

Minutes



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Date: 26 September 2019

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors L Lacey (Chair), M Al-Nuaimi, G Berry, C Evans, M Evans, C Ferris, Y Forsey, K Thomas and P Hourahine

Will Godfrey (Chief Executive), Beverly Owen (Strategic Director (Place)), James Harris (Strategic Director - People), Tracey Brooks (Development and Regeneration Manager), Keir Duffin (Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing), Anne Jenkins (Governance Team Leader) and Gareth Price (Head of Law & Regulation)

In Attendance:

Apologies: Councillors

1 **Declarations of Interest**

None received

2 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 12/07/2019**

The minutes were recorded as a true and accurate record

Matters arising

Action Sheet:

- Point 1: It was noted that the VAWDASV mandatory training monitoring information was out of date. The data was made available every November, the training was carried out as a rolling programme and therefore needed to be monitored.

The Head of Corporate Safeguarding would be contacted for further information.

- Point 5: FOI to ensure webpage to be expanded for citizens – completed information negated.

3 **Corporate Plan Annual Report 2018 /19**

Attendee:

- Debbie Wilcox, Leader
- Will Godfrey, Chief Executive
- James Harris, Strategic Director – People
- Beverly Owen, Strategic Director – Place

The Leader of the Council thanked the Committee for having the opportunity to present the plan before standing down as Leader of the Council.

This was the second Annual Report on the Corporate Plan, which set out the administration's objectives. The Plan was a snapshot of what the council had delivered however, the Leader advised that it was important for members to understand that more detailed information would be made available if required by the Committee.

- The Leader referred to the financial challenges faced by the Council. The budget was discussed a recent Finance Sub-Committee with the Corporate Director – People and it was hoped that funding from the Welsh Government would be passed down to the Local Authority.
- There was a rising demand in key front line services such as Social Services and Education, however, it was becoming difficult to put additional funding into these areas.
- By comparison with the 22 Councils in Wales, Newport City Council's Performance indicators, nine out of 18 were above the Welsh National Average Wales and nine out of 18 were below. NEETS and Housing were showing an impressive improvement. Areas that were underperforming were being monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and Corporate Management Team.
- The Four Wellbeing Objectives Themes within the in Corporate Plan were being developed.
- The Young Person's Promise was delivered, which could lead onto an apprenticeship programme and graduate programme. Safeguarding children was still a challenge. Rose Cottage, which opened in January 2019 helped to reduce the impact of out of county placements, making savings from relocating. A second property within Newport was due to be purchased.
- The Leader recently opened Oaklands with the Mayor and mentioned the wonderful work achieved by staff for those in respite care.
- Feedback from the recent Estyn inspection was positive, A-Level results were at 53% and GCSE A*-C grades at 58%.
- The Regeneration portfolio was improving the city centre along with the newly opened International Conference Centre at the Celtic Manor, the Post office building and the Undergraduate and Postgraduate departments within the Information Station.
- Recycling had increased beyond the expected predictions.
- Civil Parking Enforcement Officers from 1 July reduced illegal parking and had a positive result on the environment.
- Ringland Neighbourhood hub was almost completed.

The Chair thanked the Leader for her presentation and the committee took the opportunity to congratulate the Leader and Chief Executive on their new endeavours.

The Committee asked the following questions:

- A Member asked why was the software academy and IQE were included in the plan, as these were the City's achievement not the Council's achievement. It was explained that although the detailed work that sat behind these companies were not

under the Council's control, the IQE, a high-tech facility in Newport and the National Software Academy (NSA) were used as examples as case studies on how objectives had been met and promoted.

- It was felt that the 20 commitments were hard to find or cross reference within the Plan. Two examples were highlighted, these were the Childrens Charter - in the original document there were specific promises such as to reduce the children on the child protection register, this should be represented as a percentage and could not be cross referenced. A Thriving City – the Council achieved purple flag status for the night time economy however this could not be found. From a scrutiny point of view, it was impossible to monitor. The Plan should be the 'bible' to refer to on all relevant subjects.

