

# Minutes



## Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

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Date: 23 June 2023

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors P Hourahine (Chair), M Al-Nuaimi, M Evans, C Baker-Westhead and B Davies, G Horton

In Attendance: Samantha Schanzer (Scrutiny Adviser), Janice Dent (Policy and Partnership Manager), Tracy McKim (Head of People, Policy and Transformation), Joseph Chambers (Welsh Language Officer) and Donald Mutale (Senior Equalities Officer)

Apologies: Councillors L James and P Bright

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### 1 Apologies

Cllrs P Bright and L James

### 2 Declarations of Interest

None.

### 3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Committee member who had made the previous referral regarding Levelling Up Bids asked that their disappointment towards lack of attendance by the Head of Regeneration and Democratic Services and Electoral Register Manager to answer questions regarding the referral be recorded.

The Committee noted the vote tally was wrong on the last agenda item.

The Committee asked for an update in relation to the university being contacted to question why there has been a reduced student number.

- The Scrutiny Advisor informed Committee that the university already produced monthly reports on student numbers which could be obtained for the Committee as a first point of information.

The Committee asked if the other members were content with the officer's work at getting a response.

- The Committee feels they were happy with the officers' actions.
- The Committee will ask the strategic director to hasten a response.

The Committee noted a recommendation to make training courses simpler.

- The Committee noted that this was given an adequate response that due to NCC not providing the courses they can't control the functionality.

The Scrutiny Advisor noted recommendations are made in good faith but do not have to be implemented as they are only recommendations.

- The Committee asked for this could be passed on to the Chief Executive for response regarding recommendations and who is responsible for monitoring them, implementation or otherwise.
- The Scrutiny Advisor informed Committee a more robust outcomes monitoring system could be explored.

The minutes of the previous meeting held **2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023** were **accepted as a true and accurate record**.

#### 4 **Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report**

The report was presented by the Head of People, Policy, and Transformation, the Policy and Partnership Manager and the Welsh Language Officer.

##### **Questions:**

The Committee would have liked the report presented earlier in the scrutiny calendar due to its timeframes.

- The Head of People, Policy and Transformation noted that it was the first report published and would be tricky to get it published any earlier in the municipal year.

The Committee felt that the report did not present the achievements of the previous 12 months as efficiently as could have been done, and noted the target of having 1 million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050. The Committee felt that more information in the "going forward" section of the report, and more information about the promotion of the Welsh language could be included.

The Committee asked how Newport compared to other councils within Gwent and across Wales.

- The Head of People, Policy and Transformation noted the disappointment expressed and highlighted that the layout of the report has been styled from prior feedback about bringing the report to life to how they are working against their plan,
- The Head of People, Policy and Transformation informed Committee that information from other Local Authorities was not yet available to compare but agreed that comparing against Gwent would be beneficial.
- The Policy and Partnership Manager highlighted that the report has more of a lively feel due to feedback from last year.
- The Policy and Partnership Manager Highlighted for 6 months there was no Welsh Language Policy Officer but now one was in place who was dedicated to pursuing opportunities and making use of funding.
- The Head of People, Policy and Transformation noted that they will pursue all opportunities for funding regardless of the term of funding as it all benefits Newport and its residents.

The Committee whether the Welsh Language Officer felt that meaningful change could occur as a result of their work.

- The Welsh Language Officer felt that developing partnerships and taking all opportunities would result in meaningful change.

The Committee asked for more data to be included to demonstrate the strategy's successes or challenges. The Committee accepted that the report shouldn't just be data. The Committee also asked for a breakdown of the types of children in Welsh medium schools to highlight if there were any groups missing the opportunity.

- The Policy and Partnership Manager agreed that they could speak to Education services to include the data but typically WESP data was presented separately in Service Area Plans and Mid and End of Year reports.
- The Committee would like the figures to see if the perception is wrong.
- The Policy and Partnership Manager challenged the perception of only middle class children learning Welsh and highlighted the importance of challenging and changing this perception to benefit the residents of Newport.

