

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Place and Corporate

Date: 3 December 2018

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors C Evans (Chair), M Al-Nuaimi, J Clarke, J Richards and W Routley

In Attendance: Councillors R Jeavons (Cabinet Member – Streetscene) and J Mudd (Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Housing)

P Jones (Head of Streetscene and City Services), B Owen (Strategic Director (Place)) and Keir Duffin (Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing) and M Lawrence (Scrutiny Adviser)

Apologies: Councillors G Berry, K Critchley, D Fouweather and I Hayat

1 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Clarke and Routley declared interests as Members of the Board of Newport Transport.

2 **Service Plan Mid-Year Reviews**

a) **City Services**

Attendees:

- Councillor Roger Jeavons (Cabinet Member for Streetscene)
- Bev Owen (Strategic Director – Place)
- Paul Jones (Head of Streetscene and City Services)

The Head of City Services presented a brief overview to the Committee and highlighted the key areas for consideration. He advised that most of the defined objectives were ongoing, none were currently behind but some had not commenced in the first half of the financial year. The service area's budget was marginally overspent by £100,000, but within the operational budget. He explained that different challenges arose on a daily basis.

With regard to Performance Indicators in the Service Area, 8 were on target (Green), 4 were Amber and 1 was Red: "**Management Information – Return to Work form completed within 7 calendar days**" which was an issue in other areas and the system was being looked at to improve flexibility to allocate a supervisor if the nominated supervisor was away from work. The Head of Service advised the Committee that for Performance Indicator **PAM /010** – Bi-monthly % cleanliness inspections of highways & relevant land – the challenge was delivering the same service to a widening City within the limited resources.

The Cabinet Member added that the permanent reversal of the flow of traffic within the household waste recycling transfer centre was planned to take place over the Christmas and New Year period.

Members asked the following:

- A Member enquired about the performance monitoring cycle, in particular what happened to the information reported following the meeting. The Head of Service advised that the update before the Committee demonstrated the Service Area's performance against its Service Plan at the Mid-Year stage and an update would be reported to the Committee on the Service Area's performance at the Year-End stage.

The Strategic Director added that the information was collated in the Management Information Hub and reported to Heads of Service and Directors on a monthly basis. Information was fed through to the Corporate Management Team, who discussed how the department should address the performance and what could be improved.

Objective 1 – Introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement within the City boundary

- A Member referred to the collaboration work with the other 4 Gwent authorities and Rhondda Cynon Taff upon the related back office function of processing fixed penalty notices. It was clarified that Civil Parking Enforcement Officers would be employed by the Council at the front end of the service. When the Council took over enforcement it was expected that over the 6-12 month period that a lot of tickets will be issued and it was hoped that that this would change people's behaviour. Work was taking place with private care parks, and there was a need to make the public aware of signs and lines, which if done too early could lose impact. The Press releases would begin in July and a dummy run of warning tickets was planned.
- The Cabinet Member advised that there had been fortnightly meetings with the team, alongside Managers and the Public Relations Team upon a Press Release Strategy.
- The importance of getting the technology working to display the correct information upon electronic car park notice boards was raised, as some screens displayed information intermittently. People needed to know how many spaces were available. Members were advised that work was taking place to rectify this.
- A Member thanked the team for the work that had taken place to plan for Civil Parking Enforcement.

Objective 2 – Continuous Improvement of Recycling Performance

- A Member asked whether there would be consultation on the location of the site for the new Household Waste Recycling Centre. Members were advised that this had been discussed in Scrutiny previously and that consultation would be undertaken as part of the planning application process.

Objective 4 – Improved Transport Links and Connectivity of the City

- Member asked when there would the City transport be improved with more effective links and commented that there did not appear to be much related work being undertaken on the ground. Members were advised that the Authority was one player in joining up transport links and that together with its partners in the City Deal this was being addressed regionally by the first stage of the South Wales Metro. Work underway

included the rebranding of trains, a new station in Llanwern and upgrades to other stations. The Council was also working with Cardiff for improved bus links and investing in bus lanes. The Council along with its partners and Welsh Government had invested to sign up to the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. Some additional money had recently been received, and the Council was looking to see how we can join up connective transport. The Head of Service also advised that the Council was looking at Park and Ride areas, improving links in train stations and footbridge connectivity and that progress was being made. He added that the Council had also been encouraging Active Travel over the past two years and upgrading footpaths and routes, which relates to Objective 3 of this report: Comply with duties under Active travel Act (Wales) 2013.

