

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Place and Corporate

Date: 9 July 2018

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors C Evans (Chair), M Al-Nuaimi, G Berry, J Clarke, M Cornelious, K Critchley, D Fouweather and J Richards

In Attendance: Councillor D Mayer (Cabinet Member Community and Resources) Paul Jones (Head of Streetscene and City Services), Keir Duffin (Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing), Gareth Price (Head of Law & Regulation), Owen James (Assistant Head of Finance - Technical and Development), Richard Leake (Strategic Procurement Officer), Emma Johnson, Rhys Cornwall (Head of People and Business Change) and Meryl Lawrence (Scrutiny Adviser)

Apologies: Councillors L Lacey

1 **Declarations of Interest**

None.

2 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 June 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2018 were **approved** as an accurate record of the meeting.

3 **Performance Update - Year End 2017-18**

Streetscene and City Services (Place)

Attendee:

- Paul Jones (Head of Streetscene and City Services)

The Cabinet Member for Streetscene had sent his apologies as he was unable to attend due to the need to attend another meeting at the same time.

The Head of Streetscene presented a brief overview to the Committee which included the following amber measures and advised that all other measures for the service area were green:

- **PAM/017 – Visits to Sports and Leisure Centres per 1000 population**

The original target had been set including visits to Newport LIVE and private facilities, but should have been calculated based upon only Newport LIVE visits. This measure would be amended to include only Newport Live facilities and visits to private gyms would not be counted.

- **STR/L/018 - % of municipal waste recycled at HWRC**
This measure had improved slightly but still short overall. There were plans to build a second site which would allow the Council to engage more with residents. Plans were in place to permanently reverse the entrance into the HWRC after temporarily reversing on the weekends which began in May and would be permanently changing shortly.
- **PAM/010 - Bi-monthly Cleanliness Inspections of highways & relevant land%**
This was slightly ahead of target but the last 2 months of the year had seen a significant drop due to the snow, as staff from the cleansing team switched to winter maintenance work and when the snow had been cleared drivers had been over the driver allowance, which had meant a drop in performance, however the figures were returning to normal.

Members asked the following:

- **PAM/030 – Municipal waste reused, recycled and composted**
It was queried why the target had been reduced to 58%? It was explained that there was slightly less garden waste the previous year due to the weather and that previously Councils had been able to include wood waste as recyclable, however this was no longer the case so the target had been reduced.
- **PAM/022 - % of principal C roads that are in over poor condition**
A Member asked why the target had increased to 7.40% this year but missed the previous year's target and only slightly improved this year. It was clarified that for this indicator the lower the percentage means better performance, as the target for the service area was to be below 7.40%.
- **PAM011 – Response Rates for removing reported Fly Tipping Incidents** Members commented that the score of 99.74% against the target of 97.00% was excellent and asked what response rates were acceptable? Members were advised that Councils were challenged to collect within 5 days but that the Service strives to respond quicker and in most cases completed within 2 days. The score was an improvement on the previous year and one of the best in Wales. It was clarified that where fly tipping was on private land there was a separate process and collection could take longer.
- Members discussed Highway infrastructure and the Welsh Government £20M investment that was beginning to impact, but asked whether there was anything positive to suggest that Newport could look towards further improvement in the mid-term future. Members were advised that it was estimated that if every road was brought up to par it would cost around £1.2 Billion. The extra investment would help with some roads, however unless there is external investment there it would be a problem to maintain all roads.
- **SCS/L/002 – Number of visitors to city parks, open spaces and coastal paths.**
Members queried how the precise figure was captured? It was advised that this was done via a mix of counters at some venues, samples and estimates.
- A Member praised the Cleansing Team for attending and removing waste reported on a Saturday. Another Member praised the Winter Maintenance Crew for their assistance in the snow.
- **STR/L/018 - % of municipal waste recycled at the HWRC** – Members queried the shortfall of achieving 59.77% against the target of 65.00%. The Head of Service advised that performance had improved from the previous years and this should increase once the permanent route change into the HWRC takes effect and staff would have more time to engage with the residents attending.
- Members asked if schools were being charged to recycle and would need to find extra money to recycle. Members were advised that the Council could not provide commercial

waste collections free of charge, however Wastesavers had previously subsidised schools for recycling but had now reduced their subsidy to 50%, and the more that Schools recycled the cheaper their waste collection.

The Chair thanked the Head of Streetscene and City Services for attending.

