

Minutes



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Date: 18 April 2019

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors J Guy (Chair), M Al-Nuaimi, G Berry, C Evans, M Evans, C Ferris and K Thomas

In Attendance: D Cooke (Scrutiny Adviser), L Davies (Governance Officer), K Duffin (Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing), J Harris (Strategic Director - People), S A Jenkins (Head of Children & Young Peoples Services), T McKim (Partnership Policy & Involvement Manager) and M Ryan (Corporate Safeguarding Manager)

Apologies: Councillors L Lacey

1 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Kate Thomas declared an interest as an employee of GAVO

2 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 07/03/2019**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2019 were approved as a true and accurate record.

3 **WAO - Wellbeing of Future Generations report**

Attendees:

- Gareth Jones (Performance Audit Lead)
- Tracy Mckim (Policy, Partnership & Involvement Manager)
- Keir Duffin (Head of Regeneration Investment and Housing)
- Councillor Jane Mudd (Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing)

The Wales Audit Officer presented a brief overview to the Committee and highlighted the key areas for consideration. The Wales Audit Office report focused on the use of the sustainable development principles contained in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, when developing and meeting the Council's Wellbeing Objectives. For this report the Policy, Partnership and Involvement Manager informed the Chair that they had invited the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, and the Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing to attend and contribute to the meeting.

Members asked the following:

- Members raised concern that the Council was not focusing on the long term needs, tending to address issues with a short term approach. Officers replied to Members explaining that focus was on the five ways of working as set out in the Act, considering how to use the five ways of working for a positive outcome. To do this an authority must have taken all five ways of working into account collectively.

- A Member asked the Officers to explain about the M4 bridge toll risk outlined in the report. Officers replied explaining that the review was undertaken before the toll was removed, there were many uncertainties surrounding the outcome of the removal of the toll.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing addressed the Committee explaining that the closure of the M4 bridge toll would have an economic benefit on the City, with the attraction of the ongoing regeneration of Newport, which would attract investors and visitors.

- A Member asked Officers to clarify from the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act report, if the Authority was in line with other Councils and where could the Authority get further direction on better implementing the five ways of working. The Performance Audit lead replied explaining that all Councils were in the early stages of the process, comparisons were difficult to make as the audits were not all carried out in the same sectors through the 22 Authorities. A report on the examinations would be presented to the National Assembly for Wales at least one year before each Assembly election. The first report must be published by 2020, before the 2021 Assembly election. The Policy Partnership and Involvement Manager confirmed that the Authority were using the Future Generations tool kit, and working with the commission's officer to identify areas for improvement.

The Head of Regeneration Investment and Housing drew the Committee Members attention to the City's, Economic Growth Strategy, which presented an opportunity to extend the vision into the longer-term and was considered a strength by the Wales Audit Office.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing highlighted to Committee Members the ongoing City Centre projects working with young hard to reach groups at St Pauls Walk, which was a project funded by the Heritage fund. As well as the collaborative projects with City Centre stakeholders to reduce the number of derelict buildings in the City Centre, which would increase the amount of housing stock.

- A Member expressed concerns regarding the anti-social behaviour at St Pauls Walk, asking if the Authority would readdress hard to reach groups as part of the City Centre Master Plan. The Head of Regeneration Investment and Housing replied explaining that the Communities First initiative had engaged with 10 thousand residents from Newport, receiving around 400 consultation responses in connection with the City Centre Master Plan. Officers also confirmed that engagement with hard to reach groups had been conducted through the bus WIFI, which was largely used by young residents of the City who would not normally engage with consultations. Officers confirmed that a follow up of numbers would be provided to Committee.
- A Member of the Committee enquired about what progress the Council had made towards embedding an integrated approach to the Act, asking where that evidence was gathered to inform the statement. Officers confirmed that the objective was asking the Council to work collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to consider how the Act and its delivery would affect the Councils objectives. The Performance Audit Lead confirmed that the approach to the City Centre regeneration recognised that it could only be achieved with interventions that deal with the whole system, such as the environment, community safety, health and wellbeing, not to just focus on economic factors.
- Members of the Committee commented that the regeneration of properties in the City Centre, had attracted families with children, Members expressed concerns for those children who had a lack of activities and open spaces to play. The Policy Partnership & Involvement Manager replied to Committee explaining that stakeholders and partners

including the Police and health board had met to discuss the need for green and safe spaces within the City Centre, with Natural Resource Wales highlighting potential methods and programmes that can provide these areas to the City Centre.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member, Performance Audit Lead, The Cabinet Member and Officers for attending.