It was explained that document was a Strategic Overview of the whole Plan up until April this year. With regard to the Purple Flag Status, the Council was almost there, this was being picked up by the Trading Standards team and would be included in the next Corporate Plan.

- The IQE, a high-tech facility in Newport and the National Software Academy (NSA) were used as examples as case studies on how objectives had been met and promoted however, the detailed work that sat behind these companies were not under the Council's control.
- The committee advised that the Plan should consider the audience; who would be the recipient of the Plan? It was felt that the format was inconsistent and the committee therefore wondered if this was standard or was it developed. It was felt that the Plan was pitched at a lower level and too accessible in a picture book term and not very professionally presented. The opportunity to give background information on what was successful and unsuccessful was missed and could have been presented in a different way. For example, the Children's Charter was about modernising the Council as in Children's rights.

The Committee was informed that the plan had not followed format from the previous year, however this could be followed up with the officers.

The Leader thanked the Committee for the comprehensive analysis and acting as a critical friend. Officers had been encouraged to provide a more illustrative content, however the comments would be noted for next year's Plan.

The Committee also mentioned that there were some typing errors. This would be passed on to the officers for correction.

The Committee acknowledged that it was important to give critical feedback and it had clearly helped improve people's lives. The suggestions were positive to and would be measured against smart objectives with realistic timeframes. The Plan should be constantly evolving.

The Leader confirmed that weekly meetings were held as it was a 'live' document.

The Committee also suggested that CO2 emissions needed to be addressed, as this would play an important role in the Plan.

The Committee asked the Leader which areas were individually underperforming and how would these be addressed in the future.

The Leader replied that the safety issues was a concern, in particular Children and Adult Services, as these service areas were demand led and in the public realm but there was

not enough money to cover the services. The rest of the areas within the Plan, if led properly could be achieved therefore preventative services needed to be kept under review.

The Chief Executive did not believe that there were any areas of the council that were under performing. The Performance Indicators were only a small snapshot how the Council was running.

The Chief Executive went on to say that since 2013 Newport was the only council in Gwent that had not received statutory intervention from the National Regulator. There was a significant drop in staff and under the circumstances, employees were doing a fantastic job and within Newport and the quality of what the Council does. Issues such as a growing population at both age ranges however, the quality of children services, adult service, education and recycling were high. This was because The Council had proactively managed how this could be addressed. There was no concern about quality but services were stretched and the Council could do better but was not underperforming.

The Leader found that the Committee had made relevant points and agreed there needed to be more explicit criteria. It was important to be judged on success and learn from failure and maintain transparency. The criticism was genuinely noted and it was hoped that the same point would not be raised next year.

The Chair thanked the Leader and officers for attending and suggested an overview for those that were not involved. The Chair agreed that the Civil Parking Enforcement information is incongruous and could therefore be made clear.

The Committee did like the 'What is the Council going to do' statement at the end of each category.

It was reiterated that the performance measures were national indicators only and were unhelpful but this was a point made constantly by the Council. The Council have tried to provide more meaningful figures.

Conclusions:

- There needed to be a consistency of approach within the Plan and consideration of content to the target audience.
- There needed to be a clear emphasis on the council's collaborative working.
- The 20 commitments were not clear, it was not easy to cross-reference the objectives within the Plan, making them difficult to monitor.
- There were minor errors within the report, which would be passed to the Policy Partnership and Involvement Manager.
- There was a lack of background information on subjects such as the Children's Charter.
- There were some examples within the report that were repetitive.

4 Draft Economic Regeneration Strategy Update

Attendee:

- Beverly Owen, Strategic Director – Place
- Keir Duffin, Head of Regeneration Investment and Housing
- Tracey Brooks, Development & Regeneration Manager

The Head of Regeneration and Housing gave a presentation to the Committee on the draft Economic Growth Strategy Update for 2020.

