

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 12 June 2014 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Meirick Davies, Richard Davies, Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Dewi Owens, Arwel Roberts (Vice-Chair) and Gareth Sandilands.

Lead Member attendance requested by the Committee:- Councillors R.L. Feeley, H.C. Irving, B.A. Smith and J. Thompson-Hill.

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (MM), Director of Social Services (NS), Head of Internal Audit (IB), Head of Customers and Education Support (JW), Principal Manager: Business Support (TW), Property Manager (DL), Corporate Improvement Officer (NK), Corporate Complaints Officer (COG), Scrutiny Co-ordinator (RE) and Administrative Officer (CIW).

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Colin Hughes, Peter Owen and David Simmons

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

***RESOLVED** – that Councillor A. Roberts be appointed Vice Chair for the ensuing year.*

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor D. Simmons, the Vice Chair, Councillor A. Roberts, took the Chair for the meeting. The Committee's best wishes were conveyed to Councillor D. Simmons for a full and speedy recovery.

3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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

4 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No items were raised which in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

5 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 1st May, 2014 were submitted.

Matters arising:-

5. Corporate Health and Safety Annual Report - Members were informed that it had been agreed that it would not be appropriate for Civica to be invited to the July meeting of the Committee to discuss Health and Safety incident reporting problems. A report would be presented to the meeting by Council officers outlining the problems encountered and the steps being taken to rectify them.

RESOLVED – *that, subject to the above, the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.*

6 YOUR VOICE COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 4

A copy of a report by the Head of Customers and Education Support (HCES), which provided an overview of the feedback received via Denbighshire County Council's customer feedback policy 'Your Voice' and via the statutory social services procedure during Q4 2013/14, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The report provided information regarding performance issues in dealing with complaints. The headlines for Q4 had been provided, with the Appendices for the report giving further details. The Corporate Complaints Officer (CCO) detailed the main headlines included in the report.

The HCES responded to questions from Members and confirmed that for 2014/15 onwards the 'other' categorisation for complaints would be obsolete. All future complaints would be allocated to one of the Council's services even if the complaint crossed two or more Council services. The allocation would be done following discussions with the respective heads of services.

Following a discussion on the CRM Service and the EMMA service, and understanding that a high number of Councillors were not using the EMMA system, Councillor Richard Davies agreed to work with the Head of Customers and Education Support with a view to increasing Member engagement with the new system. The Head of Service advised that a session on EMMA would be held for all Members following a future County Council meeting.

The Head of Internal Audit clarified the Corporate Governance Committee's role with respect to the twice yearly report on the complaints process to that Committee and advised Scrutiny that its role was to examine and monitor areas of concern within services which were identified through the complaints process.

In response to a suggestion from Councillor M.LI. Davies, the HCES agreed that the Committee could receive monthly information reports on Services' performance in dealing with complaints. The monthly reports would then be used to inform the contents of the quarterly reports to the Committee, with those reports concentrating on one or two service areas of greatest concern. It was explained that this would assist services to improve their performance in dealing with complaints and with resolving problematic matters.

Following further detailed discussion it was:-

RESOLVED – that

- (a) subject to the above observations, the Committee receive the report on the performance of services in dealing with customer complaints, and
- (b) the Committee receive monthly information reports on Services' performance in dealing with complaints and that these monthly reports inform the contents of the quarterly reports to the Committee, with those reports concentrating on one or two service areas of greatest concern.

7 CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 4 - 2013/14

A copy of a report by the Head of Business, Planning and Performance (HBPP), which provided an update on the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2012-17 at the end of quarter 4 of 2013/14, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The CIM introduced the report which emphasised the need for members and officers to understand the progress made with the delivery of the Corporate Plan (CP) outcomes. Regular reporting was an essential monitoring requirement of the CP to ensure that the Council exercised its duty to improve.

A summary of the fourteen outcomes in the CP had been presented in the Appendix to the report. The report showed acceptable progress was being made in delivering the CP. This was the third year of the 5-year CP and it had been recognised that some areas for improvement would take longer to achieve than others. However, it was understood what the improvement journey should look like and this had been incorporated into the analysis within the report.

Some of the key performance exceptions to be found in the CP for Q4 had been included in the report and were summarised for the Committee. A full report of all 7 Priorities in the CP had been included in the Appendix.

Members discussed the Council's performance in delivering its Corporate Plan up to the end of the 2013/14 financial year. Discussions took place around the Economic and Community Ambition Board's decision to streamline the number of projects and indicators relating to developing the local economy. The rationale being that it would be better to focus efforts and resources towards delivering good quality sustainable projects rather than a greater number of smaller less effective projects.

Officers advised that large scale transport projects, such as the electrification of the North Wales coast railway were now being driven by Welsh Government (WG) and therefore it would not be a good use of scarce resources to duplicate this work, particularly as the Leader of each Council served on the WG's Taskforce. Dialogue had also taken place around the sites earmarked for development in future and current brownfield sites.

