

## PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 21 February 2013 at 10.00 am.

### PRESENT

Councillors Meirick Davies, Richard Davies, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Colin Hughes (Chair), Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Arwel Roberts (Vice-Chair) and Gareth Sandilands

**Observers:** Councillors Gwyneth Kensler and Win Mullen-James

### ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director Economic and Community Ambition (RM); Head of Customers and Education Support (JW); Head of Internal Audit Services (IB); Corporate Improvement Manager (TW); Corporate Improvement Officers (NK & EM); Fleet Manager (GT); Scrutiny Coordinator (RE), and Committee Administrator (KEJ).

#### 1 APOLOGIES

Councillors Ian Armstrong and Peter Owen

#### 2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declaration of personal or prejudicial interest had been raised

#### 3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters had been raised

#### 4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held on 10 January 2013 were submitted.

***RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2013 be received and approved as a correct record.*

#### 5 PERFORMANCE STANDARDS REVEALED THROUGH THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The Head of Customers and Education Support (H:CES) submitted a report (previously circulated) presenting an analysis of the feedback received via Denbighshire's customer feedback policy 'Your Voice' for Quarter 3 of 2012/13. It was highlighted that –

- the Council had responded to 89% (160/179) of complaints within timescale against a target of 95%, which was an improvement of 4% on the previous quarter 2

- 210 compliments had been received during quarter 3 and a breakdown relating to individual services had been provided over the current year, and
- detailed performance relating to individual service areas for the current year in terms of response times to the number of complaints received were included in the report.

With a view to further improving performance the Corporate Director Customers had contacted Heads of Service requesting attention be focused on complaints handling. The H:CES elaborated upon performance of individual services advising that the drop in performance identified for Highways & Infrastructure was being addressed by the new Head of Service and performance had improved in January.

The committee considered their future reporting requirements in order to provide more meaningful data for scrutiny and identify areas for improvement to deliver the best possible services for customers. It was noted that current data focused on the volume of complaints and the H:CES suggested that future reporting should focus on the nature of complaints and identifying trends and patterns and whether services were addressing those issues in order to improve services. Contrary to the objective in the Corporate Plan to reduce the number of complaints, the H:CES felt complaints should be actively encouraged and addressed to effect improvement. She hoped to change the perception that complaints reflected badly on services and their reluctance to record complaints appropriately to ensure they were dealt with effectively. Members agreed with that approach and referred to the difficulties in identifying the reasons behind fluctuations in the number of complaints received and how well services were performing without that analysis.

During consideration of the report members discussed the following matters –

- the level of protection and anonymity afforded to complainants was queried and the H:CES advised that, whilst complaints against staff were dealt with separately via Personnel, it was unlikely that customer complaints would be concealed and attitudes to complaints needed to change to perceive the complaint as a positive means of effecting improvement
- in response to concerns regarding poor performance in Social Services, members were advised that the Corporate Director Modernisation and Wellbeing was addressing the issue with a view to improving performance. Members acknowledged the difficult and complex complaints in this service area and the H:CES confirmed that, as such, those complaints were subject to a different criteria. She added that percentage figures sometimes distorted results when based upon a smaller number of complaints
- the H:CES confirmed there was an ongoing debate about whether some complaints were actually service requests and acknowledged that some complaints may not be recorded properly because of the perception that they would reflect badly on the service. It should be recognised that some services attracted more complaints because of the nature of the service provided
- members were pleased to note the number of compliments received during the year and whilst the H:CES could not provide the detail behind the figures she advised that compliments could be generated by proactively dealing with complaints

- the Chair expressed concern regarding the continual increase in complaints received by Environmental Services over the last three quarters and was disappointed that the reasons behind them could not be provided at this stage. He suggested this service area be one of the first to be analysed. The H:CES confirmed an analysis would identify any trends and steps taken to address any issues identified. She added that the volume of complaints needed to be considered in the context of service delivery which was not considered high for the particular service area.

In considering the way forward the H:CES referred to the forthcoming Members' Workshop on 5 March regarding the approach to providing excellent customer services. She advised that work was ongoing with services to find mechanisms to encourage customer feedback in order to shape services to meet customer requirements. The committee discussed the merits of establishing a Working Group to scrutinise data captured through complaints and customer feedback and it was agreed to consider the matter further following the workshop discussions.

The Chair referred to the need for a scrutiny representative to serve on both the 'Customers' and 'Legal and Democratic' Service Performance Challenge Groups and sought expressions of interest in that regard. The Scrutiny Co-ordinator added that scrutiny representatives on Service Challenge Groups would be best placed to contact relevant Heads of Service regarding performance concerns for individual services.

**RESOLVED** that –

- (a) subject to members' comments above the report be received and the performance of services be noted;*
- (b) future reporting be focused on analysing the nature of complaints and identifying trends and patterns and whether services were addressing those issues in order to improve services for customers, and*
- (c) Councillors Richard Davies and Colin Hughes be appointed the committee's representatives on the 'Customers' and 'Legal and Democratic' Service Performance Challenge Groups respectively.*

## **6 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER REVIEW, FEBRUARY 2013**

[A pre meeting briefing session had been held for committee members on Risk Management to aid with their scrutiny of this item]

The Corporate Improvement Manager (CIM) submitted a report (previously circulated) presenting the latest version of the Corporate Risk Register which detailed the major risks currently facing the Council together with actions to address those risks. By way of background the report detailed the process for reviewing the Register and the role of the Performance Scrutiny Committee in monitoring progress. Reference was also made to the role of Internal Audit in providing independent assurance on the mitigation and management of risk.

The CIM and Corporate Improvement Officer (CIO) elaborated upon each of the main changes to the Corporate Risk Register referenced within the report, clarifying issues and responding to members' questions on specific risks as follows –

- **DCC005** *'The risk that the time and effort invested in existing large-scale collaboration projects is disproportionate to the benefits realised'* – it was explained this risk had been removed because the projects were almost complete and project management had been strengthened. The two major collaboration projects referred to were the Regional Waste Project and Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service. Both projects would be included within their respective Service Risk Registers
- **DCC006** *'The risk that the economic environment worsens beyond current expectations, leading to additional demand on services and reduced income'* – Councillor Colin Hughes raised some concern regarding the downgrading of this risk because the subsidy from the Welsh Government for Council Tax Benefit had only been guaranteed for one year with the likelihood that the risk would increase. Officers confirmed that the financial climate was frequently changing and it remained a major risk which would be continually reviewed
- **DCC007** *'The risk that critical or confidential information is lost or disclosed'* – Councillor Gwyneth Kensler queried whether elected members were covered for the purpose of processing personal information in accordance with the Data Protection Act. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Co-ordinator be asked to clarify the position and report back thereon
- **DCC013** *'The risk of significant financial and reputational liabilities resulting from management of an Arm's Length organisation'* – the absence of an allocated Lead Member for this risk was noted and officers confirmed it was an oversight and advised that Councillor Huw Jones, Lead Member for Tourism, Leisure and Youth would likely be assigned to that risk.
- **DCC017** *'The risk that the impact of welfare reforms is more significant than anticipated'* – Councillor Meirick Davies queried whether DCC017 strictly met the definition of a risk within the Council's defined criteria. The CIM agreed that this risk did not fall strictly within the definition but it was a matter of significant importance and the Corporate Executive Team requested its inclusion together with DCC018 *'The risk that change/modernisation projects are not implemented as intended, hindering benefit realisation.'*

The Chair referred to his recent meeting with Mr. Gwilym Bury from the Wales Audit Office and referred to the positive Improvement Assessment Letter which had been issued. One of the two proposals for improvement highlighted the need for more information to be included on the status and outcomes of the Council's collaboration projects and concern had been expressed over the lack of methodology for corporate governance of such projects. Consequently the Chair queried whether this aspect should be considered a risk linked to **DCC015** *'The risk that the council cannot influence the collaboration agenda, and that further collaboration is forced upon us rather than entered into voluntarily'*. The Corporate Director Economic and Community Ambition reported upon the framework and processes to be adopted before entering into collaboration to mitigate governance issues which may also be covered in service plans on an individual basis. She agreed to raise the issue at CET as to whether it should be reflected as a corporate risk. Reference was also

made to a review of progress with the Compact and encouraging collaboration which would be reported back to members. The Head of Internal Audit Services advised that the framework had been introduced after the earlier collaboration projects and Internal Audit would be reviewing more recent projects to check whether the guidance was being adhered to. The CIM added that if governance around collaboration was considered weak it would be an issue to be dealt with as opposed to referenced within the Corporate Risk Register.

**RESOLVED** that the committee –

- (a) *notes the deletions, additions and amendments to the Corporate Risk Register, and*
- (b) *subject to clarification on the governance issue raised around collaboration, confirms that the Corporate Risk Register provides full coverage of the major risks facing the Council at this time and that the actions identified in the Corporate Risk Register were appropriate to address the identified risks.*

At this juncture (11.10 a.m.) the committee adjourned for a refreshment break.

## **7 CORPORATE PLAN 2012 - 17 BASELINE REPORT**

The Corporate Improvement Manager (CIM) submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking members' consideration of the draft baseline report for the Corporate Plan 2012 – 17 including measures used for monitoring delivery of the Plan and the baseline position as at 1 April 2012.

In guiding members through the report, the CIM provided some background information to the performance management process and reported upon the work carried out to date in defining the corporate priorities and determining which indicators and performance measures to use. [The priorities relating to 'Developing the Local Economy' and 'Modernising the Council' were currently being developed and would feature in the next performance report.] Comparison of performance reports against the baseline would be undertaken in order to evaluate progress in delivering outcomes in the Corporate Plan. An explanation of the Council's strategy for setting "excellence thresholds" and "interventions" for each indicator and performance measure was also provided in order to put performance into context.

Members noted the difficulties in deciding which indicators and performance measures should be used, particularly where performance measures could not be benchmarked against other councils in Wales. They also accepted the rationale to only use relevant national indicators and to use different benchmarking groups if Wales was not deemed to be the most appropriate comparator for a particular indicator or performance measure in order to provide meaningful data. In response to a question from Councillor Gwyneth Kensler, the CIM confirmed that the Council responded to the annual consultation on national indicator sets in terms of relevance and usefulness but only minor changes had been made to indicators as a result.

In response to questions the CIM and the Corporate Improvement Officer (CIO) elaborated upon some of the benchmarked illustrations used within the report, clarifying that the fluctuations reflected the changes to the Council's position compared to other Welsh authorities over previous years. The Council's default position was that being in the top quarter of councils in Wales was "excellent" and being in the bottom half became a "priority for improvement" and that status had been colour coded accordingly within the report for ease of reference. The CIO added that the new ranking of Welsh authorities would be available in August which would enable the Council to reassess its position at that time.

Councillor Arwel Roberts queried the research being undertaken by Glyndwr University regarding the indicators to be used for the priority to ensure access to good quality housing. The CIM advised that the Council had been working with the University to develop data sets in order to provide the necessary indicators. The intention was to provide a measure of the current supply of social housing, affordable housing and market housing together with a measure of housing need and pent-up demand. The Chair mentioned work the university was undertaking in his ward where there was a high concentration of social housing looking at community facilities, open space, size of gardens and reported upon a meeting he would be attending on 4 March.

The committee considered future reporting arrangements and agreed to establish a Corporate Plan Performance Management Sub-Group to examine in detail performance reports in advance of the main committee meeting. Members also agreed that a pre meeting briefing session be arranged before their next meeting on 11 April on the performance management framework and indicator thresholds.

**RESOLVED** that –

- (a) *the draft baseline report for the Corporate Plan 2012 – 17 be received and noted;*
- (b) *a Corporate Plan Performance Management Sub-Group be established consisting of Councillors Colin Hughes, Arwel Roberts and Gareth Sandilands to examine closely quarterly performance reports in advance of the main committee meeting, and*
- (c) *a pre meeting briefing session be arranged before the committee's next meeting on 11 April on the performance management framework and indicator thresholds.*

## **8 SPEED AND REV LIMITER PILOT**

The Fleet Manager (FM) submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking members' support in principle for implementing a pilot project to explore the feasibility of fitting speed limiting/rev counting devices to Council vehicles below 3.5 tonnes. Examples of organisations that had seen significant improvements in fuel efficiency from the use of such devices had been attached to the report (Appendix 1).

