Draft Minutes

NEWPORT CITY COUNCIL CYNGOR DINAS CASNEWYDD

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Date: 29th July 2022

Time: 10am

Venue: Hybrid Meeting

Present: Councillors P Hourahine (Chair), M Al-Nuaimi, M Evans, L James, B Davies, G Horton.

Tracy Mckim (The Head of People, Policy & Transformation), Mark Bleazard (Digital Services Manager), Dominic Gibbons (Digital Projects Manager), Sam Ali (Digital Projects Manager), Tariq Slaoui (Information Manager).

Samantha Schanzer (Scrutiny Advisor), Taylor Strange (Governance Officer), Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Advisor), Anne Jenkins (Governance Team Leader).

1. Apologies for Absence

Councillors C Baker-Westhead and Bright

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting: held 24th June 2022

A committee member asked that their status be marked as in attendance at the previous meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting held **24th June 2022** were **accepted as true and accurate record.**

4. Annual Digital Report 21-22

Invitees:

Tracy McKim (Head of People, Policy and Transformation)
Mark Bleazard (Digital Services Manager)
Dominic Gibbons (Digital Projects Manager)
Sam Ali (Digital Projects Manager)
Tariq Slaoui (Information Manager)

The Head of People, Policy & Transformation (PPT) gave a brief introduction to the report.

The Digital Services Manager gave a summary of the topics included in the report.

The committee thanked the Digital Services Manager for the thoroughness of the report.

Questions and comments:

The committee asked where the data centre was located.

- The Digital Services Manager informed him the data centre was called Vantage in Newport.

The committee asked how secure the data centre was.

- The Digital Services Manager assured committee that the provider carried out all necessary security checks, digitally and physically.

The committee asked for clarification regarding the priority of climate change within the report and what methods were being employed to work in a way mindful of it.

- The Head of PPT informed committee that while the climate report was placed at the bottom of the report, it was a priority. The Head of PPT highlighted some actions being carried out in line with the climate change priority such as improving energy efficiency and ensuring that the shift to digitalise doesn't add to the issue. The Head of PPT noted that there would be a separate climate change report.
- The Digital Services Manager apologised for the wording used when speaking about the climate change priority.
- The Digital Services Manager informed committee of some methods used to reduce the climate change impacts such as the cooling requirements at a large data centre being less impactful than having multiple smaller centres.

The committee asked how has the council calculated carbon savings from virtual meetings.

- The Head of PPT informed committee that this was expanded upon more in the climate change report, but some measures included checking heating usage in buildings etc.

The committee asked how power was generated at the data centre.

- The Digital Services Manager informed committee that he did not have the specific information at that time but assured committee that Vantage had accreditations relating to this.

The committee noted that they were impressed with the work done and progress made by the Digital team and thanked them for it.

The committee was concerned about call wait times, and with the suggestion of self-service use as a replacement.

- The Digital Services Manager assured committee that the use of the self-service facility was there to improve service quality and not replace call assistance. The Digital Service Manager highlighted the importance of having the choice to use both self-service and call assistance depending on the immediacy of the issue. The Digital

Service Manager informed committee that SRS were looking to develop other tools such as self-service password reset to help with common issues without having to log any calls.

- The Head of People, Policy & Transformation assured committee that this could be raised to SRS.

The committee asked what checks were in place to secure against data loss.

- The Digital Services Manager informed committee that the responsibility to limit data loss remained with the council but assured the committee that standards were maintained to keep data safe by all parties. The Digital Service Manager informed committee that these processes were reviewed.

The committee asked if there was any data of those satisfied with the SRS service to contextualise the percentages given.

- The Digital Services Manager did not have the data to hand but noted the comment and assured committee that this could be added to future reports.

The committee asked whether there was a reason for the variation in customer satisfaction percentages month to month.

- The Digital Services Manager could not give a specific reason for the variance but assured committee that SRS did monitor this. The Digital Services Managed informed committee there are monthly delivery group meetings to discuss performance but SRS had not highlighted any specific issues and assured committee that more more analysis could be done.

The committee asked what challenges there were regarding SRS call response times.

- The Digital Services Manager highlighted general challenges but felt that SRS were better able to give a response.
- The Head of PPT noted that calls resolved on the first point of contact led to longer call times.
- The committee asked if there was data for those calls resolved at first point of contact.
- The Digital Services Manager informed committee that only percentages were included but data could be added in future.

The committee asked how it was known that the average call response time was comparable to previous years when data was unavailable and why averages were not given for each system before combining.

- The Digital Services Manager informed committee that they could give averages for each system before combining. The Digital Services Manager clarified that he had attempted to explain that it had been a challenge in previous years but did not have the data to include.

The committee felt that a map detailing the WiFi available in the city centre would be beneficial for information.

The committee asked how RPA would affect residents and staff.

- The Head of PPT informed committee that RPA was implemented in areas where there was little or no resource rather than replace the existing resources. The Head of PPT hoped that the automation already put into play and future automation would free staff's time to focus on people-centred work.