Members raised concerns with respect to the drop in the Council's performance in reducing the number of young people not in Education, Employment or Training

(NEET). Whilst this had been given a priority status the Committee felt that it would be important to examine the matter more closely.

The quality of the Council's highways was discussed, particular reference being made to rural roads and the implementation of its dropped kerb strategy. With regards to the perceived performance in dealing with incidents of fly tipping the HIA explained that he had contacted Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to discuss the anomaly relating to the recording of these incidents, NRW had confirmed that they would look at the matter. The Chair had also written to NRW on the matter.

Councillor R.L. Feeley advised that as Lead Member she had already arranged a meeting with the Head of Children and Family Services (HCFS) to discuss the performance relating to holding child protection conferences. It was emphasised that whilst the indicator may not have been met on every occasion that did not necessarily mean that the child's needs had not been met. Councillor Feeley agreed to feedback the result of her meeting with the Head of Service to Members.

A Working Group had been established with a view to increasing the availability of affordable housing in the County, and the recent implementation of a new sickness absence policy was anticipated to further improve performance in this area. For future reports Members asked that it be made clear that the report presented to them was in draft format and that sections in the main report referred to in the covering report be cross referenced accordingly.

Following detailed discussion the Committee:-

RESOLVED – *that subject to the above observations, to receive the Corporate Plan Performance report Quarter 4 2013/14 and request that a report be presented to it on the measures being taken by the Council with a view to reducing in future the number of young people classed as NEETs.*

8 AGRICULTURAL ESTATE STRATEGY

A copy of a report by the Property Manager (PM) on the development of a long term strategic plan for the Council's Agricultural Estate holdings and the governance issues for delivery of the strategy, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

Following the Committee's consideration of a report on the Estate in March, and in response to concerns raised at that meeting, the Agricultural Estate Working Group had met to discuss the development of a revised long term strategy on the basis of the Council's legal obligation to retain the estate, the identified purpose of the estate aligned to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Priorities and the Council's Economic and Community Ambition Strategy 2013/23. A copy of the reports considered by the Working Group had been included as an appendix to the report presented to the Committee.

The Working Group had resolved that the existing relocation and disposal programme should continue generating anticipated capital receipts of £1.3m by early 2015, and this effectively delivered the outcomes of the existing strategy. It

was also agreed that the remaining agricultural estate was far from sustainable given the levels of investment required to bring the buildings into a reasonable state of repair (circa £1.5 - £2Million) and, given the competing priorities for investment, the retention of a sizeable agricultural estate was not a viable option.

It had been agreed that the only realistic option was to continue with a prioritised and targeted disposal programme aligned to a focus on income generation and sustainability. Options on how this could be undertaken and information on the steps being taken to develop a new strategy for the Estate from April 2015 onwards were contained in the report and appendix.

Officers asked that any operational issues relating to the Estate be brought to the attention of Members should be reported to the Property Manager in the first instance for response and resolution.

In response to Members' questions the Lead Member for Finance and Assets and officers advised that whilst the Council did need capital receipts in order to deliver its Corporate Plan no decision had been taken to sell Agricultural Estate in its entirety. The Estate, like all other Council structural assets, had suffered from a lack of investment over a number of years and consequently a considerable amount of money would need to be spent to make them viable and fit for purpose again. Members emphasised the need to deal in a fair manner with tenants and those affected when disposing of any assets and of the need to consider the younger generation of farmers when devising a strategy for the Estate's future. The importance of retaining any land earmarked as surplus to requirement as agricultural land when disposing of it was emphasised.

Members referred to a report considered by the Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGGA) Rural Forum, titled 'Welsh County Farms: Way Forward Initiative' and officers confirmed that they intended to fully engage with the work which would be undertaken by Mr Charles Coates on the WLGGA Rural Forum's behalf. Concerns were raised that due to changes to the farming industry over a number of decades some of the Authority's farms were no longer viable. Historical tenancy agreements had also complicated matters due to some of them being lifetime tenancies which meant that tenants on 'starter-units' could not be compelled to move to bigger units once their business was established, this in turn had led to a shortage of starter units. Members stressed the need to develop a long term strategy for the Estate which would ensure its viability and make it sustainable for the future.

RESOLVED – *that subject to the above observations:-*

- (a) to note the contents of the report and endorse the short-term vision for the County's Agricultural Estate,*
- (b) that the draft long term strategy for the Agricultural Estate from April 2015 onwards be presented to the Committee in early 2015 for examination, and*
- (c) that a report on the Agricultural Estate's performance, including the number and location of holdings and capital receipts received to date and proposed investment strategy, be presented to the Committee in the autumn of 2014.*

9 DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

A copy of a report by the Director of Social Services, which summarised the effectiveness of the Authority's social care services and priorities for improvement, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The Committee considered the 2013/14 Annual Report, and congratulated the Service on its achievements and service delivery. The report demonstrated a clear understanding of the strengths and challenges faced, and enabled Members to scrutinise it prior to its submission to the CSSIW by the end of June.

