred Members to the handout and he highlighted the service profile and key services offered by his team, in particular the key role they had in supporting councillors.

Members were asked to note several significant changes currently taking place, including the election of the Police Commissioner and introduction of the LG Measure; together with proposed collaborations with other authorities. Members were advised reports relating to these activities would be presented at the appropriate time.

Contact details of key personnel were given to Members, and they were asked to contact either the Monitoring Officer or his deputy should they be in any doubt regarding the Code of Conduct or for the need to declare an interest.

The Chairman thanked the officer and welcomed comments and questions from Members.

Information, Communications, Technology and Customer Service

Mr. Philip Evans, Head of Information, Communications, Technology and Customer Services referred Members to the handout and he highlighted the service profile and key services offered by his team.

The structure for the team and contact details of key personnel were given, together with

details of future priorities for the division and new initiatives, such as the introduction of broadband/Wi-Fi in schools (with large bandwidths) and multiagency working.

The Chairman thanked the officer and welcomed comments and questions from Members. Further information was received regarding the development of a members' portal and Mr. Evans confirmed Members views would be sought as to the features available. In addition, Members were advised of the introduction of a newsletter and the new technology and links to speed up their internet access from home.

Corporate Finance

Ms. Nicole Scammell, Head of Corporate Finance gave Members an overview of the Authority's budget and the Treasury Management responsibility for the division. She advised of the ongoing work relating to the medium term financial plan and of the Council's strategy to make savings in advance, where possible.

Key services and the structure of her team were also highlighted, together with initiatives and future challenges to be faced. In particular, Ms. Scammell informed Members of changes to the Housing and Council Tax Benefits that were to take effect from April 2013. This would have a considerable impact on both claimants and the level of income received by the Authority. Further information would be brought before Members in due course.

The Chairman thanked the officer and welcomed comments and questions from Members. Concerns were raised regarding the proposed changes to Housing and Council Tax Benefits and the way in which this would disadvantage council tenants. Officers confirmed these changes were Westminster led and would have to be implemented.

The Chairman welcomed further information on this.

Housing and Building Maintenance Services

Mr. Shaun Couzens, Head of Housing Services referred Members to the handout and he highlighted the service profile and key services offered by his team. Members were advised of the key priorities for the service, in particular action to be taken on the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) works programme and associated tenant groups, following the recent ballot of council tenants. A review of sheltered housing to ensure it is fit for purpose was also to be undertaken by March 2013.

Mr. Couzens advised Members of the substantial investment in the housing stock and of the challenges facing the section. He also confirmed the Authority's support to local businesses, and of the jobs and apprenticeships that would be generated by the planned works. Mr. Barnett asked Members to note that Housing and Building Maintenance Services had only recently been transferred to the Corporate Directorate and as such, work was ongoing to update the Committee's Terms of Reference.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Couzens for his presentation and welcomed comments and questions from Members.

In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and confirmed he looked forward to working with the Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting closed at 6:40 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 31st July 2012, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN