

POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30 SEPTEMBER 2014

Present: Councillor Howells (Chairperson)
Councillors Cowan, Goodway, Hunt, Love, Murphy, Robson and Walker

Apologies: Councillor Lloyd and McGarry

30 : MEMBERSHIP

The Committee noted that Council on 24 September 2014 appointed Councillors Cowan and Goodway to the Committee. The Chairperson welcomed Councillors Cowan and Goodway. The Chairperson requested that thanks be recorded for Councillors Knight's and Robson's contributions to the Committee.

31 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairperson reminded Members of their responsibility under Article 16 of the Members' Code of Conduct to declare any interests in general terms and complete personal interest forms at the start of the meeting and then, prior to the commencement of the discussion of the item in question, specify whether it is a personal or prejudicial interest. If the interest is prejudicial, Members would be asked to leave the meeting, and if the interest is personal, Members would be invited to stay, speak and vote.

Councillor Goodway declared a prejudicial interest items 3 and 4 on the agenda insofar as those items relate to decisions taken during his time in office as a Cabinet Member.

32 : CITY OF CARDIFF COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS: COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND CAPITAL TIMES UPDATE

The Committee received a report and were asked to consider the draft Communications Strategy and how the strategy responds to the WLGA Peer Review and subsequent APSE report. Members were further asked to consider the current operation of the Capital Times in light of this year's budget savings and as the 2015/16 budget proposals are developed. Members were advised that the Communications Team and the Monitoring Officer have produced a draft Communications Strategy for consultation with the Committee. The draft strategy and a summary of activities undertaken in 2013/14 were appended to

the report. The Committee also received a brief update on publication of the Capital Times.

Members were advised that the Communications and Media Team was established 3 years ago as part of the former Transformation Portfolio. Service area based communications and media functions were centralised. As part of the Senior Management restructure agreed in October 2012, the Communications and Media function formed part of the Cabinet Office, but more recently responsibility for the Communications and Media lay with the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer Directorate.

The Cabinet commissioned Peer Review in May 2013 made a number of comments relating to the Council's communications approach, details of which were set out in the report. The Peer review recommended that 'The vision of the Council is communicated and distilled for internal and external audiences' and that 'the entire communications approach of the Council should be revised and the press office needs to change from being reactive and transform into a proactive media machine so that Cardiff Council sets expectations around what it can do or has done'.

Following the Peer Review the Cabinet commissioned a review of the Communication and Media functions and capabilities. A review was undertaken by APSE covering specific personnel issues; a summary of the review was appended to the report. The summary provided Members of the Committee with the key findings and eleven relevant recommendations. The recommendations set out in the APSE report were accepted by the Cabinet and were reflected in the subsequent Organisational Change report.

The Organisational Development programme was established in May 2014. The programme included five separate work streams, including the 'Engagement and Improvement' workstream, the objective of which was to 'improve employee, Member and stakeholder awareness of the Council's priorities, challenges and successes through effective communications'. The following actions were agreed:

- Communication and Public Engagement Strategy approved by Cabinet designed to identify and communicate the Council's vision of its purpose and intended outcomes for citizens and services users
- Implement communication channels to improve employee engagement
- Increase citizen participation using social media to access information about the Council
- Develop proposals for increasing subscriber-led communications

As a result an employee engagement programme was established and employee roadshows have taken place. Employee ambassadors volunteered from across directorates and all channels of communication are being used to promote the Organisational Change programme.

The Committee at its July meeting considered the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer Directorate Delivery Plan, which set out a number of detailed actions and milestones to producing a new Communications strategy, which were included in the report at Appendix E.

Members were also advised that the 2014/15 budget approved a number of savings proposals for the Communications Team, totalling £528k, a breakdown of which was provided at Appendix F. An overall target of £265k was set for advertising and other income. At the end of quarter 2 £70k of advertising and other income had been achieved. It was noted that advertising income in quarters 1 and 2 is traditionally low but meeting the £265k target for the year would be challenging.