Conclusions on the Wales Audit Office Report

The Committee noted the Wales Audit Office – Wellbeing of Future Generations report prior to it being reported to the Cabinet.

During the course of discussion, the Committee asked the Performance Audit Lead to provide information on who from the Newport Economic Network were interviewed for the report as contextual information for the Committee.

Comments on the Revised of the Economic Regeneration Strategy

Specific to the Economic Regeneration element of the WAO report, it was noted that the recommendations and comments from WAO would be the focus of the Committees consideration when it receives the redraft of the Economic Regeneration Strategy at a future meeting.

A Committee Member asked for it to be noted that the delay to the Committee considering the redrafted Economic Regeneration strategy was not acceptable. The Scrutiny Adviser outlined to reasons that had been given by the officers to the change in timescale, notably to allow for the WAO recommendations presented to the Committee at today's meeting to be considered and approved by Cabinet, and incorporated into the redrafted strategy.

The Committee requested the following information be provided for reference:

- Confirmation as to whether minutes were recorded at the Newport Economic Network's meetings.
- Confirmation as to when City centre stakeholders were consulted with on the City Centre Masterplan.

4 Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report

Attendee:

- James Harris - Strategic Director - People
- Sally Ann Jenkins - Head of Children & Young Peoples Services,
- Mary Ryan – Head of Corporate Safeguarding

The Head of Corporate Safeguarding presented a brief overview to the Committee and highlighted key areas for consideration. It was explained that annual corporate safeguarding report monitored, scrutinised and objectively planned on the themes of “*safeguarding*” being fundamentally embedded within all aspects of Council services, functions and duties. The report provided Member with essential and key information to allow them to effectively scrutinise the Council's safeguarding practice, and to update Members on the work that had been undertaken to improve arrangements for safeguarding and protecting children and adults who require specific Council services. The Officers invited Members questions on the report.

Members asked the following:

- In response to questions from Member regarding DBS checks, the Officers confirmed DBS updates were carried out every 3 years. Responding to comments about the accuracy of the DBS checks the Officers acknowledged, the DBS check were accurate the day they were made, any offenses committed after this date were not captured. The Authority were working towards establishing good practices, the Authority was in a similar position to the Health Sector in finding ways of improving the safeguarding practices.

- A Member enquired about the increasing demand on Social Services, with safeguarding concerns and budget cuts increasing, asking how the Safeguarding Hub dealt with those issues. Officers explained that although each service area was already extensively stretched, the proposals within the action plan were realistic within existing resources; they were cost effective without the requirement for any of the work to be out-sourced and would ensure compliance in terms of the Wales Audit Office recommendations. The Officer explained to the Committee that there were increases on demands for those services, but as the area was one of growth, The Council were continuing to look at smarter ways of working, and how staff would be rewarded.
- Members expressed concerns regarding the deadlines not clearly set out in the action plans; Members felt that there was very little measurable information within the report to ensure effective scrutiny could take place. Officers replied to Members explaining that the targets and measures that were reported on was outside of their control, but they would look at how they could include more information on deadlines in future reports.
- A Member enquired about the Safeguarding Hub structure, asking Officers what were the implications of the two vacant social worker posts, and if that could have an impact in the future. Officers confirmed that the posts were in fact no longer vacant, and felt that there were no concerns in the recruiting of staff, as any posts that became available could be advertised immediately. Staff were able to move around the service area to cover any gaps which reduced the need for agency staff, the service also had student Social Workers who spent around 6 months on placement, and the Officers were confident that these students would return to support the Service Area over the summer months.
- Members asked if six Social Workers were an adequate number of staff, taking into consideration the amount of children the Authority look after. The Officers confirmed that the six Social Workers mentioned were the Duty Team. Officers also mentioned that Care Inspectorate Wales had recently completed an engagement visit and reported no concerns in this area.
- Members of the Committee enquired whether the Safeguarding Hub had sufficient support from the Police. Officers replied explaining that communication between the Police and the Hub was very good and, measures would be put in place to ensure Police support was continual.
- Members asked Officers to explain how the Authority ensured the safeguarding of children that were placed out of County. Officers confirmed that a child placed outside of the Authority would receive the same support as a child placed inside. All out of County placements were offered an advocate, all placements were regulated, and the service was committed to reviewing how the Authority could have brought children closer to home.
- A Member expressed concern around the way key data for the Child Protection Unit was presented in the report. Members felt that the information needed to be more detailed, with the use of percentages and comparable data from previous years. The Head of Corporate Safeguarding responded to the Committee Members observations ensuring the data would be made clearer and self-explanatory for ongoing reports.

