

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 13 July 2017 at 11.15 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Ellie Chard, Ann Davies, Martyn Holland, Hugh Irving, Huw Jones (Chair), Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Bob Murray and Peter Scott

Cabinet Members – Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill and Councillor Richard Mainon attended at the Committee's invitation for items relating to their portfolio.

Observers – Councillor Huw Williams

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (MM), Strategic Planning Team Manager (NK), Scrutiny Co-ordinator (RE) and Committee Administrator (SJ).

1 APOLOGIES

No apologies were received.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No members declared any personal or prejudicial interests in any business identified to be considered at the meeting.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Nominations were sought for a Member to serve as the Committee's Vice Chair for the 2017/18 municipal year. Councillor Martyn Holland nominated Councillor Hugh Irving, seconded by Councillor Ann Davies. No other nominations were received and it was therefore;

RESOLVED that Councillor Hugh Irving be appointed as the Performance Scrutiny Committee's Vice Chair for the 2017/18 municipal year.

4 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters received.

5 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held on 16 March 2017 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 16 March 2017 be received and approved as a correct record.

6 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

In introducing the report (previously circulated) the Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets gave a brief overview of the risk register methodology and the relationship between individual service risk registers and the corporate risk register, including the process for escalating a risk from the service register to the corporate register and the de-escalation process. He explained that the Corporate Risk Register was revised on a twice yearly basis by Cabinet and the Corporate Executive Team (CET) prior to being presented to scrutiny for observations. During his introduction the Lead Member highlighted the main changes made to the register as listed in Appendix 1 to the report, explaining the reasons behind the amendments.

Responding to members' questions the Lead Member and the Strategic Planning Manager advised that:

- they supported the decision to remove risk DCC032 relating to local government reorganisation as the Welsh Government's (WG) Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government had made it clear that he would not be looking to change local government geographical boundaries within the foreseeable future, but would rather be looking to councils to work together in specified areas to deliver services on a regional basis. With the development of regional services new risks associated with them may be identified and appear on the corporate risk register in due course;
- DCC011 - the need to have contingency and resilience plans in place in the event of disasters, be they natural disasters or otherwise, had come to the forefront in recent weeks in the wake of terrorist attacks in the UK and the Grenfell Towers fire. The Council did have such plans and these would be tested in the near future in the form of a resilience and business continuity exercise. The proposed exercise would test the resilience of all aspects of the Council's infrastructure to deal with a disaster situation and the subsequent recovery;
- as part of the Council's contingency planning work officers were currently undertaking a checking exercise to ensure that the Council was fully aware of all individuals residing in its housing stock properties;
- the Council's IT Service had successfully responded to the recent cyber-attack on the National Health Service's (NHS) computer system;
- all CET members and a number of Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members were trained to 'gold command' emergency planning level standard, with middle managers having attained 'silver command' competencies;
- North Wales had a joint regional Emergency Planning Service to respond to sudden disasters. All local authorities, emergency services and the health service worked closely with this regional service;
- In view of the recent announcement that the Council's Corporate Director: Economy and Public Realm would be leaving the authority in the near future the Council's capacity and skills as outlined in risk DCC030 would be tested during the forthcoming months; and
- Building resilient communities to mitigate the risks identified in relation to DCC033, '*the risk that the cost of care will outstrip the Council's resource*', would take time. In the meantime mitigating actions, including supporting

independence and developing extra-care housing were being delivered. Due to the time required to deliver objectives relating to this the risk score associated with it had not been downgraded.

Members stressed the importance of ensuring that business continuity and resilience information was easily accessible to all staff at all times, and that staff members were regularly advised on where the information could be found, particularly in the event of an emergency.

In response to points raised during the discussion the Lead Member and officers undertook to:

- ensure that the next review report contained coloured charts for all 'corporate risks' as no illustration had been included for at least one 'risk' (DCC016) in the current version; and
- seek assurances from the North Wales Emergency Planning Service that in addition to having plans in place for local authorities, emergency services and voluntary services within the North Wales region to work together in emergency situations, that they also had plans in place to call on assistance from other regions in Wales, the North West and West Midlands areas of England, if required.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee:

Resolved: - subject to the above observations and the provision of the requested information, to note the deletions, additions and amendments to the Corporate Risk Register.

7 CORPORATE PLAN (Q4)

Introducing the report (previously circulated) to the Committee the Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Assets advised that the report was now a historical report as the term of the Corporate Plan had ended with the term of the previous Council. A summary of the Plan's delivery during its final year had been reported to County Council in May 2017. A member workshop had been held recently to formulate the new Council's corporate priorities and the draft new Corporate Plan for the Council term 2017-2022 would be presented to County Council for approval during the autumn. During his introduction the Lead Member advised that it was pleasing to report that all outcomes in the 2012-17 Corporate Plan had been delivered to at least an acceptable level. He explained that the Council had set itself a very ambitious target for education indicators, it had set itself an excellence threshold and aimed to be best in Wales. Nevertheless, achieving this was not wholly within its control as school improvement work was now within the control of GwE. Denbighshire was also performing well in areas such as the condition of its roads, clean and tidy streets and the protection of vulnerable adults (POVA).