Regeneration Investment and Housing (Place)

Attendee:

- Keir Duffin (Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing)

The Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing advised the Committee that the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing had been advised that there was no need to attend where Red and Amber Measures had already been explained to the Committee and the position had not changed.

The Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing presented a brief overview to the Committee which included the following two Red measures:

- **PAM/013% of empty private properties brought back into use;**
- **PAM/014 Number of new homes created as a result of bringing empty properties back into use.**

as reported in the previous Quarter 3 Performance Report a review of the service was underway which would include consideration of new programmes and projects within this area. The Amber Measures in the Service Area had met their targets in the previous year so their targets had been increased to provide challenge to improve performance this year but these increased targets had been narrowly missed. All other measures were Green.

Members asked the following:

- **RIH/L/061 – Value of tourism (£ million)**
It was clarified that the Target for this performance measure was an error and should have read £300 not £3 and would be corrected. A Member stressed the importance of having a serious set of measures in place to monitor tourism, as it was important to the future economy.
- Members asked about the target setting for the service area's performance measures. Members were advised that the recent Red measures hadn't been met as against its comparators the Council was underperforming, but the service area was looking to improve performance. Targets for the Amber measures had been set to raise performance above the Welsh average and strive to exceed them and they had made some improvement since the previous year. The service area was examining areas where underachievement to look to implement change. Targets set had been successful but the results with empty homes had been disappointing.
- **PAM/016 (LCL/001b) Use of Public Library Services**
A Member queried whether the target of 3525 was correct on this Amber Measure. The Officer advised the Committee that he would double check the target figure for PAM/016 and provide a response after the meeting.
- **PAM/013% of empty private properties brought back into use**
A Member thought that that the Cabinet Member should be in attendance to answer questions and voiced concern that not much progress had been achieved on the performance of this measure which should be addressed as there are lots of people on the housing waiting list. There was a need to do more about empty private properties; a

change in the direction of travel on this measure was needed. The view was also expressed that the target was too low in for this measure. It was asked that these comments be forwarded to the Cabinet Member. The Head of Service accepted the comments about the performance against this measure and took responsibility for the performance, adding that the Cabinet Member had been advised not to attend where there was no new advice to provide to the Committee, and the position had not changed from the previous update. The Head of Service also advised that a full review of empty homes was being undertaken.

- With regard to the City Centre, a Member asked about the evolution of the City Centre Master Plan, whether the Consultation was still open and would are there differences to the version last seen in January? Members were advised that consultation had finished and responses were being pulled together and more graphics were being included as it is clearer for people to view. The consultation views received were overall very positive, based upon the consultation changes would be made and the Plan would be shared soon with the Public. The service area were looking for a balance between giving short and clear information that is useful for the wider public, and providing more detail in future.
- **RIH/L/043 – Number of people approaching authority for housing advice and assistance.**
A Member asked if the Head of Service had confidence that the figure reported was the true measure. The Head of Service confirmed that he was confident with the figures of the performance measure.
- A Member enquired whether the Head of Service had an update from Welsh Government upon assistance with Business Rates. The Head of Service advised that he would provide a response upon the position on Business Rates assistance to Scrutiny for Committee Members following the meeting.
- **RIH/L/055 – Number of new business start-ups**
A Member referred to the pop-up business school held in June and asked for an update upon how many new businesses resulted? Members were advised that the pop up business school was undertaken across Wales and was the most successful ever in Wales, 139 potential businesses attended, and service area are awaiting figures for final outcome. Members were advised that there were also grant programmes and a range of business support in place to help local businesses.
- A Member asked in view of the Severn Bridge Tolls coming to an end, what was being done to attract businesses looking to relocate and promote Newport. It was advised that the Council have a good relationship with Welsh Government and received a high level of contacts through that. Heathrow Hub was meeting at Llanwern to discuss a 10 year infrastructure arrangement with Heathrow. There was also the arrangement with Great Western Cities and the Department meets regularly with a range of developers. It was also advised that as the Team was very small it was challenging to attend expo's so the Council was looking to share this with partners to assist.

The Committee thanked the Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing for his attendance.

Law and Regulations (Place)

Attendee:

- Gareth Price (Head of Law and Regulation)

The Head of Law and Regulation advised the Committee that the Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation sent his apologies for the meeting.

The Head of Law and Regulation presented a brief overview to the Committee which included the following two Amber measures:

- **PAM /032 - % Food establishments broadly compliant with food hygiene standards** which although marginally under target is above the Wales Average.
- **LS/L/008 – Legal Searches in 5 days %** which dipped to 70% last May due to problems with the IT system and completing 100% now but still amber due to the cumulative impact of the significant dip earlier in the year.

for which performance was the same as reported to Committee in the previous Quarter 3 Performance Report and are not of major concern.

Members asked the following:

- **PAM /032 - % Food establishments broadly compliant with food hygiene standards**
A Member questioned why the Council had missed this target last year and this year? It was clarified that in terms of trend it was Council policy to set targets above the Wales Average. For the last 3-4 years this measure had been in lower quartile in Wales. The compliance rate had gone up and the service area was only dealing with significant risk premises, so unless there is an increase in resources this may not rise another 2%, but even that could not guarantee that compliance levels would increase.

- **LS/L/008 – Legal Searches in 5 days %**
Members sought clarification on comments made on this measure. The Head of Service explained that if systems had been running all year the targets would have been hit easily and would hit 100% for the months, however when systems were down searches were still being processed but couldn't be added to the system.

- **LS/L/027 % ASB incidents resolved by wardens**
A Member asked whether the Antisocial behaviour service can continue to be run at this level, recognising the impact of other pressures such as decriminalised parking. Members were advised that decriminalised parking required different enforcement. Community Safety Wardens would be trained in a different way. The number of Wardens had decreased significantly over the last 5 years due to budget cuts and austerity. The Head of Service advised that the Antisocial Behaviour and CCTV services are discretionary services and some of the few that the Council have complete control of but unfortunately this area had felt the impact of budget savings. Despite the lowered number of wardens delivering the service, the resolution rate was high which was commendable. Wardens also assist Environmental Health Officers to deal with low level noise nuisance and help with dog control queries.

A Member praised the performance achieved for this measure, but asked why the target had been dropped by 5% from last year. Members were advised that the target was refined as the service area reviewed annually. The increased target of 95% wasn't achievable so it was reset at 90%. This was the first time the service area had used a discretionary indicator and set the target.

- Target setting – it was queried whether this is always flexible and down to the service area's own discretion. Members were advised that only local measures are flexible, when they are not benchmarking against other councils. The service area examines the Wales average and strives to improve.
- A Member queried whether it was right for Service Areas to set their own targets for their performance measures. The Head of Service advised that this wasn't just undertaken by the Head of Service, that the process includes discussion with and accountability to

Strategic Directors and the Leadership team. National measures and Wales averages were examined as part of the process and it was only local measures that have element of discretion. If Scrutiny was of the view that the targets were not consistently set, this could be looked into and reported to the Committee.

The Committee thanked the Head of Law and Regulation for attending.

Finance (Corporate)

Attendees:

- Owen James (Assistant Head of Finance)
- Richard Leake (Category Manager)
- Emma Johnson (Income Collection Manager)
- Alan Wathan (Chief Internal Auditor)

The Assistant Head of Finance advised the Committee that the Head of Finance sent his apologies for the meeting, and that the relevant lead officers from Finance had attended to answer any queries from the Committee upon the performance measures. An overview of the report was presented given that explained all Finance targets are locally set with the only comparable target being Council Tax collection rates. Results were mixed but mainly green. One Red measure related to Lodge Card and there were two Amber Measures. Targets were well met in terms of Council Tax collection rates overall and Performance measure FIN014 was a positive result as it showed the arrears are also being collected.

Members asked the following:

- **FIN/L/014 - % total Council Tax collected as % of 17/18 budgeted amount A**
Member commended the positive result and asked how it was achieved? The Income Collection Manager advised that two performance measures had been placed together so Council Tax was being collected as well as arrears over the year which equalled the total amount of Council Tax collective against the amount that the Council needed the department to collect. Although the **CFH/007 Council Tax Collection %** measure didn't quite reach the target of 97%, however collecting for long term standing debts was targeted and would put the service area in a better position than at the start of the year.
- A Member queried the reasons for non-payment of Council Tax Arrears, whether people could not pay or would not pay. The Income Collection Manager advised that there were mixed reasons why people could not or would not pay. If someone had arrears and needed to pay current council tax then a decision needed to be made which to pay. For the service areas performance measure against other Councils it was preferable for residents to pay the current year and make a regular payment for arrears to ensure their financial position does not get any worse. Members were informed that 4 different payment dates were offered for direct debits and people can spread the payments over 12 months if they choose.
- **CFH/007 Council Tax Collection %** - A Member queried that although this performance measure was narrowly missed this year, performance had declined from the previous year. Members were advised that the overall collection rate was higher than what was needed for the budget so the Council was in a better position than last year, so collectively the result was a lot better.
- **FIN/L/024% No of Suppliers using Lodge Cards**
Members queried what a Lodge Card was and asked had the service area given many cards to suppliers? The Category Manager advised that the Lodge Card is

similar to a credit card that was held in Procurement. A Lodge Card supplier gets money paid to them within 4-5 days and removes the invoicing process. This was a discretionary performance measure and was disappointing that target was missed. The Team had done a lot of work with card provider Barclaycard, however more needed to be done. The focus now would be to increase the number of suppliers having the lodge card. This would mean companies get paid quicker and takes invoicing out of the system. Currently 5 suppliers had a card, and the Team were looking to increase this number.

- **CFH/006 Payment of Invoices within timescales %**

A Member queried whether there were any proposals to bring in an alternate measure to avoid payment delays? Members were advised of an E-invoicing programme held in Procurement, and were looking at suppliers who can take normal purchase cards. A few programmes worked in tandem. The aim was to reduce the number of invoices coming into the Council. An example was given to consolidate invoices for suppliers who make multiple deliveries i.e. for food a 14 day summary will be produced but only one invoice would be sent out.

- A Member queried whether it was right for Service Areas to set their own targets for their performance measures and who signs this off. Members were advised that discussions were held with the team and the Leadership Team to see what was realistic and challenging, previous year's targets examined and look to improve. There would be occasions such as austerity, members of staff that things may need to be adjusted. An example was then given a few years ago where a performance measure for payment of invoices was adjusted due to the number of staff cut from the team as it would not have been achievable. The Head of Finance would also discuss target setting with the Cabinet Member and Chief Executive.
- Members queried if debt collectors that are used by the Council were properly vetted and had the standard accreditation. It was advised that the only Enforcement Agents used and covered by an accredited and professional body. The Council would not use any agents that caused alarm and while debt collection was never a popular measure, any complaints against Enforcement Officers were robustly discussed and investigated and that the Officers wear body cameras.

The Committee thanked the Officers for attending.

People and Business Change (Corporate)

Attendees:

- Councillor David Mayer (Cabinet Member for Community and Resources)
- Rhys Cornwall (Head of People and Business Change)

The Head of People and Business Change presented an overview of the report. It was advised that service area targets were set alongside the Cabinet Member and Chief Executive. There were also two measures that are externally set which are out of the Council's control, as when the Council joined the Shared Resource Services, the SRS strategic board had already decided performance measures for partners.

PBC/062 - % ICT Helpdesk calls resolved at first point of contact – The Service Desk tool did not measure calls resolved at first point of contact. The new Service Desk tool would be able to measure against the right set of calls at which time the performance should represent an improved and accurate measurement. However working with SRS, if 85% target is set, the Council should be doing better than 69% regardless of those issues. Things were improving but slowly, and the Council is working with SRS to make things better, as

dealing with as many calls at first point of contact would free staff to undertake development courses and other work.

PBC/061 – ICT customer satisfaction % - 73.70% was very comparable with other partners across SRS. Only 5% of responses were completely dissatisfied. Once a month meetings are held with SRS to discuss figures. The direction of travel was getting worse towards the end of the year as there were issues and it was worrying that the response rate was low - only 16% out of 1792 surveys sent.

HRP/049 – Number of employees trained in Welsh awareness – it was advised that Welsh Language Standards require the Council to raise awareness with staff. Last year training was more academically based and slightly missed the target of number of people on Welsh courses.

Member asked the following:

- **PBC/062 % ICT Helpdesk calls resolved at first point of contact**
Members thanked the Cabinet Member for attending referring to the equipment and software failure mentioned in the report, enquired was it a large proportion and also what the criteria was for a call to be logged as resolved. Members were advised that there is a monthly breakdown from SRS regarding system and equipment failures which could be provided to the Committee. An example was given that if there were issues with a laptop, if SRS could remotely connect and sort the problem and the laptop works then it was logged as resolved. It could not be resolved until the laptop could be used again.
- A Member queried why the target for Employee sickness had been reduced. Members were advised that until January the service area could have justified adjusting the target this year as in December the number was way below, however due to the winter virus, increases in January and February followed and settled again in March. At next Cabinet, a report would be discussed regarding the early year performance to see how well the service area did in comparison with the target.

