



CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 14TH MAY 2024 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor G. Johnston - Chair
Councillor A. McConnell - Vice Chair

Councillors:

M. Adams, G. Enright, C. Forehead, A. Gair, L. Jeremiah, J. Jones, C. Mann, M. Powell, D. W. R. Preece, C. Thomas, L. Whittle, and C. Wright

Cabinet Members:

Cabinet Members: Councillors P. Leonard (Planning and Public Protection), Councillor N. George (Corporate Services, Property and Highways) and Councillor J. Pritchard (Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change)

Together with:

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services), M. S. Williams (Director for Economy and Environment), L. Lucas (Head of Customer and Digital Services), I. Evans (Procurement and Information Manager), R. Roberts (Business Improvement Manager), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), A. Dallimore (Regeneration Services Manager), I. Raymond (Principal Project Officer), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), and A. Jones (Committee Services Officer).

Also in Attendance:

Sara-Jayne Byrne (Audit Wales) and Jason Williams (Audit Wales).

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 J. Fussell, D. Harse, S. Kent, W. Williams, and E. Stenner

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 20TH FEBRUARY 2024

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th February 2024 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal votes (and in noting there were 11 for, 0 against and 0 abstention) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 20th February 2024 (minute nos. 1 – 7) be approved as a correct record.

4. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

5. CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report, which outlined details of the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period May 2024 to March 2025.

An additional report for the 25th June had been added to the Forward Work Program which was the Revised Performance Management Framework report.

It was moved and seconded that the report recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal votes (and in noting there were 12 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions), this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers be published on the Council's website.

6. CABINET REPORTS

There had been no requests for any of the Cabinet reports to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

7. USE OF PERFORMANCE INFORMATION AND SERVICE USER PERSPECTIVE AND OUTCOMES REPORT FROM AUDIT WALES

The Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change introduced the report from Audit Wales, which was issued in February 2024. A summary of the report was provided to the Committee which advised that Audit Wales conducted a review across each Authority of how service user perspective and outcome information is provided to senior leaders and how the information is used in performance reporting. The review used the performance reporting through the Directorate Performance Assessment as its evidence base.

The report showed that Audit Wales focused on the performance information provided to senior officers and senior members (senior leaders) about service user perspective and outcomes, and how this information was used. Audit Wales had not undertaken a full review of the Council's performance management arrangements or an in-depth review of the quality of the data that the Council collects. Neither did the review focus on engagement with service users on specific service changes or the development of policies and strategies.

The high-level summary from the review was that "Overall, Audit Wales found that the Council provided limited performance information to enable senior leaders to understand the perspective of service users and the outcomes of its activities and thus, effectively manage its performance" The report was attached as appendix A

Audit Wales made three recommendations for improvement as noted in paragraph 5.4 and the Council's Organisational Response Form (ORF) was attached as appendix B.

Audit Wales introduced themselves and advised the Committee that the report had been carried out for all 22 Councils in Wales and that a National Report would be published over the next month or two. The conclusion of the National report would be that Councils look to address the recommendations issued by Audit Wales and would emphasise the importance of looking at information about outcomes from a service user perspective. The National Report would underline the importance of information to help senior leaders determine whether or not they are achieving Corporate objectives.

A presentation from Audit Wales was given to the Committee which outlined the work undertaken with the review and the findings which influenced the recommendations within the report.

The Director for Education and Corporate Services acknowledged that the matter under discussion had been a challenging piece of work across Wales for Audit Wales and acknowledged that all Councils faced similar challenges, and that this report demonstrated where improvements could be made.

Members were advised that the review was from a relatively narrow area of the Councils performance information, looking into the Directorate Performance Assessments (DPA's), and interviews. Areas that did not form part of the review were discussed with Audit Wales and examples of good practices were given, for example in Education where the Council had built and embedded a Management Evaluation System (MES). Audit Wales had accepted the areas of good practice; however, concluded that this approach was not consistent across the whole authority. But it was recognised that there were lessons that could be learnt from this approach which would strengthen overall performance.