Responding to members' questions the Lead Member and officers:

- advised that some of the performance measures used to measure the Council's performance were national indicators, others were comparisons with similar local authorities known as 'family group' comparisons, and other

- performance conclusions were based on independent monitoring undertaken by external organisations such as 'Keep Wales Tidy';
- clarified the definitions 'deficit school places' and 'surplus school places', emphasising that generally there were insufficient school places in the north of the county and empty school places in south Denbighshire;
 - confirmed that the performance indicators (PIs) relating to cleanliness did not include weeds. Neither did it include alleys or walkways, which were areas that seemed to have problems with litter and dog fouling;
 - that whilst GwE was responsible for delivering school improvement services across North Wales, Head teachers and governing bodies should also be held accountable for their own school's overall performance. The School Standards Monitoring Group (SSMG) was due to be re-established in the near future. However, if Scrutiny wished, it could request individual Head teachers and Chairs of Governing Bodies to attend scrutiny to answer questions about their schools performance;
 - confirmed that they would enquire whether the Council's request to suspend 'The Right to Buy Scheme' in relation to its housing stock to Welsh Government (WG) had been granted and whether the new Service Manager for the Intake and Intervention Service had been appointed and had taken up post; and
 - confirmed that a report would be presented to County Council in the autumn on 'Long term empty properties and second home taxation', which could potentially help to bring empty homes back into use and ease housing pressures.

Members raised concerns in relation to problems which had recently come to light with the performance of the Council's weed spraying contractor and enquired whether the tendering and procurement process for this contract had been adequately robust. The Scrutiny Co-ordinator agreed to request further information from relevant officers with regards to this matter.

Concerns were also raised by members on the number of good teachers across the county which had taken up posts with GwE under secondment arrangements. They felt that this had a detrimental effect on individual schools' performance and on the county's overall performance in the field of education. The Chief Executive advised members that it was school governing bodies who granted permission to teachers to take up secondment opportunities not the County Council, therefore they had a duty to ensure that sufficient resources were in place to mitigate against the loss of experienced teachers and ensure that pupils' education and overall attainment were not in any way compromised. School governing bodies should be held to account for their decisions.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee:

Resolved: subject to enquiries being made in relation to the matters listed above, to receive the report on the Council's final overall performance in delivering its Corporate Plan 2012-17.

8 YOUR VOICE' COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE (Q4)

Due to the unplanned absence of the relevant officer the Committee deferred the presentation of this report until September's meeting. However, a number of queries were raised which the Scrutiny Co-ordinator agreed to follow-up with relevant officers, these being:

- the general trend over recent years for the number of complaints received to peak during Q1 of every year;
- the feasibility of including Ember Dashboard customer satisfaction/public opinion information in future quarterly 'Your Voice' reports to the Committee

The Vice-Chair requested the Committee to robustly challenge the data in the Your Voice reports and use it as a basis for developing its forward work programme with a view to further improve service delivery and outcomes for residents. It was:

Resolved: - *subject to the above queries being followed-up, to defer the presentation of the Your Voice Quarter 4 2016/17 report until the Committee's meeting on 28 September 2017.*

9 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A copy of a report by the Scrutiny Coordinator (SC), which requested the Committee to review and agree its forward work programme and which provided an update on relevant issues, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

A copy of the 'Member's proposal form' had been included in Appendix 2 the SC requested that any proposals be submitted to herself. The Cabinet Forward Work Programme had been included as Appendix 3, information and a table illustrating Service Challenge Groups was included as Appendix 4. The SC informed members that, for each of the 9 Service Challenge group's, a representative from Performance Scrutiny was sought to serve on the groups. In addition a representative was sought to serve on the Strategic Investment Group (SIG). Following discussions the Committee appointed the following:

Service:	Performance
Education and Children's Services – Karen Evans	Cllr. Ellie Chard
Community Support Services – Phil Gilroy	Cllr. Ann Davies
Legal, HR & Democratic Services – Gary Williams	tba
Business Improvement & Modernisation – Alan Smith	tba
Customers, Communications, & Marketing – Liz Grieve	Cllr. Hugh Irving
Facilities, Assets & Housing – Jamie Groves	Cllr. Geraint Lloyd-Williams
Finance – Richard Weigh	Cllr. Peter Scott
Highways & Environmental Services – Tony Ward	Cllr. Martyn Holland
Planning & Public Protection – Graham Boase	Cllr. Bob Murray (tbc)

Strategic Investment Group	Cllr. Huw Jones
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Members' requested that information be provided to them, ahead of September's meeting on:

- the percentage of teaching assistants across the County which were being utilised as teachers to cover staff shortages;
- absenteeism rates (both authorised and unauthorised) for each individual primary and secondary school in the county during the 2015/15 and 2016/17 academic years; and
- the role of local education authority (LEA) governors on school governing bodies

Resolved:

- (i) that, following consideration of Denbighshire pupils' provisional external examination results and teacher assessments report and other associated education related matters at the Committee's September meeting, consideration is given to inviting head teachers and chairs of governing bodies to future committee meetings to discuss their plans to improve outcomes; and***
- (ii) if the Council had been granted permission to suspend its 'Right to Buy' scheme, that a report on the impact and effectiveness of this decision on the availability of properties within the Council's housing stock be presented to the Committee in twelve months' time***

10 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

No relevant meetings had been held since the Committee's last meeting for members to feedback to the Committee on the discussions.

The meeting concluded at 13:00 pm.