The Council had continued to provide high quality social services during 2013/14, and achieved some excellent performance in areas that were important to the communities. Progress had been made with transforming social services in response to the challenges posed by the financial position and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. A number of areas had been identified where improvements needed to be made and plans were in place to address these issues.

Future plans and actions identified for Social Services would be delivered within existing budgets. However, some of the themes covered by the report, such as supporting independence and enhancing wellbeing need to be considered as corporate matters. This would mean ensuring that all services, for example housing, highways, planning, environmental services and leisure, were designed to optimise independence. Feedback from service users and carers about services had been utilised as part of the existing quality assurance system.

Reference was made to the New Work Connections Programme, which would shortly be coming to an end, the Principal Manager: Business Support (PMBS) agreed to circulate information highlighting the good work undertaken in the Programme.

Members raised questions regarding the relationship with the Health Service, including GPs. They were advised that the new Single Point of Access (SPoA) which would be a joint service was about to be launched and the Enhanced Care Service (EHS) (previously known as HECS) was now beginning to work well across the County, although more work would be required. It was also acknowledged that more work needed to be done also to support carers, which were an extremely valuable asset for the purpose of delivering care to the County's vulnerable people and investing in services for carers would assist the Authority to cut down on social care costs in the long-term. Services for carers had been highlighted in the report as one of the six areas which would require strengthening during the course of the forthcoming year.

Work was now underway with a view to changing the way services would be delivered in future, partly in light of limited funding but partly in response to service-user preferences for service delivery and their wish to remain independent. At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee:-

RESOLVED – to:-

- (a) commend the report as a clear account of performance in 2013/14, and
- (b) to request that the Scrutiny Coordinator schedule the areas highlighted in the report as 'Future Challenges' into the Committee's forward work programme over the forthcoming months.

10 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A copy of a report by the Scrutiny Coordinator, which requested the Committee to review and agree its Forward Work Programme and provided an update on relevant issues, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting. The Cabinet Forward Work Programme had been included as Appendix 2 and a table summarising recent Committee resolutions, and advising on progress with their implementation, had been attached at Appendix 3 to the report. Members were informed that the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group would meet on the 3rd July, 2014.

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme for future meetings, as detailed in Appendix 1, and the following amendments and additions were agreed for the following meetings:-

17th July, 2014:-

- A verbal report on the Adult Social Care Task and Finish Group be presented to the meeting by the Head of Adult and Business Service if the Group's work had been concluded by then.

2nd October, 2014:-

- Report on Looked after Children be included in the forward work programme for the meeting.

20th November, 2014:-

- Report on the Performance of the Agricultural Estate be included in the forward work programme for the meeting.
- An information report on New Library Performance Standards 2014/17 had been circulated with the Information Update for the meeting. Members agreed that a report in respect of this matter be included in the Committee's forward work programme in late 2014.

In reply to a question from Councillor M.LI. Davies, it was explained that a meeting would be convened between officers and Members to discuss the school transport policy. The Committee was informed that the issue could be referred to the Communities Scrutiny Committee for further consideration if required following the meeting already arranged

The Scrutiny Coordinator explained that all Scrutiny Committees had been asked to appoint or re-appoint representatives on to the Council's Service Challenge Groups. A complete list of Scrutiny representatives for 2013/14 had been included in

Appendix 4. The Committee considered its appointments for the forthcoming year and, subject to the following amendments, the list was agreed:-

- Housing and Community Development – Councillor M.LI. Davies be appointed as the Committee’s representative, with Councillor D. Owens as a substitute.
- Highways and Infrastructure - Councillor M.LI. Davies be appointed as the Committee’s representative with Councillor A. Roberts as a substitute.
- All other representatives to stay the same and Councillor R. J. Davies to become the substitute representative for Education

The Committee agreed that Councillor A. Roberts be re-appointed as its representative on the School Standards Monitoring Group (SSMG) for 2014/15, and Councillor C. Hughes be appointed as a substitute representative for 2014/15.

RESOLVED – that, subject to the above amendments and agreements, the Work Programme as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

11 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Councillors D. Owens and M.LI. Davies had recently been on a Service visit to the Registrar and Coroner's Service. Whilst they were extremely complimentary of the Services' work they had serious concerns with regard to safety and privacy aspects of the Registrar's Office in Rhyl. A request was made that the transfer of the Service to the ground floor of the Town Hall be expedited as soon as possible. The Chief Executive agreed that the concerns expressed would be investigated.

Councillor G. Sandilands confirmed that the Strategic Investment Group had met and discussed issues pertaining to the Nova Centre and Bowls Centre in Prestatyn and the all-weather pitch in Denbigh.

Councillor A Roberts advised that he had attended a meeting with Rhyl College and referred to the excellent work being undertaken.

Councillor G.Lloyd-Williams made reference to the increase in the number, and success, of sports events being held in Denbighshire.

RESOLVED – that the reports be received and the contents noted.

Meeting ended at 12.40 p.m.