

Minutes



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Date: 8 March 2024

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors P Hourahine (Chair), B Davies, G Horton, C Baker-Westhead, 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), Daniel Cooke (Property Manager), Janice Dent (Policy and Partnership Manager), Donald Mutale (Senior Equalities Officer), Sarah Davies (Head of Asset Management and Valuation – Newport Norse), Cllrs Debbie Harvey (Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing), Stephen Marshall (Cabinet Member for Social Services – Childrens Services) and Jason Hughes (Cabinet Member for Social Services – Adult Services).

Samantha Schanzer (Scrutiny Adviser), Taylor Strange (Governance Officer) and Simon Richards (Governance Officer)

Apologies: Councillors P Bright

1 **Declarations of Interest**

None.

2 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on **30th January 2024** were **accepted as a true and accurate record.**

3 **Strategic Asset Rationalisation Plan 2023-28**

Invitees: Rhys Cornwall (Strategic Director Transformation and Corporate)
Tracy McKim (Head of People, Policy and Transformation)
Sarah Davies (Head of Asset Management and Valuation – Newport Norse)
Daniel Cooke (Property Manager)
Councillor Laura Lacey (Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Assets)

The Head of People, Policy and Transformation (PPT) introduced the report. The Head of Asset Management for Newport Norse gave a presentation on the Newport City Council (NCC) estate.

The following was discussed:

- The Committee felt the Plan clearly stated its ambition to achieve net zero in NCC buildings as soon as possible. The Strategic Director informed Committee of the draft decarbonisation policy, which would form part of the overarching Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP).
- The Committee asked whether funding opportunities arose from Climate Change projects. The Strategic Director informed the Committee that the team are effective in obtaining funding and Newport received significant funding from the Welsh Government. The Strategic Director informed the Committee that there was a large amount grant funding available, but that it wasn't the prime source of funding and was driven by the 2030 target date for Newport becoming net zero.
- The Committee felt that the Plan was clear and concise and queried what happened under the previous Plan. The Head of PPT informed the Committee that the previous SAMP was dated and didn't reflect the impact of the pandemic. They informed the Committee that comments could be included regarding the previous SAMP in the Cabinet report. They informed Committee that this item would be considered by Cabinet in May and reported annually thereafter. The Strategic Director agreed that a review of the previous SAMP could be provided to Committee. The Cabinet Member informed Committee that the Asset Rationalisation Programme is discussed in monthly briefings. They agreed that the Plan was clear and concise but appreciated its complexity and reassured Committee of its' continuous review to ensure it is fit for purpose. They agreed that the previous Plan should be considered in the development of the new Plan.
- The Committee felt that comments and recommendations made on the previous Plan should be reflected upon and fed back to the Committee.
- The Committee asked how the Plan would work in practice and were unsure how the target date of 2026 would be reached. The Head of PPT clarified that the Plan would set out the principles on the way of working but there was also an annual schedule of works to achieve this target. They highlighted that delivery would be monitored through Service Plans and could be included in the annual SAMP report but there was work underway to modify the scheme of delegation and Constitution to ensure alignment with the Plan.

Conclusions:

- The Committee thanked Officers for the clear and concise presentation of the report and its policies.
- The Committee requested an information report to summarise the previous actions and outcomes under the 2018 SAMP. They also felt that this information needed to be referenced in the 2024-28 Plan to provide background information and context. The Committee requested information as to what the previous recommendations under the 2018 Plan were and whether they were implemented.
- The Committee recommended that the Plan be presented to Scrutiny on an annual basis and should include an Annual Delivery Plan.

4 Strategic Equalities Plan 2024-28

Invitees: Tracy McKim (Head of People, Policy and Transformation),
 Janice Dent (Policy and Partnership Manager),
 Donald Mutale (Senior Equalities Officer),
 Councillor Dimitri Batrouni (Cabinet Member for Organisational Transformation)

The Head of People, Policy and Transformation introduced the report. The Policy and Partnership Manager and Senior Equalities Officer (SEO) gave an overview.

