

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held in BY VIDEO CONFERENCE on Thursday, 18 March 2021 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Ellie Chard, Hugh Irving (Vice-Chair), Bob Murray, Paul Penlington, Arwel Roberts (Chair), Peter Scott, Andrew Thomas and David Williams

Lead Member for Housing and Communities, Councillor Tony Thomas for agenda item 6.
Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment, Councillor Brian Jones for agenda item 5.

Lead member for Finance, Performance and Assets, Julian Thompson-Hill for agenda items 7 and 8.

Councillors Meirick Lloyd Davies and Emrys Wynne attended as observers.

ALSO PRESENT

Head of Highways and Environmental Services (TW), Waste and Recycling Manager (TD), The Head of Customers, Communication and Marketing (LG), Principal Librarian (BH), Strategic Planning and Performance Team Leader (IM), Strategic Planning and Performance Officer (EH), Scrutiny Coordinator (RhE) and Committee Administrator/Host (KJ).

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Martyn Holland and Geraint Lloyd-Williams.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters had been raised with the Chair prior to the meeting.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Performance Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28 January 2021 were submitted. The Committee:

Resolved: - to receive the minutes of the Performance Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28 January 2021 and approve them as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

No matters were raised in relation to the contents of the minutes.

5 TRADE WASTE AND RECYCLING REVIEW

The Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment, Councillor Brian Jones introduced the report (previously circulated) explaining that save for the interruption of the Covid-19 lockdown the residual waste service was working well and supported the report recommendations that the service continue to operate in the same way moving forward.

The Head of Highways and Environmental Services, Tony Ward reminded the Committee that the residual trade waste service had previously been outsourced to Veola in August 2018 with a commitment to review the service at Performance Scrutiny Committee once it had had time to embed. Appendix 1 to the report, compiled by Wrap Cymru, highlighted the success of the Service to date. It was intended to renew the contract when it expired in August 2021.

The Waste and Recycling Manager, Tara Dumas explained the rationale for keeping the trade waste recycling service in-house. The Authority were best placed for managing the source segregated waste that would be required in future to comply with the Environment Act which was already established practice on domestic rounds.

Collection of source segregated waste was expensive to deliver. However, the Authority could take advantage of the domestic round service to collect the larger 4 wheeled bins alongside the communal collections and smaller trolley boxes with the weekly domestic service, reducing the costs for businesses whilst allowing the Authority to recover their own costs.

Responding to Members' questions Officers advised:

- Current charges were fixed dependent on the size of the container.
- Recycling charges for businesses going forward had yet to be established.
- The Authority attracted a large volume of smaller businesses for their trade waste removal.
- Merging of the trade and domestic waste collection services would lessen the impact of the Authority's carbon footprint.
- A range of modifications had been made to the proposed household collections to avoid adverse impact on either rural locations or houses of multiple occupation / flats.
- Local Authorities were required to be transparent, publishing their pricing policies, whereas private business were not.
- There was a prospective collaboration project in progress with Conwy to renew the contract for managing household waste recycling centres.
- A re-use shop was being set up at the Rhyl recycling centre with the anticipation of opening in April/May 2021.
- A video of the working of the Shotton recycling plant was available and could be circulated to members.

It was proposed to arrange a site visit to view the segregation of waste at a recycling centre once Covid restrictions permitted visits to restart. The Waste and Recycling Manager suggested Parc Adfer, a waste to energy facility in Deeside that

had a purpose built visitor centre (closed during lockdown) that might be of interest to members.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their report and presentation.
The Committee:

Resolved: - having considered the tasks, targets and timescales set out in the 'Trade Waste and Recycling Delivery Plan' (Appendix 2) to support the Plan as a framework for delivering the key recommendations based on the findings of WRAP Cymru Trade Waste Review Report (Appendix 1)

6 LIBRARY SERVICE STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE

The Head of Customers, Communication and Marketing, Liz Grieve introduced the report (previously circulated) covering the financial year 2019/2020 that was also submitted to Welsh Government.

