



JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY 26TH OCTOBER 2023 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor G. Johnston – Chair

Councillors:

M. Adams, E.M. Aldworth, C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, P. Cook, D. Cushing, C.J. Cuss, E. Davies, D.T. Davies MBE, G. Ead, C. Elsbury, G. Enright, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C. Forehead, J.E. Fussell, A. Gair, D. Harse, T. Heron, A. Hussey, D. Ingram-Jones, S. Kent, A. Leonard, A. McConnell, B. Miles, B. Owen, M. Powell, H. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, J. Roberts, R. Saralis, J. Simmonds, S. Skivens, C. Thomas, A. Whitcombe, L.G. Whittle, S. Williams, W. Williams, J. Winslade, C. Wright and K. Woodland.

Co-opted Member: M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education).

Cabinet Members:

Councillors S. Morgan (Leader of Council), C. Andrews (Education and Communities), S. Cook (Housing), E. Forehead (Social Care), N. George (Corporate Services, Property and Highways), P. Leonard (Planning and Public Protection), C. Morgan (Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces), J. Pritchard (Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change), and Mrs E. Stenner (Finance and Performance).

Together with:

Officers: C. Harry (Chief Executive), D. Street (Deputy Chief Executive), M. S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director - Head of Children's Services), J. Williams (Assistant Director Adult Services), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), C. Ewings (Youth Service Manager - Participation and Inclusion), R. Kyte (Head of Regeneration and Planning), C. Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager), B. Winstanley (Head of Land and Property Services), R. Roberts (Business Improvement Manager), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), J. Pearce (Business Improvement Officer), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live-streamed and recorded and would be made available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). Members were advised that voting on decisions would be taken via Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Angel, N. Dix, K. Etheridge, C. Gordon, M. James, L. Jeremiah, J. Jones, C. Mann, T. Parry, L. Phipps, D.W.R. Preece, D. Price, J. Reed, J. Rao, J. Reed, J. Scriven, and J. Taylor.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

3. CORPORATE PLAN (INCLUDING WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES) 2023-2028.

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive introduced the report which presented the Joint Scrutiny Committee with the Councils' Draft Corporate Plan which details the new Well-Being Objectives for the next five-year period from 2023 to 2028, prior to the Plan's journey to Cabinet and Council.

Members were advised that the Well-Being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 requires all public bodies to set Well-Being Objectives that improves the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of their area, and the objectives are designed to maximise the contribution to the National Well-being Goals for Wales.

The Leader and the Chief Executive both wished to note thanks to all involved in producing the Draft Corporate Plan.

WBO1 Enabling our Children to Success in Education

Cabinet Member Councillor C. Andrews (Education and Communities) introduced the first Well-being objective 'Enabling our Children to Success in Education.'

A Member asked about the vocational options available to 14-year-olds. The Chief Education Officer advised Members that a work experience pilot had recently commenced which five schools had signed-up towards. The Strategic Lead for School Improvement also highlighted the national review of vocational qualifications in Wales and referred Members to the information available on the Caerphilly Learning Pathways website. Members also heard about the work of the Inspire Team which had been financed through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The Member referred to an apprenticeship scheme that Cardiff Council was running in partnership with a college of further education in the city.

The Chief Education Officer advised Members that a meeting had been scheduled with Coleg y Cymoedd to discuss similar opportunities.

A Member queried how the leadership structure proposed differed from the current model. The Committee heard about the robust leadership programme which was run in collaboration with EAS and involved all levels of staff and governing bodies. The Member also asked about the refurbishment plans for schools. The Head of Education Planning and Strategy gave details on the £1.5M capital programme and grants from the Welsh Government.

A Committee Member highlighted the role of voluntary organisations who helped develop literacy skills in schools and enquired if this function was being promoted. The Chief Education Officer outlined how this was a decision for schools based on their culture, and the school improvement plan would have a target on literacy, together with a high level of support from the EAS. The Member also asked about promoting the learning of Welsh and other European languages. Officers outlined the benefits of new Welsh medium education facilities and advised that a review of teaching languages was currently taking place and would be the focus for a future report.

One Member asked about the help for pupils whose education was impacted by the Covid-19 lockdown regulations. Members heard about some of the work being done for the well-being of pupils' post-lockdown measures, and reference was made to the children who went from primary to secondary schools without any transition preparations. Members were advised that the latest attendance figures for Primary Schools was up 1% on the previous year at 93.1%, together with an increase in attendance of 1.5% for disadvantaged learners.

Members were also advised of an increase in grant funding, some of which would be going towards additional family liaison officers. There was also reference made to a new campaign on pupil attendance that was due to be launched.

A Member highlighted Community focussed schools and asked how they would improve NEET figures, and also if mental health support was included. Officers highlighted some of the innovative ways this project was being run and also stressed the work being done by the Inspire Team, with reference made to a spring term conference to share best practice guides and engaging the community. Members were also told that additional support in the Education Psychology Service had been increased.