Members received an early draft of the Communications Strategy. The Committee was asked to note that the draft Communications Strategy has the following objectives:

- To improve the image of the Council
- To demonstrate that we are a listening and engaging Council
- To ensure the Council's achievements are recognised and celebrated
- To increase the percentage of residents who think the Council are doing a good job
- To increase the percentage of residents who think the Council keeps them well informed
- To increase the number of staff who feel well informed and engaged with the changes happening across the Council and delivers the highest standards
- To ensure the communities we service are aware the way services are delivered has to change
- To deliver a consistent and high quality brand across all directorates
- To work with our partners both public and private to deliver for the City of Cardiff

As part of its work programme discussions, Members of the Committee expressed an interest in exploring how the 2014/15 budget proposals affected the Capital Times and its advertising revenue. The 2014/15 budget agreed that Capital Times would only be printed six times during the year. Members received details of the costs and income levels for Capital Times for the current and past three years and information regarding readership levels.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sue Lent, Deputy Leader; Marie Rosenthal, County Clerk and Monitoring Officer; and Jeremy Rhys, Acting Head of Communications and External Relations to the meeting. Councillor Lent, deputising for the Leader, made a brief statement. Councillor Lent stated that the Peer Review recommended that the Council's vision be distilled for internal and external audiences and the authority was attempting to address this issue holistically. The APSE report also recognised that the communications function needed to improve. Capital Times was said to be well regarded and provided an excellent vehicle with which to communicate with residents.

Marie Rosenthal advised the Committee that since October 2013 interim management arrangements were put in place and with a result the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer assumed interim responsibility for the communications function. However, it is intended that the new Head of Communications will report to the Chief Executive. Members received further details of those actions taken as part of the 'Engagement and Improvement' workstream, including the Cardiff Debate, communications with Members and the employee roadshows.

Jeremy Rees was invited to deliver a presentation in Capital Times. The presentation included an overview of Capital Times, its distribution, income generation, advertising clients and proposals for the future. Members were advised that the target for income generation had doubled at the same time the number of editions printed was halved. However, should that decision be reviewed and Capital Times be printed on 12 occasions each year, then it was feasible that a new income stream of approximately £100k would be possible from the Council's publication of statutory public notices.

The Chairperson thanks the Cabinet Member and officers. The Committee was asked whether they wished to seek clarification, raise questions or comment upon the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Officers were asked to clarify whether the £19k cost for the publication of each edition included the cost of distribution. Officers confirmed that the £19k figures included the cost of distribution. Staff costs were not included.
- The Committee noted that all Councillors did not have full sight of the APSE report. The APSE report recognised that internal communications were poor. Concerns were expressed that the Council's twitter feed was 'dry' and did not engage as much as it could. It was also reliant on the goodwill of staff for 24 hours coverage. Members questioned whether the Council Twitter feed should also 'follow' Councillors.

Officers replied that a rota was recently introduced which addressed the 24 hour coverage issue. The Monitoring Officer advised that the APSE report could be released to Members on an ad-hoc basis. A commitment was also given to investigate whether the Council's Twitter feed should 'follow' Councillors.

- Some Members urged caution with regard to the use of Twitter for internal and external communication, as it was often used inappropriately.
- It was acknowledged that large numbers of staff did not have access to electronic communications. However, internal communications, and in particular employee engagement, had improved through the introduction of employee roadshows and ambassadors. The next tranche of employee roadshows will take place during the autumn. An action plan, based on the feedback received at the roadshows, would then be produced.
- Concerns were raised that there was too much electronic communication with staff and not enough filtering of the information being circulated. As a result, important information was missed. Particular concern was expressed regarding the production of 'staff magazines' such as Our News.

The Monitoring Officer stated that there was an expectation that all Managers will have regular meetings with their teams, enabling the filtration of information relevant to those Members of staff.

- The Committee considered that it would be useful to receive details regarding the staff costs for producing Capital Times.
- The Committee considered that the content of Capital Times was universally 'good news'. Bad news or criticism of the Council and its performance was not included. Members considered that it was vital the public were given this information in order to provide a balanced view and to ensure that the Council's communications were respected.

