

Minutes



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Date: 1 December 2023

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors P Hourahine (Chair), G Horton, S Cocks, M Evans and L James

In Attendance: Rhys Cornwall (Strategic Director - Transformation and Corporate Centre), Tracy McKim (Head of People, Policy and Transformation), Leanne Rowlands (Democratic Services and Electoral Register Manager) and Kevin Howells (Senior HR & OD Business Partner)

Samantha Schanzer (Scrutiny Advisor) and Simon Richards (Governance Officer)

Apologies: Councillors B Davies, P Bright and C Baker-Westhead

1 Declarations of Interest

None.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held **26th October 2023** were **accepted as a true and accurate record**.

- The Committee asked whether there had been any further response from the University of South Wales. The Strategic Director for Transformation and Corporate informed Committee that there was no new information. The Committee noted their disappointment.

3 People Plan 2023-2028

Invitees:

- Rhys Cornwall (Strategic Director for Transformation and Corporate)
- Tracy McKim (Head of People, Policy and Transformation)
- Kevin Howells (HR and OD Manager)

The Head of People, Policy and Transformation (PPT) introduced the report, and the HR and OD Manager gave a summary outlining that recruitment and retention would be a key focus.

The following was discussed:

- The Committee highlighted timelines were not mentioned within the Plan. The HR and OD Manager informed the Committee that they would be monitoring the Plan throughout the period and progress monitoring would take place under Service Area Plans.
- The Committee sought clarification on how the Plan would work in practice and how actions were prioritised. The Committee proposed that actions and measures should be separated. The HR and OD Manager informed Committee that actions would have to be evaluated, prioritised and measured over the course of the Plan.
- The Committee recognised the advantages and challenge of working from home for staff culture and asked how this would be managed. The HR and OD Manager highlighted that whilst the pandemic prompted an increase in office-based staff working from home, a vast number of staff outside of central services did not make this change due to the nature of their work. They informed Committee that the New Normal policies had been embedded for approximately 12 months and noted that it was about finding balance between staff and service, considering the needs of the service and employee wellbeing. The HR and OD Manager confirmed that Audit Wales had reviewed the workforce and asset process, providing positive feedback and that Newport City Council (NCC were considering how best to measure and reflect that success).
The HR and OD Manager informed Committee that there was a balance between being an employer of choice that offers flexible working arrangements and managing potential wellbeing and contact issues. The Head of PPT informed Committee that they had established a framework around engagement, directorate roadshows, service area discussions, check ins and 1-2-1 conversations as consistent engagement was important when staff worked from home and in other environments. The Strategic Director informed Committee that during and since the pandemic, they had tried to be pragmatic and flexible. They informed Committee that they were aware of the potential welfare, wellbeing and team development issues working from home presented. They informed Committee that while many staff were unable to work from home, they needed to make fair decisions and increase visible leadership. They informed Committee that the footfall in the Civic Centre now was comparable to pre-pandemic levels.
- The Committee made some recommendations to officers on the presentation of the report and asked for more detail around themes to be included. The Committee queried whether the Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment (FEIA) in full was necessary for the report. The Head of PPT informed Committee they had discussed how to present the FEIA and decided to include it within the agenda and provide a link to it online.

Conclusions:

- The Committee recommended improving the presentation of the Plan and separating Actions and Measures of Success into two separate columns.
- The Committee recommended summarising the FEIA and creating a link to it within the report.

Invitees:

- **Leanne Rowlands (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager)**

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager presented the report to the Committee.

The following was discussed:

- The Committee thanked the officers for the report.
- A member of the Committee reflected on public engagement levels and how this could be further encouraged. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager informed Committee that in response to the Local Government and Elections Act 2021, the Democratic Services Committee had developed a Participation Strategy which was adopted at Council. The strategy sought to reflect the good practice already embedded within the Council's work, but also sought to build on this foundation to continue to improve engagement and participation.
- The Committee queried how could they be alerted to and monitor areas within the Council which might require further investigation. The Chair informed Committee that a summary of considerations and outcomes from all Scrutiny Committees would be requested at the next Chair's Meeting as part of the development of Scrutiny and Forward Work Programmes.
- The Committee noted that Cabinet Member decisions were not monitored and could leave a gap in highlighting areas for Scrutiny. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager informed Committee that this was not part of the role of Scrutiny, however this is considered by other committees as part of the overall Governance framework. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager confirmed that training for members on the wider governance arrangements and framework would be explored. They informed Committee that training on how risk and performance is managed would also be offered in 2024.
- The Committee member asked whether regular Chair's Meetings had occurred and how frequently they met. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager informed Committee they met quarterly.
- The Committee were happy to see more cooperation between Committees.

Conclusions:

- The Committee recommended changing wording within the report to reflect that Scrutiny Chair's meetings are quarterly.
- The Committee were concerned that there may be some information that Committee Members wish to be appraised of that does not come to Scrutiny as a matter of course under their Terms of Reference.

5 Scrutiny Adviser Reports

a) Actions Arising

- The Scrutiny Advisor noted that there was one ongoing action about the number of residents contacting the City Contact Centre. The Scrutiny Advisor Informed Committee that a response had been received about this ongoing action.
- The Committee recommended that the number of residents who contact the City Contact Centre as they are unable to access services online is recorded and collated to improve intelligence gathering and resulting outcomes. The Scrutiny Advisor informed Committee of the Customer Services review due to be carried out and highlighted information may be captured there.

b) Forward Work Programme Update

- The Scrutiny Advisor presented the Forward Work Programme and noted no changes.

6 Live Event

[Click here to watch the recording.](#)

The meeting terminated at 10.51 am