

# Minutes



## Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

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Date: 26 July 2024

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors P Hourahine (Chair), D Jenkins, J Harris, D Mayer and M Evans

In Attendance: Samantha Herritty (Scrutiny Adviser), Mark Bleazard (Digital Services Manager), Rhys Cornwall (Strategic Director - Transformation and Corporate Centre), Shaun Powell (Newport Intelligence Hub Manager) and Caroline Ryan-Phillips (Head of Prevention and Inclusion)

Apologies: Councillors C Baker-Westhead, M Linton and S Cocks

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### 1 **Declarations of Interest**

None.

### 2 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held **12<sup>th</sup> July 2024** were **agreed as a true and accurate record.**

### 3 **Adaptations Policy**

#### **Attendees:**

- **Councillor Pat Drewett (Cabinet Member for Communities and Poverty Reduction)**
- **Caroline Ryan-Phillips (Head of Prevention and Inclusion)**
- **Dale Sheals (Team Manager – Adaptations)**

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Poverty Reduction introduced the report, and the Head of Prevention (HP) and Inclusion gave an overview.

The following was discussed:

- The Committee commended the report and asked how Newport City Council compares with other local authorities in terms of budget allocation. The Adaptations Team Manager (ATM) informed the Committee that benchmarking was suspended during the pandemic but has now been reintroduced. They informed the Committee that they sat on the South Wales Adaptations Panel and information on local authorities' budgets has been requested. They advised the Committee that Newport City Council have been able to support as many people as possible and they work closely with Occupational Therapy to ensure that the most vulnerable are being helped and that the largest grants are being utilised most effectively.

- The Committee noted that in the Fairness and Equalities Impact Assessment (FEIA) attached, almost 31,500 residents identify as disabled in Newport. The ATM informed the Committee that data was provided by the Newport Intelligence Hub and was taken from the last census. They advised that they are trying to benchmark this information to understand population growth, but the data needs further quantifying.
- The Committee felt that waiting lists being at their lowest should be celebrated as adaptations have a significant positive impact on resident's lives.
- The Committee asked whether staffing provision was adequate under the current budget, and it was confirmed by the ATM that it was.
- The Committee highlighted that the FEIA attached only offered English and Welsh translations of the policy and enquired whether there have been any requests to have it translated into other languages. The ATM informed the Committee that they work closely with a translation service, so they are able to provide the document in other languages if required and this had not been a barrier.

#### **Comments and Recommendations:**

- The Committee were content with the report.

#### **4 Annual Digital Report 2023-24**

##### **Attendees:**

- **Mark Bleazard (Digital Services Manager)**
- **Rhys Cornwall (Strategic Director for Transformation and Corporate)**
- **Dominic Gibbons (Digital Projects Manager)**
- **Shaun Powell (Transformation and Intelligence Manager)**
- **Samantha Turnbull (Digital Projects Manager)**

The Digital Services Manager (DSM) gave an overview of the report.

The following was discussed:

- The Committee enquired where digital feedback for other services could be found. The Strategic Director (SD) informed the Committee that this feedback would be included in the mid and end of year reports which are brought to the Performance Scrutiny Committees.
- The Committee enquired whether the recent Microsoft outage impacted Newport City Council systems and whether there should be alternative arrangements in place as a backup. The DSM informed the Committee that the impact was minimal and highlighted that there are business continuity plans in place for when technology fails. The SD added that it was difficult for organisations to deal with technology failures as it had such a large impact. They highlighted the Council's journey towards cloud-based systems and the benefits this brings but was mindful about service delivery in instances when this fails.
- The Committee highlighted the importance of contingencies when failures occur such as in the previous Council meeting. The SD informed the Committee that the system used to stream Council had experienced a hardware failure which had subsequently been fixed and new microphones had been installed in the Committee rooms. They added that Microsoft made changes to Teams and no longer support live events so alternatives are being explored.

- The Committee asked how the Robotic Process Automation (RPA) works. The SD explained that RPA is software that produces an output based on the input command entered into it. The DSM added that RPA can mimic what an individual could do with a defined rules-based process, but it cannot make complex decisions that require human judgement or interpretation.
- The Committee asked for some further clarification between RPA and Artificial Intelligence (AI) from a lay person's perspective. The DSM informed the Committee that a supplier has videos available on YouTube and the Digital Projects Manager added that RPA can perform tasks 24/7. They explained that RPA follows rules, but AI is continually learning and adapting.

#### **Comments and Recommendations:**

- The Committee requested that the difference between Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) be clarified within the report.
- The Committee were content with report.

## **5 Scrutiny Adviser Reports**

### **a. Actions Arising**

The Scrutiny Adviser informed the Committee that the majority of actions were complete and had chased for the outstanding actions.

### **b. Forward Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Adviser informed the Committee that the Strategic Equalities Plan Annual Report and Annual Corporate Wellbeing Self-Assessment will be discussed at the meeting on 6th September 2024.

### **c. Outcomes Monitoring**

The Scrutiny Adviser informed the Committee that the responses are in the table and the Climate Change Annual Report is outstanding.

The meeting terminated at 10.45 am

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