

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Date: 4 October 2023

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors E Stowell-Corten (Chair), B Davies, P Drewett, F Hussain, J Jones, A Morris, M Pimm and A Screen

In Attendance: Councillor Dimitri Batrouni (Cabinet Member for Organisational Transformation), Rhys Cornwall (Strategic Director-Corporate and Transformation), Tracy Mckim (Head of People, Policy and Transformation), Matt Lewis (Chief Officer Shared Resource Service) Sarah Stephens (Educational Lead Shared Resource Service), Kath Beavan-Seymour (Assistant Director Shared Resource Service), Dominic Gibbons (Digital Projects Manager), Mike Doverman (User Support Manager Shared Resource Services), Paul Higgs (Assistant Director – Senior Leadership Team – Shared Resource Service), Janice Dent (Policy and Partnership Manager), Dr Bethan Bowden (Consultant in Public Health Aneurin Bevan University Health Board), Harriet Bleach (Senior Officer Natural Resources Wales), Wayne Tucker (Senior Policy and Partnership Officer), Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Advisor), Taylor Strange (Governance Officer) and Simon Richards (Governance Officer)

Apologies: Councillors C Baker-Westhead and K Whitehead

1 **Declarations of Interest**

None.

2 **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19th July 2023**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 19th of July 2023 were held as a true record.

3 **Shared Resource Service Monitoring Update**

Invitees:

- Dimitri Batrouni (Cabinet Member for Organisational Transformation)
- Rhys Cornwall (Strategic Director-Corporate and Transformation)
- Tracy Mckim (Head of People, Policy and Transformation)
- Matt Lewis (Chief Officer Shared Resource Service)
- Sarah Stephens (Educational Lead Shared Resource Service)
- Kath Beavan-Seymour (Assistant Director Shared Resource Service)
- Dominic Gibbons (Digital Projects Manager)
- Mike Doverman (User Support Manager Shared Resource Services)
- Paul Higgs (Assistant Director – Senior Leadership Team – Shared Resource Service)

The Chief Officer of Shared Resource Service and the Head of People, Policy and Transformation gave an overview of the report and a background to the Shared Resource Service.

The following was discussed:

- The Committee raised questions regarding the progress in recruiting additional organisations into the Shared Resource Service (SRS). The Chief Officer for Shared Resource Service explained plans to incorporate groups into the SRS and highlighted the interest of an English authority in partnering with the SRS.
- The Committee inquired about the loss of 27 members of staff in the SRS. The Chief Officer Shared Resource Service explained that the main reason for their departure was lower wages compared to other organisations. Additionally, some staff found the work too complicated.
- The Committee asked about the SRS's approach to dealing with online scams. The Chief Officer highlighted one measure they have taken, which is restricting access to the UK only.
- The Committee asked about the diversity of apprentices and enquired about university links for work experience. The Chief Officer of Shared Resource Service informed the Committee about their collaboration with a scheme in Cardiff and their efforts to reach minority or underrepresented groups.
- The Committee enquired about direct contact for support from the SRS. The Chief Officer Shared Resource Service stated that this information can be provided.
- The Committee questioned the figures on reserves compared to capital funding. The Chief Officer Shared Resource Service explained that these are different figures based on revenue reserves and funding provided by Newport.
- The Committee asked about the number of apprenticeships in Newport. The Chief Officer Shared Resource Service explained that the funding for these apprenticeships comes from the SRS, and they work with all their partners, not solely within Newport.
- The Committee enquired about out of hours call outs and IT support. The Assistant Director Shared Resource Service explained that the service desk covers 9-5 Monday-Friday, and out-of-hours service is staffed to handle critical system issues. The Head of People, Policy, and Transformation emphasised the importance of SRS's ability to provide support that an in-house IT team cannot.
- The Committee questioned how the SRS keeps up with cybersecurity attacks. The Chief Officer for Shared Resource Service mentioned allocating resources and staff to address cybersecurity issues. The Head of People, Policy, and Transformation highlighted that Newport Council has a risk owner supported by the SRS.
- The Committee asked if there were any security attacks or concerns for schools in Newport. The Chief Officer for Shared Resource Service confirmed that there have not been any with schools supported by the SRS.
- The Committee enquired about the user-friendliness of the new Newport website. The Head of People, Policy, and Transformation assured that it will be better than the current website and mentioned financing partners to design it accordingly. The Chief Officer Shared Resource Service noted that Newport is part of a group of councils sharing best practices for website design.

- The Committee expressed interest in reducing the environmental impact of data storage. The Chief Officer of Shared Resource Service explained that cloud-based storage would help achieve this goal. The Digital Projects Manager mentioned Newport's cloud-based policy, which also saves costs on energy.
- The Committee questioned the time it would take to bring the SRS systems back to capacity if they went down. The Chief Officer for Shared Resource Service assured that they have measures in place to limit the impact, including various systems and facilities. They are also looking into disaster management, which would involve housing a copy of all files externally. The User Support Manager Shared Resources added that they run disaster scenarios to test these situations.
- The Cabinet Member for Organizational Transformation thanked the Committee, officers, and partners for their participation. They emphasised the constant effort to protect against cybersecurity issues and the desire to drive skills and talent within Newport. The Cabinet Member for Organizational Transformation highlighted the importance of reducing costs and utilising the skills of the SRS team. They also emphasised the importance of data management and usage.