The Committee agreed that it was important to educate the public on the basic fundamentals with regard to the way in which the Council works.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the authority was bound to operate its publications under a legal framework – the Code of Conduct for Local Government Publications.

- Members suggested that in order to provide further balance, the Capital Times might devote a page to Cabinet items and a page to backbench Councillor items.
- Concern was expressed that the Employee Roadshows were not providing meaningful employee engagement. Employee ambassadors were said to have been ‘carefully selected’ and were feeding back positive news. Furthermore, Council employees were not given an opportunity to contribute to the Cardiff Debate.

It was also suggested that the Members Diary and Newsletter were not providing the important information Councillors need.

- Some Members considered that the Communication Strategy should capture the Council’s priorities, in particular the Co-operative Council element, as many Councillors and Members of the public have no concept of what it means.

Other Members were of the view that the Co-operative concept did not need an explanation as residents are involved in the process and consulted. However, emphasis was placed on the importance of engagement with front line staff. A request was made that engagement with staff be kept under review.

Officers advised that, in terms of staff engagement, the authority started a process of meaningful engagement, the agenda for which is being shaped by employees.

- The Monitoring Officer gave an undertaking to seek the views of Members in terms of improving the Members Diary and Members Newsletter. That matter would be discussed at the next meeting of the Democratic Services Committee.
- Members stated that content of Capital Times had a tendency to lean towards ‘propaganda’. Whilst supporting a return to monthly publication and delivery, some Members asked whether there was any scope to make Capital Times more creative, ‘less stuffy’ and include information about the many social events being held in the City, as many events were not included.
- The Committee noted that Capital Times was successful and was valued by the community, particularly by the elderly and the many other people with access to information technology. It had outlasted most free press

publications. Some Members suggested that any form of outsourcing should be resisted.

- The Committee noted that Capital Times was also used for publicity campaigns, such as the White Ribbon Campaign. Without Capital Times the authority would need to publicise such campaigns by other means.
- Members advised that in the past District Audit were keen to ensure that Capital Times was not used for party political purposes. Statistics regarding the comments/photos/articles of all Councillors were monitored up to 2004. Members suggested that this monitoring be reinstated and the statistics be reported periodically to the Committee. It was suggested that such monitoring would help protect an asset valued by the Community.
- The Committee discussed the possibility of increasing income from advertising and statutory notices in Capital Times. Some Members supported a partnership approach to finding additional advertisers. Members questioned whether there was any scope for supporting advertisements on the Council's website. Officers stated that the hosting of advertisements on the Council's website was currently being discussed as a proposal for next year's budget.
- Officers gave an undertaking to provide the Committee with figures regarding the total number of hits on the versions of Capital Times hosted Council's website and the cost of placing statutory public notices in other publications.
- A Member urged caution against using the Capital Times as a vehicle to create a public section monopoly, as other local publication were likely to suffer from loss of income should the authority decide to use Capital Times to advertise statutory public notices exclusively. The Monitoring Officer stated that in England local authorities are forbidden by law from producing local newspapers.

AGREED –That a letter be sent by the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee to Councillor Bale, Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Partnerships, to convey the following observations of the Committee:-

- The Committee welcomed the opportunity to scrutinise the draft Communications Strategy and to consider the results of the APSE Review of the Council's Communications and Media function. The Committee recognise the efforts which have been taken to respond to the WLGA Peer

Review and the APSE Review, in more clearly setting out the Council's vision and in communicating with citizens through the Cardiff Debate (which Members look forward to scrutinising in depth at our next meeting). In addition to this the Committee would like to recommend that more thought is given to using social media in an appealing way; Members feel that at times our Twitter feed in particular can be quite dry.