The following was discussed:

- The Committee agreed that the Consultation Report would not be considered.
- The Committee enquired who the intended audience was for the report as it was quite high-level and were concerned it may not be accessible for residents. The SEO informed Committee that they have considered this and that there would be an easy read version as well as the final plan being translated into Welsh and Community languages.
- The Committee enquired whether something would be produced for younger residents to provide them with an understanding of NCC priorities. The SEO informed the Committee that Newport Youth Council were consulted as a focus group and helped inform the Plan. They highlighted continued work with Newport Youth Council to promote the Plan to other youth groups and communities. The Committee recommended that it should include a graphic or something short to drive engagement.
- The Committee were concerned about elderly residents experiencing digital exclusion. They felt that this had not been addressed within the report as there was a focus on digital improvement. The Policy and Partnership Manager informed Committee that this Plan linked to the Digital Strategy and wider pieces of work to ensure residents were able to engage with the Council but acknowledged the concern.
- The Committee enquired how this Plan would be reviewed. The Policy and Partnership Manager informed Committee that performance would be reported on annually and a new Plan would be presented at the end of the period.
- The Committee queried whether the consultation highlighted any areas of concern which affected the Plan. The SEO informed the Committee that they have amended Equality Objective 2 to include actions to reduce barriers to digital access and changed the objective to include digital inclusion as well as customer services and access. They informed Committee that when developing Equality Objective 5, actions were developed around attainment gaps for vulnerable learners. They felt there should be a stronger focus on disability so included actions in Equality Objective 6 to reflect this and other actions throughout the plan for promotion of disability inclusion.
- The Committee were pleased that Newport Youth Council were consulted but noted that they might not be wholly representative of Newport's young people. They asked whether a direct consultation in schools could take place. The Policy and Partnership Manager informed Committee that a breakdown of who had been involved in the consultation by demographic could be provided and that they had co-ordinated with schools. The SEO informed Committee that they had consulted with a wide range of equality stakeholders but all public bodies were consulting on their equality plans which has resulted in consultation fatigue.
- The Committee noted the importance of service delivery being data driven and felt it would be helpful to include data to support successes or challenges. The Head of PPT informed Committee that the plan committed to show that decisions were driven by data which can be seen in FEIAs. They agreed to look at providing more data to support information.

- The Committee struggled to see progress with more qualitative than quantitative data. They felt that Equality Objective 6 was a broad category and struggled to see how it could be quantified. The Policy and Partnership Manager informed the Committee that there would be deliverables under objectives for performance monitoring. They highlighted these would be included in the annual report. The Head of PPT informed Committee that the annual report for the previous plan would be coming to the Committee in September 2024 and could include reference to the new Plan.
- The Committee enquired about the barriers for residents to access sports and how would success be measured. The Policy and Partnership Manager informed Committee that barriers could change, and new barriers emerge, so it required continuous review. They highlighted ensuring the new leisure centre being built was managed in an accessible way and success would be measured through the delivery plan. They noted that equal opportunities were not about treating everyone the same but giving everyone the ability to access the same services or opportunities. The SEO informed Committee that WG action plans had recently been published and the Plan had been aligned. The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that the aspiration was bold but was keen to be data-driven and evidence-based for accountability.

Conclusions:

- The Committee recommend more promotion of this plan with young people – either as a shortened/more accessible report, or a graphic etc.
- The Committee recommend using data to reinforce successes or challenges where it is meaningful in annual reports.
- The Committee recommend that the final Strategic Equalities Plan Annual Report for 2023/24 includes a summary of work done within the plan period.
- The Committee emphasised the importance of accessibility for residents with low digital skills, elderly residents or those who do not choose to engage with the Council digitally.

5 Scrutiny Adviser Reports

a) Forward Work Programme Update

The Scrutiny Adviser noted no changes.

b) Actions Arising

The Scrutiny Adviser noted that there were no new actions.

6 Meeting Recording

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

The meeting terminated at 11.11 am