- With regard to the following interventions the Authority would seek to influence: Local Network Improvements, and; Securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's network:
 - A Member raised the recurring seasonal problems with drainage on the highway in the vicinity of the Admiral Building and the Head of Service advised that the Council is working with Admiral to resolve the issue.
 - A Member raised concern at the lack of decision on the M4 Relief Road which resulted in congestion on the existing road network. The Cabinet Member advised that had raised this issue at the M4 Relief Road Board on a number of occasions and an announcement was awaited.
- Members felt that more detail and examples needed regarding how the Council's policies within the Local Development Plan met the Long Term way of working requirement of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act.
- Members were concerned about bus transport in rural areas of Newport and stressed its importance for the elderly. A Member commented that social dividends seemed to have disappeared. It was explained that the Council had an operational relationship with the Bus Service and while there were a small number of Council run routes there was limited funding for such subsidies. There were also a number of Demand Response Transport routes in rural areas of Newport and these opportunities needed to be communicated and promoted.

Objective 5 – Supporting the Council's 'Digital by Design' approach, ensure that customers are at the centre of service delivery with provision of prompt and secure access to the services and information they need in order to provide them with a positive experience

- A Member enquired whether the Cloud-based platform to provide the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) function and opportunities to improve service provision had gone live in November as planned. Members were advised that the system had gone live with a soft launch on the Council Website. It replaced the previous platform that was prone to crashing. It had worked well, with 700 people using it up to yesterday and staff had been checking that the enquiries were flowing to the correct places. A hard launch would be arranged in February.
- Members queried the Action: "Ensure compliance with relevant regulations and legislation", asking would this action point always be in progress or ever be completed? Members were advised that this Action refers to a particular project, but would go onto to form part of ongoing work.

Objective 6 – Understand the continuing impacts of Welfare Reform and support residents and services to adapt to changes, which may affect them.

- Members queried when the following action would start: “Lead a cross-service working group to assess the impact of Welfare Reform on households in Newport and propose appropriate action to be taken to mitigate any negative effects”. Members were advised that work had already started with other areas of the Council, Homelessness Officers and more work to happen. Managing staffing had become a challenge as staff were aware that jobs would be cut as the system rolls out. In terms of impact upon residents there hadn’t been a significant impact on service areas, but it was constantly being monitored.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and Officers for attending.

b) Regeneration Investment and Housing

Attendees:

- Jane Mudd (Cabinet Member for Regeneration Investment and Housing)
- Bev Owen (Strategic Director – Place)
- Keir Duffin (Head of Regeneration Investment and Housing)

The Cabinet Member presented a brief overview to the Committee and highlighted the key areas for consideration. Members were advised of the official launch of the National Software Academy which will offer opportunities to the people of Newport that provide higher level employment. The Cabinet Member also wished to highlight the support that had been provided to small businesses and paid tribute to Officers provided that support. Members were advised that there were only limited resources to support small businesses and it had been good to hear what those businesses had to say about the support they received from the Council. In the broader scheme, there had been a successful bid for Heritage funding for the Market Arcade.

Members were also updated that works on the Convention Centre and Chartist Tower were underway. The Cabinet Member had also visited an Aparthotel business being set up in Clarence House, which is an area that could be expanded upon, and met the Manchester owners whose view was that Newport had the potential to be a thriving city.

Members asked the following:

Objective 1 – Encourage and support continued economic growth within the City, with particular focus on sustainable development and regeneration in the City Centre.

- A Member commented that the Draft Master Plan was quite brief, that in the update the 5 Ways of Working were not recognised and asked when would it become the Master Plan.

The Cabinet Member advised this Plan had avoided zoning, to ensure that a mix of economic and residential areas to future proof the creation of diverse areas. The Council has collaborated and consulted with many people upon the Draft Master Plan and that feedback was being gathered and collated to listen to Partners and Employers across the City.

The Strategic Director reinforced that the Master Plan was high level and moving away from specific zones and that through phased development mapping out key buildings would develop a set of lower level plans.

- Invitees were asked whether they were confident that it was a satisfactory Master Plan. The Cabinet Member advised that it was important to note that the Master Plan was still in its draft form. It was a collaborative process with the Council being enablers and not providers, as it did not have the resources and it was important to get feedback from businesses. There was confidence that it was progressing in the right direction.