All 12 of the Core Entitlements had been met (appendix A referred). Of the 16 Quality Indicators 10 had targets. The limitations due to Covid-19 had impacted the Quality Indicators resulting in the removal of some of them. Discussions were ongoing as to how the performance for the year 2020/2021 could be assessed but would probably make for a more narrative report. Of the remaining 9 targets for 2019/2020; 7 were achieved in full, 1 in part and 1 had not achieved the target.

There was no significant change to the Welsh Government's review of Denbighshire County Council's Library Service. Denbighshire's commitment to health and wellbeing - active partnerships with Community Support Services, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and Third Sector bodies was noted and considered important going forward. As was the increased use of digital resources and focus on development of staff.

The Quality Indicator for Up-to-date and appropriate reading material had not been met. Whilst new materials were being acquired spending did not reach the target set by Welsh Government. The work undertaken by libraries and partnerships across North Wales meant that residents were not severely impacted by that.

Denbighshire had been ranked 1st (out of the 22 Welsh authorities) for the number of Welsh books borrowed per capita. Credit was given to the staff who were responsible for organising reading groups in both English and Welsh.

The Principal Librarian, Bethan Hughes updated the Committee on the role of libraries during the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns including:

- redeployment of staff to provide the Council's Proactive Calls service to shielding residents;
- expanding and promoting of the Digital Library – digital borrowing increased by 118%.
- switching the Bookstart team to an online service;

- introduction of an Order and Collect service for library books as restriction lifted;
- providing One Stop Shop services online and by phone;
- receipt of Welsh Government funding for a digital transformation project to reallocate small rooms within libraries to allow residents to book to participate in virtual meetings and
- training of library staff to hold events online.

The Committee were advised:

- in the return to normality customers would be continued to be supported to pay their bills by other (non-online) means outside the library.
- future plans included access links to the Archive Service and its information library;
- customers were referred and supported to access online digital services for the National Library of Wales;
- a conscious decision had been made (several years ago) to reduce the budget spent on new books and it was unlikely that would change in future as it was felt that the Service, through careful management, was able to meet readers' demands within the its limited resources;
- librarians had to consider popular books versus specialist subjects working within a budget. The advantage of working closely with North Wales' libraries was that specialist books could sometimes be sourced from other library services.

The Committee commended the work of the Libraries' staff.

It was:

Resolved: - subject to the above observations:

- (i) to receive and congratulate the Council's Library Service on its performance against the 6th Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards; and***
- (ii) that a further progress report be presented to the Committee in January 2022 on how the Service has performed against the annual Welsh Public Library Standards during 2020/21 and how it has adapted its service provision to meet residents' needs during the year.***

7 CORPORATE PLAN UPDATE QUARTER 3 2020-2021

The Lead Member Finance and Strategic Assets, Julian Thompson-Hill introduced the report (previously circulated) as the Council entered the final year of its Corporate Plan. He advised that Covid-19 had an impact on some elements of the Corporate Plan – mainly time slippage of projects being delivered.

The summary page generally reported good progress. Two priority areas remained a priority for improvement in regard to measures. The Council's default approach where national data was available was that performance above the upper quartile

was regarded as excellent, and performance below the median as a priority for improvement. If no national data was available, a local determination was made as to what constituted excellent performance or a priority for improvement.

The Strategic Planning and Performance Team Leader, Iolo McGregor advised that due to the Covid-19 lockdown the report was out of sequence to the usual order that members received it.

The two measures highlighted priority for improvement were ongoing:

- Connected Communities – which included Broadband availability throughout the county
- Young People - education data had been affected by the pandemic and it was extremely unlikely that there would be any detailed educational data available for some considerable length of time

The report also included information on how the Council had responded to Covid-19 and would continue to do so going forward.