The Committee asked the following questions:

The Chair thanked the Head of Regeneration and Housing for an interesting and informative presentation and felt that the document was pitched at the right level and that the information was relevant and right. It was a very good document with the right balance of graphics. There was also enough for scrutiny to measure.

A member of the Committee did mention that the arrows were slightly confusing. It was noted however that the arrows were meant as to indicate the direction of travel and not the targets.

The Committee asked why was the Newport Hub under aspirational people, should this be under wellbeing. This was in relation to visitors to city, information was being collected to find out why people are coming to the city as it was important to know what was attracting visitors. An example given was the Newport Ship, who was attending, was there potential and should the council build on this as number were increasing to over 100 thousand.

The Committee asked was data being collected on self-employed people as they were a major contributors to the Newport economy the Development and Regeneration Manager would find out if there were performance indicators in relation to self-employed people.

The Committee referred to the Citizens Panel and the Newport Economic Network, as key leaders were brought together in Newport by these groups it was felt that more of an explanation was required.

The Committee liked SWOT analysis layout however, it was felt that more evidence could be provided.

With regard to Property Maintenance 19% of landlords were classed as rogue landlords. The Committee would like to see this moved into the 'Challenges' category and negligent landlords added to the 'Threats' category.

There was no mention of the impact the of M4 corridor had on businesses and although it was a national problem it had an important role to play in the consultative process.

A member of the Committee referred to the whole time equivalent gross earnings, as there were highly paid jobs however, poorly paid jobs were growing. It was felt that if we did not have 'drivers' coming to Newport the city would be left behind and we should therefore aspire to drive up earnings. There was also a need for students from the university to stay in the city. A high level of students attending Cardiff Met University stay in Cardiff and help to regenerate the city. If we could retain a small percentage of the cohort that would be an achievement, therefore could the figures be presented in a more attractive way.

A member of the committee mentioned that the document was greatly improved with a reduction of approximately 10 pages of repetition. The M4 relief road would need to go into the 'Threats' category and there was concern about students and the night time economy. In general there was an improvement from the last document.

A member of the committee referred to employees aspiring to high wages and felt that women were still suffering and suggested addressing companies on the gender pay gap. These companies should be monitored and we should protect citizens. In addition, it was suggested that the council could monitor uptake of universal credit as well as benefits for older people.

A member of the committee suggested that the sports economy could also be promoted within Newport. Newport was now a city of sport, with a lot of business opportunities for

physiotherapists, trainers, mini gyms etc. The Council could have a sports fair, similar to a jobs fair, to promote these facilities within Newport. The Head of Regeneration and Housing said that this was a helpful comment and the city could use sport as an economic draw.

The Committee reiterated that the document was really positive feedback and a good piece of work. The only criticism was the picture quality of some of the images. It was generally felt that there needed to be a cultural element to attract students into the city centre as well as more mature students. The Council needed to be more reactive where there was potential such as new businesses coming to the city as well as attracting bigger employers.

The Thriving City comments were subjective and measures needed to be more objective.

Conclusions:

- Under Newport Now - Rogue Landlords needed to be added to the Challenges category and Absent Landlords needed to be added to the Threats category within the report.
- More information regarding sports business opportunities within Newport should be added to the report.
- Under Location and Connectivity - The Report should highlight the Threat/Challenges that the M4 Relief Road had within Newport.

5 Scrutiny Adviser Reports

Scrutiny Adviser Reports – Forward Work Plan

The Committee discussed the forward work plan ad referred to the Downstream side of waste and Non-registered waste, which could be picked up as a service plan.

Date of Next Meeting

1st November 2019

Agenda Items to include;

- Director of Social Services Annual Report 2018/2019
- Performance Management Strategy – Recommendations Monitoring
- Local Toilet Strategy

24th January 2020

Agenda Items to include;

- Draft Budget Proposals and MTFP 2020/21

The meeting terminated at 6.10 pm