The Chair thanked the officer for attending.

Conclusions

- The Committee expressed their gratitude to the invitees for attending, and commended the positive report, Members praised the enthusiasm displayed by the officers when discussing the report and the strength of the partnership. Members also commended the financial information provided in the report, appreciating the assurance that funds were reserved for various projects.
- Members requested statistics concerning the diversity of apprentices within the partnership.
- Members were pleased to receive the news that the upcoming council website will prioritise accessibility for users and open-source compatibility for future updates. They also expressed an interest in receiving examples of open-source websites used by other local authorities.
- The Committee would like more information on the Disaster Recovery Plan when developed as part of next year's report. Members also asked for an Information report in the interim if available.
- The Committee would like to know if there is a direct contact number for Members to contact SRS for issues.
- Members would like to know the viability of recruiting more organisations into the partnership.
- Members would like to know if there has been any incidents with breakdowns which have resulted in issues with safeguarding in schools.

4 One Newport Well-being Plan Final Report

Invitees

- Janice Dent (Policy and Partnership Manager)

- Dr Bethan Bowden (Consultant in Public Health Aneurin Bevan University Health Board)
- Harriet Bleach (Senior Officer Natural Resources Wales)
- Wayne Tucker (Senior Policy and Partnership Officer)

The Policy and Partnership Manager provided an overview of the report, expressing the Partnership's satisfaction with its outcomes, marking the successful conclusion of a five-year plan, and highlighted the significant achievements of the Partners and their commitment to the partnership. The Consultant in Public Health from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board commended the efforts made to engage stakeholders and the positive reception of the participation budgeting initiative. They specifically praised the genuine partnership relationship that has been fostered.

The following was discussed:

- The Committee expressed their gratitude for the report and its content. They also enquired about the purple flag status and its application criteria. The Policy and Partnership Manager stated that they are currently in the process of reapplying for the purple flag status and assured the Committee that they will provide the requested information.
- The Committee asked if the partners had engaged in discussions with entertainers and performers to gather their perspectives on the city centre. The Policy and Partnership Manager acknowledged this query and mentioned that they will provide feedback to the partners regarding this matter.
- The Committee enquired about the initiatives and activities being undertaken to engage and provide opportunities for the youth. The Policy and Partnership Manager responded by stating that the prevention and inclusion service area specifically targets youth. They emphasised that a significant amount of work is being carried out in this regard. Additionally, they offered to provide more detailed information outside of the meeting.
- The Committee enquired about any potential changes to the list of partners, including additions or removals. The Policy and Partnership Manager informed the Committee that they continuously evaluate their partners. The Head of People, Policy and Transformation highlighted that Newport has prioritised going beyond the statutory partners, distinguishing themselves from other authorities.
- The Committee raised a question regarding the partners' commitment to continuous learning and improvement on an annual basis. The Policy and Partnership Manager responded by explaining that the learning and improvement process follows a bottom-up approach. They emphasised that continuous improvement is encouraged and addressed from all aspects of the partnerships.
- The Committee acknowledged the significance of the environmental work that will bring benefits to Newport. They expressed their gratitude to the officers for their efforts in this regard.
- The Committee raised concerns about whether sufficient measures have been taken to mitigate flood risks in Newport. The Senior Officer from Natural Resources Wales responded by stating that the next Gwent Wellbeing Plan will address climate change, which includes flood risk management. They further informed the Committee that Steve Morgan, the Head of South East Wales Operations at Natural Resources Wales, will directly engage with Committee members to discuss flood risk issues outside of the meeting. The Committee requested that a report on flood risk from

Natural Resources Wales be presented to the Committee for further discussion and consideration.

The Chair thanked the officers for attending.

Conclusions

- The Committee expressed their gratitude to the invitees for attending, and were highly impressed by the information received. Members observed that the work between the partners was significant over the last five years, and again wished to make comment about the enthusiasm of the partners presenting their report. Members also wished to note that the work being conducted by the partnership is inspiring to young people, such as helping to create green spaces in area of the city that have not previously been green, and this would pay dividends to the future generations.
- The Committee requested for the criteria for Purple Flag status to be shared with the Committee Members as a written update. Members also queried whether the partnership have spoken to or made contact with performers or entertainers in the city centre about what their thoughts are about the city centre and if they have any suggestions on how to improve the entertainment experience in the city centre.
- The Committee recommended that there be permanent signage for the Bee Friendly Cities.
- Members request if Natural Resource Wales could produce an information report about Flood Risk, including information about which areas of Newport are at risk of flooding and future projections of flooding.

5 Scrutiny Adviser Reports

Invitee:

- Neil Barnett – Scrutiny Adviser

a) Forward Work Programme Update

The Scrutiny Adviser presented the Forward Work Programme, and informed the Committee of the topics due to be discussed at the next two committee meetings:

Tuesday 10th October 2023, the agenda items;

- Gwent Regional Partnership Board Area Plan 2023 – 2027
- Gwent Regional Partnership Board Annual Report 2022-2023

Wednesday 8th November 2023, the agenda items;

- Norse Joint Venture Partnership – Strategy and Performance Review
- Draft Safer Newport Strategic Needs Assessment

b) Action Sheet

The Scrutiny Adviser presented the action sheet to the Committee.

6 Live meeting

The meeting terminated at 6.29 pm