The Chair thanked the Officers for attending.

Conclusion - Comments to the Cabinet

The Committee noted the Corporate Safeguarding and agreed to forward the minutes to the Cabinet as a summary of the issues raised.

The Committee wished to make the following comments to the Cabinet:

1. The Committee noted that some of the information received was out of date such as the VAWDASV training figures. It was recommended that in future annual safeguarding reports contained up to date information on deadlines related to actions in the individual team plans.
2. The Committee requested that in future reports information was presented itself in a way that lends itself to scrutiny. For instance where possible using percentages instead of figures, and provide comparable data from previous years or other local authorities if that data is not available.

5 Annual Forward Work Programme

Attendees:

- Daniel Cooke (Scrutiny Adviser)

The Scrutiny Adviser introduced the Draft Annual Forward Work Programme to the Committee and discussed each item individually with the Members, the following possible agenda items were discussed with Members;

- Civil Parking Enforcement Implementation review – The Committee were informed that this item would be broken down into two separate items with a verbal update pre implementation to the Committee on 6 June and a review of implementation in March 2020.
- Scrutiny Annual Report – The Committee were informed that the annual report on Scrutiny would be sent to the Committee on 6 June.
- Annual Corporate Report – The Scrutiny Adviser explained that this year the Committee would receive a report on the Council's performance towards achieving their objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan.
- Annual Information Risk Report - The report would look at how the Council was managing the risks relating to IT and feed their comments to Cabinet.
- Public Convenience Strategy – The Committee accepted the referral to scrutinise the Public Convenience Strategy prior to the report being finalised.
- Draft Economic Regeneration Strategy – The Draft Economic Strategy will be provided to the Committee for their comments prior to the strategy being published. The Committee voiced their disappointment at the delay in receiving the strategy and requested that everything that can be done is done to bring the strategy earlier. The Scrutiny Adviser stated that he would seek feedback from the Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing on the feasibility of this.
- Performance Management Strategy – Recommendations monitoring relating to the recommendations and comments made by the Committee when the Performance Management Strategy was brought to the Committee the year previous. The Scrutiny Adviser explained that this item was subject to change due to the Officers undertaking a review of the Strategy and the option of combining the Performance and Risk strategies into one document.

- 20 – 21 Draft Budget and MTFP Proposals - The Committee were informed that they would receive the report and would be able to make comments and recommendations to Cabinet on the public engagement and budget process of the setting of the MTFP and budget for the next financial year.
- Annual Corporate Safeguarding report – The Committee attention was drawn to the annual report that would be provided by the Head of Corporate Safeguarding, Director of Social Services and Head of Children and Young Peoples Services.

The Scrutiny Adviser discussed the potential Policy Review Group subjects or additional reports from Officers. These included; the use of Fairness Equality Impact Assessments across the Council when proposing changes to a service, the annual budget process and an update or follow up on the WAO Scrutiny 'Fit for Purpose' report.

The Committee would also be receiving all regulatory reports in the future. They would initially be sent to the Committee for information, and then the Committee would have to opportunity to add the report to a future agenda.

The Committee agreed the draft schedule of dates set out by the Scrutiny Adviser, with one exception. The meeting on the 6 of June clashed with a D-Day ceremony in the City Centre. The Committee requested that another time or date was secured. The Scrutiny Adviser would find an alternative and inform the Committee at a later date

The meeting terminated at 12.00 pm