The committee asked several questions in relation to a broader deployment of city Wi-Fi.

- The Digital Services Manager informed committee that WiFi was available across the city centre as well as in 50 buildings for public use. The Digital Services Manager clarified that it did not extend to the Friar's Walk area as there was existing provision there. The Digital Services Manager informed committee that there were discussions for the widening of the public WiFi range but was mindful of the cost associated. The Digital Services Manager highlighted that there had previously been a proposal to reduce public WiFi provision but that had been overturned.
- The committee expressed the importance of digital inclusion for the residents of Newport.

5. Digital Strategy Report 22-27

Invitees:

Tracy McKim (Head of People, Policy and Transformation)
Mark Bleazard (Digital Services Manager)
Dominic Gibbons (Digital Projects Manager)
Sam Ali (Digital Projects Manager)
Tariq Slaoui (Information Manager)

The Digital Services Manager presented the report and highlighted that the previous Digital Strategy had expired in 2020 but due to the pandemic, it was only able to be brought to committee now.

Questions and comments:

The committee noted that the previous report could have been included within this report.

The committee felt that the inclusion of timescales may be beneficial.

The committee expressed the importance of ease of use and accessibility for digital systems.

The committee commended the aims and objectives.

The committee asked how many people had been contacted when surveys had been conducted and their feedback.

- The Digital Services Manager informed committee that they had been aiming to strike a balance with the level of detail included for Scrutiny meetings. The Digital Service Manager noted that there had been good feedback from surveys in multiple formats, and approximated the responses were in the hundreds. The Digital Services Manager informed committee that a summary of these responses could be provided for information.

The committee asked how high as digital literacy.

- The Digital Services Manager informed committee that a question on digital literacy was included in the survey. The Digital Services Manager informed committee that levels have reduced but acknowledged that digital-alternative services were a priority. The Digital Services Manager highlighted the importance of training availability to improve digital skills for residents and staff.
- The Head of PPT agreed with committee about the importance of continuing face to face services for residents.

The committee asked whether there was data relating to those who use the Newport City Council application compared to the website?

- The Head of PPT informed committee that she did not have the information to hand but assured committee that the focus was on driving the most efficient way to use the service.

The committee asked whether work would be done to improve the user experience of the website.

- The Head of PPT stated that the project was in the planning stages with the goal of looking at how to improve efficiency of the website.

The committee asked how the council supported the ability to access the cost-of-living payment and whether work was being done to mitigate costs for residents to ensure digital inclusion.

- The Digital Services Manager highlighted the public Wi-Fi and the tablet loan scheme and assured committee that there was an ongoing review being conducted on how to improve.

The committee asked if the utilisation of hotspot areas could lead to a reduction in anti-social behaviour.

- The Head of PPT noted the aspiration to have Wi-Fi hubs but highlighted that business have previously also requested Wi-Fi be turned off due to anti-social behaviour.

The committee highlighted the importance of being mindful of the inclusion of older residents who don't have access to technology or the skills to use it.

- The Digital Services Manager highlighted that the skills and inclusion theme aimed to address this but agreed with the importance of alternative access and support where necessary.

The committee congratulated officers on their aspirations but noted that there was still work to be done.

The committee asked whether data was shared and with who.

- The Digital Services Manager informed committee that this would be more fully covered in the Annual Information Risk Report. The Digital Services Manager explained that data protection legislation did not mean that data could not be shared at all and highlighted instances such as where impersonal data was shared or there was a legal duty for sharing data such as for safeguarding. The Digital Services Manager assured committee that data was only shared with appropriate parties.

The committee highlighted the importance of accessibility of services for residents.

The committee asked from about social media engagement and whether it was monitored.

- The Head of PPT felt that this was an issue for communications but confirmed that contact on social media was monitored.

The committee asked if the strategy would come back to the committee.

- The Head of PPT informed committee that once the Strategy had been agreed, updates would be provided to committee through the Annual Digital Report.

The committee thanked officers for their attendance and asked them to leave the meeting.

6. Conclusion of Committee Reports

The committee felt that the reports were comprehensive and clear.

The committee acknowledged the hard work of the officers and the progress and transformation that had been made for both the Council and the city of Newport and its residents.

The committee highlighted the importance of accessibility, simplicity and ease of use for digital systems and updates.

The committee asked that a summary of the feedback from resident surveys be provided for information.

The committee recommended that a definition of the city centre area that is covered by public WiFi be included and noted the importance of quality and accessible WiFi.

The committee highlighted the importance of scrutinising data services partners and providers.

The committee recommended that specific data be included as well as percentages to contextualise information more easily.

7. Scrutiny Advisor Reports

The Scrutiny Advisor explained that the Forward Work Programme was still being developed but provisionally the next reports to be presented would be the Corporate Plan and the Strategic Equalities Annual Report.

The committee expressed concern at multi-item agendas.

The Scrutiny Advisor noted the concern but explained that it was unavoidable due to scheduling issues.

8. Date of the Next Meeting

9th September 2022 at 10am.