- It is evident that there is still some way to go in terms of engaging effectively with our employees from Members' conversations with constituents, albeit that some improvements have been made. Discussions at Committee focussed on how best to ensure that those without access to ICT are able to participate. The Committee noted that the Chief Executive has made efforts to visit frontline employees by holding staff roadshows at various locations and recommend that more are scheduled and Members also believe that due emphasis is placed by managers on the quality of interactions with their employees.
- The Committee believes that communication with Members needs to be considerably improved. The Members' Newsletter and Diary do not inform Members about significant issues in a way that enables them to engage with communities meaningfully. The Committee recommend that this issue is addressed as soon as possible.
- The County Clerk and Monitoring Officer offered to provide the Committee with the full APSE Review of the Council's Communication function, on a confidential basis. Members would be grateful if this could be arranged in order to inform future scrutinies.

Capital Times

- Members were surprised by the levels of income which the paper has achieved historically. The Committee would be grateful if you would pass on Members' thanks and congratulations to those officers who have worked so hard to bring in quite substantial levels of advertising income and have made it a trusted source of information in the city.
- The County Clerk and Monitoring Officer set out several options for the paper's future, including moving to a weekly digital newsletter or returning to twelve printed editions. Members were reassured to hear from Councillor Lent that wholly online distribution is not likely, as we feel that this may exclude sections of the community who do not, or prefer not to, access ICT.

- The Committee could see several positive aspects to reinstating the full twelve printed editions of the Capital Times: the largely good reputation which it has with its readership and the likelihood that the online version may not be the best way to communicate with communities.
- In order to facilitate the scrutiny of any pertinent budget proposals in February, Members would be grateful for further information in terms of number of unique hits which the online editions of the Capital Times have received. Members also asked for a breakdown of those costs not reflected in the £19,000 per printed edition, such as the journalists' time, and for details of the costs of publishing statutory notices elsewhere. If it could be proved that the income would cover the costs of producing additional printed editions of the paper, the Committee would in principle be supportive of a return to twelve editions.
- The Committee strongly recommend that the Capital Times is developed to be a more effective tool for communicating openly and honestly with the citizens of Cardiff regarding the more challenging issues facing the Council and the City. It seems a pity that the Wales Audit Office's Corporate Assessment was not covered, for example, in order to open a conversation with communities about how the Council can improve. Given its distribution, the Capital Times should also be a key tool in engaging the public in difficult budget decisions.
- There was considerable discussion at the meeting regarding the need to ensure that the Capital Times is balanced and avoids all suggestion that it shows bias towards the Cabinet or ruling group. The Committee recommends that, as discussed at the meeting, the monitoring of Capital Times content is reinstated to ensure that political balance is definite.

33 : MONTH 4 BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee received for information the Month 4 Budget Monitoring Report which was presented to Cabinet on 18 September 2014. Members were asked to consider the contents of the report. The Committee would have an opportunity to consider the budget in more detail at month 6.

Members were asked to note that the Council is currently projecting an overspend of approximately £1 million compared with the 2014/15 budget. Directorate overspends are currently projected to total £7.1 million. Management action was forecast to reduce this significantly by the end of the financial year. The report provided further details of the management actions to be undertaken at Appendix A.

An overview of each directorate budget monitoring projection was also provided. The Committee noted that the budget monitoring report included an appendix detailing progress achieved in making specific directorate savings set at part of the 2014/15 budget.

Members were advised that the WAO Corporate Assessment considered at the meeting on 2 September 2014 concluded that ‘there was a high risk that savings targets for 2014/15 would not be achieved and longer-term savings requirements are unlikely to be met if current methods of service delivery are sustained’. At Month 4 it was projected that of a total savings of £43.833 million; £24.139 million had been achieved; £38.870 million is projected to be achieved; £4.963 million is projected not to be achieved.

The Committee discussed the contents of the report and in particular the projected overspend. Members acknowledged that whilst the £7.1 million figure may be offset. However, when the Budget Monitoring position is considered at Month 6, Member requested further details in which directorates the overspend is accruing and why.

AGREED – That the Committee noted the contents of the report.

34 : CORRESPONDENCE

The Committee received copies of correspondence sent and received in relation to matters previously scrutinised by this Committee.