- With reference to the 360 new housing units that had been completed, Members questioned whether this scale of development and investment likely to continue in the future. The Cabinet Member advised that at a Regional level the Council was taking the lead in identifying sites for employment. She also explained that the focus upon the skills agenda and entrepreneurship was starting to come together, with provision of what was needed to support, develop and grow businesses in line with retail and consumption patterns changing. This would include working to try and retain the expertise of national software academy graduates within the area by discussions about a start-up space, support and employment.
- Member discussed the removal of the Bristol bridge tolls in two weeks' time and asked what the Council was doing to encourage technology businesses to invest in the city, and whether NCC Officers were attending business expositions in the Bristol area to capitalise upon the effect of the ending of the Bridge tolls. The Strategic Director advised that discussions have been ongoing through the Newport Economic Network with a city summit being held at the end of January with key individuals. Work was also taking place within the Marketing Team and on the Place website upon what to do in Newport, where to invest, new jobs development etc. and it was not constrained to Bristol with fairs and expositions. As part of the City Deal the Council will look to attract from further afield, and was sending press releases further afield and sending a representative to speak at Breakfast meetings. The importance of putting Newport forward in the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Plan was stressed.

Members discussed Inward Investment and the City Region Deal and whether the Council was confident of securing such investments to Newport. The Strategic Director – Place advised the Committee that the Council was reaching the stage of consensus of the City Deal model and the plan to use on a commercial level. She further advised that 300 jobs had been secured by the siting of CAF Rail in Newport and the Semi-Conductor facility had also been located in Newport and as the strategic plan moves forward there was confidence that the whole team support to developers from Planning and Skills Teams provided had the necessary resources to support approached from companies. A Member commented that a good example of a team approach had been the Convention Centre.

Objective 3 – Develop a collaborative approach to modernise service delivery to residents across the city.

- A Member asked for more detail on the vision for Neighbourhood Hubs. The Head of Service explained that a review of neighbourhood services had been undertaken, and the results clearly found that better results could be achieved by providing core services in the area those services were most wanted / needed in Neighbourhood Hubs and reinvest in the services to make it better for the customer. All data was examined to see where the customers were, where the services were most needed. The first Neighbourhood Hub was being developed in Ringland and was planned to open in the next two months as a bespoke approach and also aimed to improve IT accessibility.

Objective 5 – Enhance community wellbeing through improved housing officer.

- Members referred to the Action: “Review information on private sector housing in Newport”, for which the status was: To be commenced and the End of Quarter 2 update was: to be initiated when work on the Local Housing Strategy concluded. The Cabinet Member advised that the Local Housing Strategy was the overarching document, upon which the Service was currently getting feedback from Housing Association partners.

Objective 6 – Promote the decarbonisation of our operations and support sustainable travel and clean air measures in housing programmes.

- A Member referred to the Action: “Review the Council’s Asset Management Plan and performance of the Norse Joint Venture”, which was in progress. It was felt that in the current economic climate the review of assets was important and it was questioned how long the review would take. The Cabinet Member advised Members that this Action was not within her Cabinet portfolio. Officers advised that the review will be ongoing and that the arrangement with Norse is halfway through its term so was being reviewed to ensure the best value for money.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and the Officers for attending.

Conclusions - Comments to the Cabinet

The Committee noted the Mid-Year Review and agreed to forward the minutes to the Cabinet as a summary of the issues raised and made the following comments to the Cabinet:

General:

- The Committee asks that invited attendees work from the same Agenda pack as the Committee, so that the same page numbering can be cited for ease of reference.
- The Committee welcomed the explanation of the performance management cycle and the monthly Management Information reports to Senior Management Team for escalation to CMT for mitigation as and when required.
- The status of Actions needs to be developed for subsequent reports, from options of either: Complete; In progress or; To be commenced, to include projected deadline dates for Actions or stages of actions e.g. Review of Asset Management in progress but no detail on when it should be completed.

City Services:

- The Committee concluded that there was not enough supporting detail provided in End of Quarter 2 narrative upon Actions, and request that more detailed supporting information be included in future reports.

Regeneration Investment and Housing:

- The Committee asked to draw Cabinet’s attention to the discussions and concerns about:
 - slow progress upon the development of the Master Plan.
 - seeking assurance that the Council has sufficient resources to work with inward investors on potential large scale opportunities.
- The Committee expresses concern that opportunities presented by the imminent removal of the Severn Bridge tolls are not lost and suggests that appropriate representatives of Newport City Council could attend business breakfast meetings, fairs and expositions in the Bristol area.

The meeting terminated at 5.45 pm