

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 17 October 2018

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Cllrs Debbie Wilcox (Chair); P Cockeram, D Harvey, J Mudd; R Jeavons, D Mayer, M Whitcutt

Apologies: Cllrs R Truman and G Giles

In attendance: Mr W Godfrey; Mr J Harris; Mrs B Owen; Mr G Price; Mr M Rushworth; Mr R Cornwall

Part 1

1 Apologies for Absence

Noted above.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2018 were confirmed as a true record by the Cabinet.

4 WAO Annual Improvement Report

Cabinet reviewed the finalised Annual Improvement Report (AIR) prepared by the Wales Audit Office (WAO). The report described how the council is meeting its duty to demonstrate continuous improvement under the Local Government Measure (2009).

The Local Government Measure (2009) introduced a new form of improvement reporting required of the Auditor General that sets out how well councils are improving their services.

Legislation introduced in April 2010 requires councils to make arrangements to improve their services and the way that they work.

Each year, the Auditor General must report on how well Welsh councils are planning for improvement and delivering their services. Drawing on the work of the relevant Welsh Inspectorates, and the audit work of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) and the Appointed Auditor the report presents a picture of improvement over the last year.

During the course of the year, the Auditor General did not make any new formal recommendations. However, a number of proposals for improvement have been made and these are mentioned in the

report. Progress against these recommendations will be monitored internally and by the Wales Audit Office through their ongoing programme of work.

Based on, and limited to, the work carried out by the WAO and relevant regulators, the Auditor General concluded that the Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement for 2017-18. This shows that the council is continuing to improve despite the financial, legislative and population growth challenges that it continues to face.

The Annual Improvement Report is not an exhaustive assessment of all services; rather, it focuses on a range of priorities for improvement.

The Leader was pleased to report that Newport City Council is the only authority in Gwent not to have any services in special measures in the last five years.

Will Godfrey commended staff for their hard work in achieving this.

Non Jenkins (WAO) confirmed the report is a summary of everything done over the last year and that reports are on the WAO website.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed the report.

5 WAO Scrutiny Fit for the Future Report

The Leader introduced the report and explained that as part of their programme of work for 2017/18 the Wales Audit Office (WAO) reviewed the Council's overview and scrutiny arrangements. The main aim of the review was to assess how 'Fit for the Future' scrutiny functions in responding to current challenges including the Well-being of Future Generations (WFG) Act.

The review also included how Councils are beginning to undertake scrutiny of the Public Service Boards.

The Review was undertaken during December 2017 and January 2018. The WAO reviewed documents, observed a sample of scrutiny committee meetings, interviewed officers and held focus groups with Members involved in scrutiny to obtain their views on the Council's current scrutiny arrangements and understand how the Council is approaching and intends to respond to the challenges identified.

The Review found that the Council's leadership is committed to improving its scrutiny function and to meet current and future challenges for scrutiny, but Members need a fuller understanding of their scrutiny role and more effective, timely training. The WAO came to this conclusion because:

- a. The Council has made recent changes to its scrutiny arrangements, which now need to be strengthened and embedded effectively in order for it to be well-placed to meet current and future challenges;
- b. The Council is creating a new environment for scrutiny to drive improvement, however Members need a fuller understanding of their role in scrutiny and timely and specific member training to improve their effectiveness; and
- c. The Council is improving the planning and operation of its scrutiny function, which can be strengthened by greater alignment between the work of scrutiny and Cabinet.

The WAO made six Proposals for Improvement:

The Council's scrutiny function could be further strengthened by:

P1 Providing a structured and timely member development programme to improve members' scrutiny skills and improve their understanding of their scrutiny role;

P2 Effectively holding Cabinet Members to account for service performance when invited to scrutiny meetings;

P3 Improving the planning and links between the forward work programme of scrutiny committees and Cabinet;

P4 Providing further training for scrutiny members on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act to improve their understanding and consideration of the Act when undertaking scrutiny activity;

P5 Reviewing the impact of the new scrutiny structure and arrangements in driving improvement; and

P6 Improving the public's engagement with the scrutiny function by using a wider range of engagement methods.

The Council has provided the WAO with a management response and created an action plan to address the Proposals for Improvement.

Non Jenkins (WAO) thanked all that were involved in this review: the key message from the WAO is to keep the momentum going and learn from what is working and what needs to be tweaked/changed going forward.

The Leader thanked the WAO for the review and confirmed the Council will learn lessons from it.

Councillor Jeavons stated that training should also be extended to the role of Chair of Scrutiny. In addition, Councillor Cockeram stated that more policy development is required to be undertaken by Scrutiny.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed the report and to initiate the Action Plan to address the Proposals for Improvement.