The last recommendation from Audit Wales had been queried due to the accuracy of data, Audit Wales had acknowledged challenges with validating such data. Members heard how about the authentication work of the Council's performance team such as triangulating and checking the data that comes through the Directorate Performance Assessments

(DPA's) and also presenting for consideration at meetings of the Management Team, Joint Scrutiny, internal Audit and Cabinet.

The Corporate Director confirmed that he felt comfortable with the arrangement as they currently stood, and that further testing of aspects identified would strengthen things further. Audit Wales were thanked for the supportive work with the Council which resulted in the balanced report under discussion. Members were advised that the Performance Management Framework would be shared in due course.

A Member sought clarification on who the senior leaders referred to in the report were, why there was little recognition of the value of performance indicators in the report, and why the Council did not seem to be learning from other organisations. It was confirmed that Senior Leaders were Senior Members and Officers who regularly meet to receive and consider corporate performance information. The Director for Education and Corporate Services confirmed that it was important to note that the DPA's were not the only documents used to determine the Council's performance and what needed adjusting. In relation to learning from other organisations Members heard how this was not the purpose of the DPA's, but it was something the Council did every day through the Mobilising Team Caerphilly programme.

A Member commented that there was a lot more going on within the organisation besides Education and asked did that mean that there were a lot of other areas where this was not happening.

Audit Wales confirmed that they had looked at the public performance reports and mechanisms that the Council used to manage and monitor performance. The report showed examples in Education and other service areas. The Committee were advised that Audit Wales had constructive conversations with Caerphilly County Borough Council about this piece of analytical work and were assured about the responses provided and were now keen to see what improvements the Council makes on the back of these discussions. Audit Wales did not find that there was a huge amount of information outside of Education that would help the Council understand things like outcomes and the perspective of service users. Members were advised that the national report would go into this aspect in more detail. Members heard how the picture across Wales was quite similar to that in Caerphilly and it was hoped that this piece of work would really kickstart things and shine a light on improvements required.

A Member sought confirmation as to whether this was the first time the Council had been audited on this subject and asked if two audit committees over the next 12 months was sufficient to look at these issues. The Chair confirmed that there was an audit committee in June and then it would go through the audit regulator.

Clarification was sought by a Member on who the service users were in relation to Education. It was confirmed that there were multiple stakeholders, and each have a view. The process developed and used within Education with all stakeholders was explained by the Director for Education and Corporate Services. It was confirmed that this works well in Education and following discussions, Audit Wales had suggested that the Council considers rolling that out this approach across other areas. The Director confirmed that he was happy to sit down with the Member and go through the process. The Member thanked the Director for the offer.

Following consideration of the report the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

1 Reviewed and noted the report as presented by Audit Wales.

2 Actions to address the recommendations for improvement would be monitored by Governance and Audit Committee through the 'Regulator Tracker'.

8. PROCUREMENT REFORM

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Property and Highways introduced the report which provided the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee with an update in relation to the UK Central Government and Welsh Government procurement reform agendas.

The Procurement and Information Manager explained that there were three separate legislative requirements for Wales which would be coming into force to support the procurement reform agenda, each playing an important part of the new regime within Wales. In terms of consolidating previous legislation such as utilities and defence into one Act for Wales, the interaction and alignment to Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and how the Council procures Health and certain Social Care Services. Members were advised that there are subtle differences between Wales and the wider UK. The UK and Welsh Government have recently confirmed that they were working towards a 'go-live' date for the new regime of Monday 28th October 2024. This announcement triggered the six month pre-implementation phase for Contracting Authorities such as Caerphilly County Borough Council to prepare for the new procurement regime in Wales. The report set out the overarching requirements of the new legislation and fully summarised the report in a presentation.