Members were advised that the new fuel management and fuel cards systems enabled a benefit analysis of new initiatives relating to fuel usage to be undertaken. Consequently a pilot project was proposed which involved fitting a device to each vehicle to control the top speed and how fast the engine could rev in order to reduce fuel usage, cost and carbon emissions. The trial would involve a cross section of vehicles in different services and a programme of training for drivers would also be required. Funding of £3000 for 10 units had been identified to cover the cost of the devices for the six month trial.

The committee welcomed the initiative and supported the implementation of a trial to assess the benefits and efficiencies of using such devices but sought assurances regarding the impact on both vehicles and drivers and how issues would be managed as a consequence. Members also felt that consideration should be given to efficient route planning to further increase fuel efficiencies. In response to members' questions and comments the FM –

- explained how the rev limiter would work in practice to ensure fuel was not wasted and confirmed that devices would be transferable at little cost; vehicle warranties would not be affected
- training would need to be provided in order to modify driver behaviour to ensure the vehicle was being driven efficiently and that drivers were aware of the impact of the device on their driving habits
- driver training would be provided in-house for the pilot therefore the cost would be minimal; if the pilot was successful and rolled out across the authority external training provision would likely be required.

During debate it was established that each council vehicle had a tracker fitted but it was the responsibility of individual service managers to manage their own transport fleets. Members expressed concern that managers were not seen to be managing fleet information effectively and highlighted the importance of monitoring vehicle speed and route planning to reduce fuel wastage and non-productive travel time.

Councillor Richard Davies commended the recent training provided by the FM which gave an insight into fleet management. He queried how the initial discussions with specific users had been received and the FT advised that concerns had been raised which should be overcome by training. In discussing the next steps the Corporate Director advised that the pilot project proposal would likely be submitted to the Senior Leadership Team for approval. Members considered the recommendation and Councillor Meirick Davies asked that the devices referred to be clarified within the resolution. Consequently it was –

***RESOLVED*** that implementing a pilot project to explore the feasibility of rolling out the fitting of speed/rev limiting devices to all Council vehicles below 3.5 tonnes be supported in principle.

## **9 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

A report by the Scrutiny Coordinator was submitted (previously circulated) seeking members' review of the committee's future work programme and providing an

update on relevant issues. Various appendices had also been attached to the report requiring members' consideration.

The Scrutiny Coordinator reported upon the development of the draft work programme detailing minor changes since its preparation together with details of provisional meeting dates for the next twelve months. Members discussed potential amendments to the work programme and various business items with officers and after consideration the committee –

- noted the date change of the committee meeting from 23 to 16 May
- accepted the two information reports contained within the information brief relating to the Local Authority Social Services Inspection Evaluation and Review 2011-12 and Wales Audit Office Improvement Assessment Letter
- reaffirmed that a pre meeting briefing/training session be held before the April meeting on performance management issues
- agreed that a report on the Review of the Service Challenge Process be submitted to the April meeting together with an information report on Corporate Self-Assessment
- agreed that the item relating to the Annual Council Reporting Framework (Appendix 2 to the report) be scheduled for May, and
- decided that the scope of the report on Cefndy Enterprises scheduled for May be widened to include the future direction and impact of the potential loss of DWP funding in line with the report scheduled for Cabinet in June.

**RESOLVED** that, subject to the amendments and agreements referred to above, the forward work programme as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

## 10 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

The Chair referred to a visit to Wrexham County Borough Council as part of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) Improvement Study on Scrutiny. The process involved a peer review with members and officers visiting committee meetings at another council and providing feedback. Wrexham Council's Homes, Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee had discussed library closures and apart from not aligning the report with their asset review, it was found to be operating well overall and not dissimilar to Denbighshire. The Scrutiny Coordinator added that another visit to a committee meeting would be made the following week and that a delegation from Flintshire County Council would also be visiting Denbighshire's next Communities Scrutiny Committee. The study was taking place at all councils across Wales with a report of the findings being made available by the WAO in the summer.

**RESOLVED** that the verbal report from the Chair regarding the visit to Wrexham County Borough Council's Home, Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting be noted.

The meeting concluded at 12.20 p.m.