AGREED – That the correspondence report and attached documentation be noted.

35 : CABINET RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE INQUIRY REPORT ENTITLED ‘PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH SCRUTINY’

Following the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2011 and its accompanying guidance, the Committee had undertaken a task and finish inquiry to consider public engagement with scrutiny. The report made recommendations to the Scrutiny Services Team, to the Cabinet and to the Constitution Committee. Members received the Cabinet’s response to their task and finish inquiry report.

Members were advised that three of the four recommendations to Cabinet were accepted, and one was partially accepted. Two recommendations were made to the Constitution Committee. The Constitution Committee accepted one recommendation in principle subject to further consultation, and requested a

further report on the remaining recommendation. The Scrutiny Services Team is seeking to implement all the recommendations made to them.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor De'Ath, Cabinet Member for Safety, Engagement and Democracy; Marie Rosenthal, County Clerk and Monitoring Officer; and Paul Keeping, Operational Manager, Scrutiny Services; to the meeting. Councillor De'Ath was invited to make a brief statement.

Councillor De'Ath stated that the administration was actively seeking to engage with citizens as part of the co-operative approach to service delivery and he welcomed the Committee's views on how to target limited resources more efficiently.

Paul Keeping addressed the Committee. He stated that the Scrutiny Team understood the importance of engagement as a Welsh Government priority identified in the Council's Corporate Plan. Referring to 'Arnstein's Ladder of Participation', Members were advised that the Council's Scrutiny function were currently broadly achieving Levels 3 and 4 – engaging with people and groups with a vested interest in the subjects. Paul Keeping accepted that there were challenges facing the authority in terms of the resources available. It was noted that a vacant Public Engagement Officer post had been lost as part of the budget savings.

Marie Rosenthal stated that the Scrutiny Service was carrying forward 5 work programmes. Challenging financial pressures may have implications for the scrutiny role. Public engagement was improving such as the 'tweeting' details of all Scrutiny meetings and key pieces of work, regular Scrutiny features in Capital Times and press releases regarding task and finish inquiry reports. The Scrutiny Services Team is aiming to increase engagement with the third sector and bring forward proposals for public question time at Scrutiny meetings within existing resources.

Councillor De'Ath suggested that the Budget Scrutiny meetings in February be held in the Council Chamber and webcast. Members of the Committee supported this proposal and also suggested that Cabinet meetings and Planning Committee meetings could be webcast.

Members considered that the authority should experiment and try new methods aimed at encouraging people to engage. It was acknowledged that a scrutiny committee meeting forum may be 'daunting' for some members of the public and was not designed for public engagement. However, the Cabinet Member stated that experience had shown that there were some issues, subject to scrutiny, where members of the public are intensely engaged. Councillor

De'Ath considered that where citizens are interested in key issues, the authority should have apparatus in place to accommodate engagement with them.

Some Members of the Committee felt that the authority should be realistic about how readily the public will seek to engage. The Welsh Government has put considerable resources into public engagement, yet Welsh Government public engagement was reported to be poor. It was felt that there was likely to be little public interest in a Scrutiny Committee such as the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny, which is primarily responsible for scrutiny of how the Council discharges its functions. The Committee accepted that it was often difficult to generate enthusiasm in terms of increasing public participation.

The Committee further acknowledged that in many areas of the City, where levels of deprivation are high and citizens are excluded, it was always going to be difficult to encourage those sections of the community to engage. Members suggested that it may therefore be of equal worth inviting front line staff, rather than Corporate Directors and managers, to address Scrutiny meetings for specific items. Furthermore, Members of the Committee agreed that there was also a role for Ward Councillors, as elected representatives of their communities, to play a more active role in scrutiny.

As a footnote, Members recognised that as the Council seeks to increase public engagement, there was a possibility that 'the more sophisticated voices get through, whilst other voices are drowned out'.

AGREED – That the Committee noted the Cabinet's response to the Task and Finish Inquiry report 'Public Engagement in Scrutiny'.