Members queried whether there were any special measures available for children who move into Wales from outside of the area, to support their Welsh language learning. Members were advised that this would depend on the level of education of the child, and whether primary or secondary school age but the relevant support would be available for these children with reference made to the Welsh immersion unit.

The Chair noted thanks to all staff in the Education Directorate.

WBO2 Enabling our Residents to Thrive

Cabinet Member Councillor E. Forehead (Social Care) introduced the second Well-being objective 'Enabling our Residents to Thrive.'

A Member queried how the community and voluntary sector were enabled to support residents. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that cost-of-living budgets and funding via the Regional Partnership Board had supported the voluntary sector within the County Borough over the last two years.

A Member highlighted the homeless figures following the 2020/21 census. The Member questioned if the 1,303 figure had now changed and also what proportion of this figure were children. If children were included in the figure, the Member also queried how they were doing in school. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that this information would be provided to Members following the meeting.

A Member enquired about plans for repurposing empty properties. The Deputy Chief Executive gave information on work as part of the Caerphilly Keys initiative, and the empty property team, with progress being made alongside the internal legal team. The Cabinet Member for Housing further advised Members that there were 954 empty properties in the County Borough and last year 100 were brought back into use due to the work of the empty property team.

The Chair noted thanks to all staff in the Social Services and Housing Directorate.

WBO3 Enabling our Communities to Thrive

Cabinet Member Councillor N. George (Corporate Services, Property and Highways) introduced the third Well-being objective 'Enabling our Communities to Thrive.'

A Member suggested that key data from a UK perspective was missing from this report. The Corporate Policy Manager advised that UK data was now available, and the points highlighted by the Member would be updated. The Chief Executive also provided assurances that the wider data set was being considered before a final report goes to Full Council.

A Member sought clarification on the improved access to public and other alternative modes of transport. The Corporate Director for Economy and Environment provided information on partnership working between Local Authorities, the WLGA and the Welsh Government, looking to achieve a sustainable model for bus service provision across Wales. It was also highlighted that bus passenger levels had still not returned to pre-COVID levels which is severely impacting financial sustainability.

The Chair noted thanks to all teams involved in this area of work.

WBO4 Enabling our Economy to Grow

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Councillor J. Pritchard (Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change) introduced the fourth Well-being objective 'Enabling our Economy to Grow.'

A Member requested a definition of what is meant by economic inactivity. The Head of Regeneration and Planning provided details on this matter and outlined how it applied to those who were eligible for work but are not working. It differed from those who were not in work but were seeking employment.

A Member raised the issue of using the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for rural communities. The Head of Regeneration and Planning gave details on a plethora of initiatives across the County Borough which were funded by £28M over a 3-year period. Objectives of the Rural Development Plan were also highlighted to Members.

A Member asked about assistance for businesses, especially in the north of the County Borough. The Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change outlined assistance available via the Caerphilly Enterprise Fund. It was emphasised that this funding was helping businesses across the County Borough. The Head of Regeneration

and Planning also highlighted the work of the Business Support Team within the regeneration service. The Council Leader gave Members additional information on the role of the Cardiff Capital Region and the jobs and prosperity created as a result. In the most recent report, the region had experienced the largest economic growth in the UK outside of London. Members also heard about the work being done under the Northern Valleys Initiative.

A Member enquired about support available for the economically inactive, in particular for those over 24 years old, and the challenges around transport to attend job fayres in the five principal towns. The Head of Regeneration and Planning gave details on the work of the Employability Team who provided advice and support on a one-to-one basis across the County Borough. Members were advised that the location of future jobs fayres would be considered, and information would be provided to Members. Members were also referred to the adult education programmes availability and locations.

A Member queried the employment availability for those seeking employment on a flexible-hours basis. The Head of Regeneration and Planning provided information on the work done by the employment team and business liaison officers with recruiters, to facilitate this need. Members were advised to refer any residents having difficulties finding suitable employment, and wishing to seek assistance and advice, to the employment team.

WBO5 Enabling our Environment to be Greener

Cabinet Member Councillor C. Morgan (Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces) introduced the fifth Well-being objective 'Enabling our Environment to be Greener.'

A Member commented on the wording of the outcomes and the way they were written in a look back tense e.g., 'we will' and the subsequent methods of measuring performance. It was the Member's view that targets should be set and then eventually measured against performance indicators. This facility was missing in the report according to the Member. The Member also believed that some of the objectives in the Plan might not be reached in the future due to the financial challenges faced. The Chief Executive assured Members that they would be receiving updates on the Corporate Plan before 2028. Members heard how there was a suite of performance measures which would be reported on annually.

A Member enquired if the "Nature isn't Neat" initiative was going to be reviewed. The Corporate Director for Economy and Environment advised that a Members' Seminar on Grass-Cutting Regimes would be taking place next month to discuss lessons learnt and forward delivery.

The Joint Scrutiny Committee reviewed and discussed the draft Corporate Plan (2023-2028), and it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 38 For, 0 Against, and 1 Abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet and Council:

The draft Corporate Plan (2023-2028) be considered.

The meeting closed at 6.51 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 15th January 2024.

CHAIR