The Committee congratulated Officers on only receiving 5 complaints in the year relating to Welsh Language. The Committee expressed that they liked the reporting format and that it was clear and concise but felt that the volume of data was unnecessary. The Committee felt that using more meaningful data to demonstrate figures, trends and explanations rather than a volume of data which had small impact on the work done would be better for Committee's understanding of impact of the Strategy. The Committee agreed that looking at Gwent would be fair and useful.

- The Head of People, Policy and Transformation highlighted that they had to capture the requirements of the report and noted that other reports captured other things that might be useful in understanding this report, such as Service Area Plans and their Mid and End of Year reports.
- The Head of People, Policy and Transformation expressed that Newport was doing well in terms of population averages and that the data presented does tell more of a story.
- The Committee noted that this point could be discussed later to specify the recommendation.
- The Head of People, Policy and Transformation noted that any recommendations could be implemented to this report, not just the following year's.

The Committee noted that the report stated that all communities would be engaged with but highlighted that refugee, migrant and minority ethnic communities were singled out in the point below. The Committee asked why they were singled out for Welsh language promotion work.

- The Head of People, Policy and Transformation noted that the first point regarding all communities could be reworded as the purpose was to note engagement with all of Newport's communities. The Head of People, Policy and Transformation noted that the second point was specifying communities that could be reached out to. The Head of People, Policy and Transformation stressed the importance of reaching out to these communities and that it was culturally significant work which had started and would continue.
- The Policy and Partnership Manager agreed with the importance of reaching out to communities to make them feel included and a part of the Welsh culture. The Policy and Partnership Manager agreed that the first point could be reworded for clarity.
- The Senior Equalities Manager highlighted the importance of this work and the academic studies which concluded that those from minority backgrounds experience greater barriers to access. The Senior Equalities Manager reassured Committee that they were taking steps like these to address these barriers and provide access.

The Committee felt that the Welsh Language Champion should comment on the report.

- The Head of People, Policy and Transformation informed the Committee that the Welsh language champion and Welsh language staff see the report as it is being written.
- The Committee felt that a comment from the Welsh Language Champion should be included within the report.
- The Head of People, Policy and Transformation informed Committee that the foreword in the report will have a comment from the Cabinet Member and Welsh Language Champion.

The Committee noted this report will be used as benchmarking tool and asked whether there were any mechanisms to compare to other governing bodies, not just Councils but authorities such as the Police, to see if there are any methods that Newport City Council could benefit from using.

- The Head of People, Policy and Transformation noted the benchmarking data was lapsed during Covid by Welsh Government but would improve in future reports.
- The Head of People, Policy and Transformation explained that work was done with multiple partners to ensure best practice could be expanded.

The Committee asked for an explanation of the Welsh Language Group.

- The Welsh Language Officer informed Committee that this group consists of representatives from different areas of the Council who discuss the implementation plan which involves the Welsh language, identifying any challenges or areas of success and development. The Welsh Language Officer informed Committee that the group includes representation from Social Care, HR, Senior Management and Equalities and that they meet quarterly to look at issues, develop plans, etc.

The Committee thanked Officers for their attendance.

### **1. Conclusion of Committee Reports**

- The Committee agreed that the report was a true and fair reflection of the Council's Welsh Language performance over the period and demonstrated the continued commitment to the Welsh language and areas of challenge, success and development.
- The Committee felt that the reporting style needed to be more balanced including more quantitative and meaningful data, more hyperlinks to relevant Council plans for further reading, comparative data with other comparable Local Authorities such as authorities in Gwent and Cardiff. The Committee agreed that case studies and feedback should continue to be included to portray a fuller picture.
- The Committee recommended that the priorities highlighted in Section 8 be reworded for clarity.
- The Committee felt that a comment from the Welsh Language Champion would be beneficial within the report.

## **5 Scrutiny Adviser Reports**

The Scrutiny Advisor highlighted that the meeting scheduled on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023 had been rescheduled to the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed to be **28<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 10am**.

## **6 Live Event**

[The recording of the meeting can be watched here.](#)