The Strategic Planning and Performance Team Leader and Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets advised:

- The residents/stakeholders survey would be re-run to establish the priorities in the County to inform the next Corporate Plan.
- It was anticipated that there would be a rapid increase of building in housing portfolio in the near future.
- The results of the STAR housing survey undertaken with Council Tenants would be submitted to a Scrutiny Committee for examination in the near future.
- Members may want to use the information contained in the Corporate Plan Update to identify areas that required further scrutiny e.g. provision of affordable housing.
- The Corporate Plan period mirrored the Council term and
- The completion date for the Extra Care Housing Scheme in Denbigh – April 2021 – was on target.

The Committee:

Resolved: - subject to the above comments and observations to receive the report on the Council's performance in delivering its Corporate Plan 2017-22 during Quarter 3 of 2020-21.

8 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER REVIEW

The Lead member for Finance, Performance and Assets, Julian Thompson-Hill introduced the report (previously circulated). Summarising The Lead Member advised:

- There were no new risks identified since the last report

- Risk 46 - delivering the new Local Development Plan had been removed given the deadline extension from Welsh Government
- Risk 14 - health & safety had increased slightly given the residual effect of Covid-19
- Risk 44 – Ash Die Back updated to reflect that the Council was no longer seeking collaboration with other authorities and
- That, roughly 55% of Corporate Risks were inconsistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement.

The Strategic Planning and Performance Team Leader, Iolo McGregor (IM) told the Committee that it was an improved report on what was being considered in September 2020 reflecting on the first Covid-19 lockdown and Brexit. He went on to explain the concept of Risk Appetite and its use as a tool to consider whether the Authority was doing enough giving the following examples:

- Ash die Back was a fairly new problem with various unknowns such as; where all the trees were in the County, what harm they could cause and the likelihood of them falling on someone. Going forward investigations would answer and address those issues, subsequently reducing the risk involved with Ash die Back, heading more towards the Authority's level of Risk Appetite.
- The approach to Safeguarding's Risk Appetite was minimalist. However, the nature of Safeguarding meant it would never be in the Authority's control. Therefore, that risk would never align with the Council's Risk Appetite, regardless of ambition.

The Committee were advised that:

- In relation to the Risk Register the term 'Safeguarding' referred to protecting vulnerable citizens from harm (regardless of age)
- 'Priority for Improvement' was given to any measure that fell below the median requirement of Welsh Government.
- The Risk Register was reviewed 6 monthly, however each risk was delegated to an owner who monitored it consistently as did the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Cabinet also reviewed the Register on a six-monthly basis.

The Committee:

Resolved: - subject to the above to support and endorse the amendments made to the Corporate Risk Register (Appendix 1) during its recent six monthly review, including the status of each risk against the Council's Risk Appetite Statement (Appendix 2).

9 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator introduced the report (previously circulated) seeking Members' review of the Committee's work programme and providing an update on relevant issues. Members were reminded that the proposal form for scrutiny topics (appendix 2) should be completed for the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group to review and allocate items of business.

- Enquiries had been made with the relevant officers on whether the Director of Social Services Draft Annual Report would be available for presentation to the Committee at its next meeting on 29 April. The statutory requirement to publish the Annual Report in July 2020 had been waived by the Welsh Government due to pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Local authorities were expected to publish this report by the end of July 2021 to cover the 2019-20 and 2020-21 years. Officers had confirmed that the report would not be available in time for the April meeting but would be available for submission to the Committee's June meeting. The Committee agreed to this deferral, but asked that the April meeting date be held open in case an urgent item of business came forward for discussion.
- A request had been received from officers seeking the follow-up report on the Hafan Deg Centre in Rhyl to be deferred until the late summer of autumn of 2022 as the Centre had been unable to operate at anywhere near its expected capacity for the last 12 months because of COVID-19 restrictions. The contract for the Centre was up for renewal during the summer of 2021 therefore it was felt that the most appropriate time to monitor the Centre's effectiveness would be one year into a new contract when hopefully pandemic restrictions would have eased sufficiently to allow the operator to grow the business and services available there. Members agreed to the requested deferral.

It was:

Resolved: subject to the amendments agreed above to approve the Committee's forward work programme.

10 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

No feedback from representatives was submitted.

Meeting concluded at 12:20pm