6 Final Year End Analysis of Performance Indicators

Each year data is submitted to Data Cymru (previously called Data Unit Wales) for relative comparison alongside other Welsh Authorities. The dataset submitted is known as the 'Public Accountability Measures' (PAMs) and enables local authorities to provide an account of their performance to the public, including comparing their performance with that of other authorities. The PAMs also enable the public to hold the authority to account over issues that matter most to them.

In 2017/18, the PAM dataset comprised of 26 performance indicators, but comparisons for only 18 of these have been published by Data Cymru; only 14 have data directly comparable to 2016/17. The remaining eight performance indicators are due to be published later in the year. The 2016/17 year-end performance analysis compared the data for 24 performance indicators.

Against a backdrop of budget cuts and limited resources, Newport has continued to improve performance in national indicators. The improvements reflect significant efforts made in service areas within the Council.

Performance for 2017/18 showed:

- 59% of our performance indicators have performed better than target;

- 36% of our performance indicators have performed better than last year;
- 40% of our performance indicators have performed better than Wales' average

The published data indicates that three of the performance indicators are in the top quartile and a further five are in the upper middle quartile. The analysis detailed in Appendix 1 of the report gives the performance for 2017/18 and includes the comparison of Newport City Council in relation to the other Welsh Local Authorities.

It is important to note that these comparator figures do not take into consideration the potential impacts of financial position, population demographics or service demands. It is worth noting that Newport City Council has historically low levels of spending. The Leader impressed on everyone the importance of the Council's performance against SSA.

Cabinet noted that the published comparative data ranks local authorities against each other but does not include any qualitative standard of performance.

Whilst Cabinet acknowledged that improvement is needed, and maximising the Council's performance within the resources available will be a priority, there have been some positive improvements:

- Significant progress has been made in the percentage of pupil attendance in primary schools improving from 21st to 14th best in Wales since last year; (this improvement is unprecedented in Newport with many people collaborating to achieve this improvement with the 'attendance matters' campaign). It was noted that there are very fine margins between some of the indicators – for example, a 1% increase in pupil attendance would put Newport City Council in the top quartile.
- To be able to live independently is a priority for many residents; the Council has continued to deliver Disabled Facility Grants within statutory timescales and are the 4th best in Wales for this indicator; (this was an important issue for the Cabinet Member as at one time Newport was 22nd so a massive improvement for Newport which has been achieved without using extra funding);
- The Pride in Newport campaign has continued throughout 2017/18, which has resulted in nearly 100% of reported fly-tipping incidents being cleared within five working days of the incident being reported.

In addition to the national indicators, the Council has adopted four Well-being Objectives and eight Improvement Plan Objectives, which were selected following consultation with the public, elected members and staff. The objectives include some national performance indicators as well as locally set performance indicators, which support the delivery of the objectives. The annual review of both the Well-being objectives and the Improvement Plan objectives show that the Council has made good progress against the areas that are important to residents.

Councillor Jeavons referenced page 59 (PAM/020) percentage of principal A roads that are in overall poor condition. Newport is in Quartile 1 - Newport's A roads are better than the Welsh average.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed the report.

7 Academic Results for Newport Schools

The Leader introduced this report in the Cabinet Member's absence and was delighted to report on the achievements made.

The report focussed on the Teacher Assessment Outcomes for the City of Newport for 2017/18. The Leader reported on the high level of performance, which continues at Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and most notably Key Stage 3, which is above the national average for the first time since 2011/12.

The investment in Key Stage 3 will continue to assist positive outcomes at Key Stage 4, which in turn will ensure a greater volume of pupils ready to gain post-16 qualifications and apprenticeships, supporting the continued vision of Newport as a thriving city.

A new revised curriculum will be published in April 2019 and bring with it a new set of performance measures for students. The Leader is looking forward to seeing a more detailed paper coming to Cabinet in 2019, demonstrating how Newport will implement this huge curriculum change.

Key points to note within the report were:

- Consistently strong performance of Newport schools at Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3;
- Newport continues to perform significantly above the Welsh average in the Foundation Phase Indicator;
- In 2016/17 Newport ranked 6th out of 22 Local Authorities in Wales – significantly above the Free School Meal ranking of 15th place.
- In 2016/17 Newport performed 1.9 percentage points above the Welsh average – last year Newport performed 3.8 percentage points above the Welsh average.
- Core Subject Indicator attainment at Key Stage 2 continues to improve and to perform above the Welsh average
- Core Subject Indicator in Key Stage 3 has continued to improve and is above the Welsh average for the first time in recent years following a 3.1 percentage point improvement in 2017/18;
- Newport's performance in English, Maths and Science at National Curriculum Levels 6+ and 7+ is consistently above the Welsh average
- An increase in Newport school attendance performance with Newport primary school attendance moving from 21st to 14th ranking position and secondary schools moved from 21st to 19th position in 2017/18.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed and welcomed the report.