The Chair sought confirmation as to whether the latest changes being brought in would be a good thing for the Council. It was confirmed that the new legislation was positive, providing flexibility to deliver effective public services. Members heard how the procurement team were a mature procurement function and were in a good position to meet the requirements of the new legislation, however there was need for change in terms of transparency of procurement within the wider organisation. Officers have worked with Government organisations in the pre-legislation consultation to ensure views were reflected in the introduction of the legislation. Staff within the procurement team have already undertaken training and would continue to undertake training opportunities as they become available. Transparency is a key aspect of the legislation therefore the use of the current Council's contracts register would be paramount. It would be vital that all services complete the contracts register to ensure that the supply chain has full knowledge of the Council's forward work plan and pipeline of future procurements.

Clarification was sought on whether the changes would allow the Council to procure things locally rather than going overseas. Members were advised that where possible the Council would seek to source locally, but for items such as laptops for example there would be a reliance on global supply chains.

A Member enquired if the Council was on target for the implementation of the new legislation in October and asked how any updates would be reported back. Officers confirmed that the Council was on target to meet the requirements of the legislation in October 2024. Training would be provided as required to the wider organisation outside of the procurement team. Sessions with Leadership, Management network were already planned and would be supported by Welsh Government. The Council's E-procurement provider – Proactis are fully engaged with the new legislation and would ensure the eprocurement solution used within the Council meets the requirements set out by the legislation. Officers confirmed that any updates would be reported back to the relevant Committees. It was also confirmed that deployment of the new legislation would be monitored through the Mobilising Team Caerphilly programme.

Members were advised that the Council was in a good position in relation to the legislation however there is a clear dependency on Welsh Government completing the necessary secondary legislation and guidance documents. Officers outlined how Welsh Government would have monitoring panels in place to monitor the deployment of the legislation and co-ordinate reporting requirements. Welsh Government has recently launched the electronic community of best practice, "Cyd" which would provide online tools to support procurement teams with the introduction of best practices but also lessons learnt and advice on the legislation.

A Member referred to item 2.2 of the report regarding small businesses competing for public contracts and asked if this would make it easier for them. It was confirmed that existing procurement rules had never prohibited small businesses in the County Borough and officers could not see any issues going forward. Members were told that the Council had Supplier Relationship Officers who advised on contracts and approaches to strategies with the local supply chain. Officers confirmed that the Council would continue assisting the local supply chain with the new regulations going forward.

A query was raised on whether or not the changes would make it easier to take tougher measures on underperforming suppliers. Members were advised that the Council had always taken action against underperforming suppliers and that this monitoring would continue when the new rules were in place.

Following consideration of the report the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee NOTED.

1 The current status of the UK Central Government and Welsh Government procurement reform agendas via the three new separate legislative requirements.

2 The Council's approach to implementing the new procurement regime.

9. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND – 6 MONTHLY MONITORING UPDATE REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change introduced the report to the Committee and advised that it was an update on the delivery of the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) within the County Borough as part of the UK Government's "Levelling Up" programme. A power point presentation had been circulated to members prior to the meeting and the Cabinet Member presented the summarised report to the Committee.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for the presentation and for all the hard work he had done with the events highlighted.

A Member queried the accuracy of the footfall data as the cameras were at a fixed location and could have multiple people walking back and forth, meaning that those would be double counted, and would therefore not be a true reflection of the footfall figures and requested that this be investigated.

The Cabinet Member thanked both Members for their comments and confirmed that the events were extremely popular and placed his thanks on record to the residents and businesses for working so proactively with the Council to ensure that events go ahead. In relation to the footfall query the comments were taken onboard and the Cabinet Member confirmed that it would be looked at by Officers.

The Regeneration Services Manager confirmed that the technology is outdated, and that contracts were due to be renewed on the footfall counters. An alternative way of measuring footfall was also being looked such as the better use of mobile phone technology. Members were advised that the Council was exploring the use of Wi-Fi capabilities in town centres to get better measures of footfall in our towns.

Following consideration of the report the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee NOTED.

1 The detail of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund update and six monthly monitoring report and the opportunities for the programme to contribute to the Council's own Place Shaping, Transformation and Regeneration agendas.

2 Recognise the progress officers and stakeholders have made in mobilising a significant investment programme within the time constraints afforded by the funding programme.

The meeting closed at 18:56 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 25th June 2024.

CHAIR