The Committee thanked the Cabinet Member – Community and Resources and Head of People and Business Change for attending.

There was a discussion about additional previous years' performance data obtained by a Member through additional research prior to the meeting as part of their preparation of questions.

It was clarified that it is open to any Member of Scrutiny to undertake independent additional research around a topic and this varies among the Members of each Committee. The previous years' performance data sourced had contributed effectively to a number of questions on performance trends. In addition, following the circulation of each Scrutiny Agenda when the Pre Meeting agenda is emailed to Members, they are asked if they want more information or assistance with the Agenda to contact the Scrutiny Team before the meeting. A process had been agreed with the four Chairs of Scrutiny that if a Member of a Scrutiny Committee requested information through the Scrutiny Team, then that additional information would be emailed to all Members of the Committee for information. It was also open to the Committee to request changes to the format of reports they receive, so it could request additional previous years' performance data be included in future performance reports to the Committee.

Conclusion

Comments to the Cabinet

The Committee noted the performance for the Services areas, and agreed to forward the minutes to the Cabinet as a summary of the issues raised.

The Committee wished to make the following comments to the Cabinet:

1. Generally overall there had been a lack of improvement in the Red and Amber Indicators over the final quarter and a more in depth response should have been provided on these. There was a concern that there did not appear to an appropriate pace of change to improve the Council's performance against these measures.
2. The Committee had concern regarding self-setting of targets and proposed that the Council should ensure a robust challenge be put in place for target setting, involving an independent sign off of targets set, perhaps by another Head of Service.
3. The attendance of the Cabinet Member for Community and Resources was appreciated. The Committee understood that the agreed process for Cabinet Members attendance at Scrutiny as where there were Reds and Amber measures to scrutinise. The Committee required Cabinet Members and Officers to attend the Scrutiny Committee as invited, aside from unforeseen circumstances.
4. The Committee raised concerns regarding some of the specific measures that they wished to draw the Cabinet attention to:
 - a. **PAM/013% of empty private properties brought back into use**

The Committee feel that not much progress had been achieved on the performance of this measure, which should be addressed as there are lots of people on the housing waiting list. There was a need to do more about empty private properties; a change in the direction of travel on this measure was needed. The view was also expressed that the target was too low in for this measure. Although the Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing explained that a review of empty homes was being undertaken, it was felt that sufficient progress had not been made, nor sufficient explanation on the timings for the conclusion of the review. The Committee ask that the Cabinet Member attend for this item in future to explain the progress being made towards this measure.
 - b. **RIH/L/057 % of vacant commercial properties in the City Centre**

Members discussed this measure, in the context of the impact of the City Centre Masterplan. This Plan had been discussed a number of times at the Committee and concern expressed regarding how the Council will respond to issues raised within this consultation in the final published version.
 - c. **People and Business Change Measures**

The Committee commended the Head of People and Business change for his clear concise explanations for each of his Service Area's Performance Measures in Appendix 5 of the report and would ask that all Appendices be completed to the same standard, as some only had a brief reference on the Head of Service Dashboard page.
 - d. The accuracy of the Performance data should be improved e.g. the target figure for RIH/L/061 – Value of Tourism (£Million) should have read £300 not £3.

e. Further Information Requested

- The Committee requested that the previous two years' performance data be included in future performance reports to enable comparison and trend monitoring.

- **Regeneration, Investment and Housing:**
PAM/016 (LCL/001b) Use of Public Library Services -
The confirmed target figure for Amber Measure PAM/016.

The updated position from Welsh Government upon Business Rates assistance.

- **People and Business Change:**
PBC/062 % ICT Helpdesk calls resolved at first point of contact -
The latest monthly breakdown from SRS regarding system and equipment failures.

4 Forward Work Programme Update

Attendee:

- Meryl Lawrence – Scrutiny Adviser

The Scrutiny Adviser presented the Forward Work Programme Update to the Committee and outlined the reports for the next two meetings, as well as the Briefings upon Housing and the Quality of the Road Network to be arranged beforehand.

It was proposed that the Briefings are scheduled on the same day and time as Committee meetings but a fortnight apart.

Agreed:

The Committee **approved** the topics and invitees scheduled for the next two meetings and **agreed** the above proposal for scheduling the two Briefings on a Monday at 4pm a fortnight apart.

The meeting terminated at 6.12 pm