8 Independent Living Strategy 2017-2022

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, compels local authorities to promote a greater choice of services, to reduce dependency, and to focus on preventative services. The Act also requires local authorities to develop new service models and user-led initiatives, such as co-production and social enterprises. Rather than looking at accommodation needs as merely bricks and mortar, we need to continue to consider the care and support models in the context of these priorities set out in the Act.

The following are key principles of the Independent Living Strategy:

- To reflect significant changes in legislation, policy and planning
- To reflect changing demographic pressures
- To ensure effective partnership working with key stakeholders
- To make effective use of diminished resources and working within budget constraints
- To identify a range of approaches to promote independence
- To encourage creativity and innovation

The Independent Living Strategy identifies a series of actions to develop community services and an extensive range of benefits that will arise. The expected benefits include reduced reliance on the Council, increased diversity of support and more sustainable, cost effective provision, and supporting people to achieve better outcomes as they become more independent.

The challenges facing the Council are significant, with many of the young adults with learning disabilities presenting complex needs and conditions. Alongside this, there are a significant number of older adults with learning disabilities who continue to be supported by their families. The Strategy highlights the importance of planning for those future needs by ensuring that Social Services and Strategic Housing continue to work together to develop appropriate accommodation and support models. This will require further partnership working with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and will enable the Council to access vital capital funding streams.

The Strategy is aimed at delivery over the period 2017-22, but it is anticipated that it provides an effective blueprint for future planning and partnership working in the years ahead.

Cabinet was asked to authorise approval of the Independent Living Strategy 2017-2022 as it enables the council to fulfil its statutory responsibilities to develop creative and innovative approaches to promoting independence.

The Cabinet recorded a note of thanks to stakeholders and partners as without their creativity and time this strategy would not have been achieved.

Decision

Cabinet approved the Strategy

9 Director of Social Services Annual Report

The Leader introduced this report the purpose of which is to set out the local authority's improvement journey in providing services to people in Newport, who access information, advice and assistance, and those individuals and carers in receipt of care and support. This report sets out to demonstrate how Newport Social Services has responded to the new requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and how we have promoted and accounted for the delivery of well-being standards to the citizens of Newport.

The report is intended not to detail process but to focus on the activities and outcomes achieved and the impact this has had on citizens in Newport. The report is a significant review of the whole Council and not singularly the report of the Director of Social Services. The evidence of citizens has been used throughout the report, as has the contribution of our partner agencies and commissioned services.

The report has three main features:

- It reflects two dynamic services which are delivering services in new ways in changing environments;

- The well-known budget challenge is a necessary consideration across all Social Services operations;
- Performance and delivery have been maintained – a significant achievement in the circumstances

The well-being objectives wind through all social services operations and tie closely to the Newport City Council Corporate Plan, notably:

- To improve skills, educational outcomes and employment opportunities.
- To enable people to be healthy, independent & resilient.
- To build cohesive & sustainable communities.

It was noted that each year financial constraints become more significant when available budgets are set against rising costs and increasing demand. There is a continuous striving to minimise costs and identify savings. In Children's Services, efforts have concentrated on addressing the shortage of placement options and the associated costs as well as appropriately minimising the numbers of looked after children. Work in Adults Services has included the managing of demand and the building of capacity through the integration of health and social care. As usual, there has also been a drive to minimise delayed transfers of care, which were kept at manageable levels though there remains scope to improve. The Care in Wales Inspection Reports and Performance Indicators demonstrate however, that the service delivered to children and adults is being maintained, a significant achievement.

In addition to legislative change and financial challenges, implementation of the Welsh Community Care and Information System (WCCIS) has been delivered. This took considerable planning, training and management and means that Newport City Council will be able to take full advantage of this still developing case information system designed for Councils and Health Boards.

Partnership working has developed further with the other South East Wales Local Authorities with numerous joint initiatives maintained and developed:

- The integrated partnership with Barnardo's has remained a strength with a retendering for the strategic partnership delivered by Barnardo's recently completed.
- The Regional Partnership Board, at which the third sector, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and South East Wales Local Authorities are represented, has emerged as a primary route for the transformation of health and social care and Newport City Council engages fully in this process.
- The opening of Ty Eirlys in partnership with Pobl and the joint working with the third sector, Health Board and Gwent Local Authorities in general

2018/19 will prove no less challenging but social services in Newport City Council are lean, efficient and well placed to respond.

The Cabinet Member commended the staff for bringing this excellent report forward and the ground-breaking initiatives being taken forward within the service area.

Councillor Whitcutt (seconded by Councillor Mayer) commended the staff and the Cabinet Member for their sterling work in delivering such services under great pressure.

Decision

Cabinet unanimously agreed to endorse the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services for 2017-18.

10 Work Programme

The Leader of the council presented the latest update to the work programme.

Decision:

To agree the updated work programme.

11 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 14th November 2018, at 4.00 pm in Committee Room 1, Civic Centre, Newport