

ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 DECEMBER 2018

Present: Councillor Howells(Chairperson)
Councillors Henshaw, Gavin Hill-John, Parkhill, Robson and Sattar

41 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gordon and Simmons.

42 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

43 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

44 : EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Lynda Thorne (Cabinet Member – Housing and Communities), Jane Thomas (Assistant Director, Communities and Housing) and Helen Evans (Operational Manager – Advice & Benefits) to the meeting.

Members were advised that this item enabled them to review the implementation on changes to Employment Services in Cardiff. Members were reminded that they scrutinised these proposed changes last year and that they were implemented in April, following the cessation of Communities First and the changes to funding for employability services.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement in which she said she was pleased to introduce the presentation on the development and successes of the new Into Work Advice Service. With the introduction of the Gateway, the new service has successfully simplified access for all who need employability help. With so much being reported on in –work poverty, it was great to see that work was being done too to upskill those who are already in work to look for better paid employment.

The Cabinet Member was happy to say that the team was currently meeting or exceeding targets that have been set by funders for the number of people that are being helped into work. The case studies within the presentation, really bring home the excellent work that the team does and illustrate how they are meeting the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in society.

Members were provided with a presentation on Employment Services after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members commended the presentation and work undertaken by Officers.

Members made reference to the Pop-Up business school and the number of business that were started up afterwards but were conscious that often there is a void afterwards where support is needed and asked what support the Council provides to ensure that these small businesses continue to trade, grow and start employing people. Officers stated that there are forums for support and it was important to strengthen the links with Business in Focus and Business Wales.

Members noted the numbers of employers who have been assisted in quarters 1 and 2 were the same at 87. Officers confirmed that this was correct and that they were exceeding targets here but still working with more employers going forward.

Members noted that there were lots of skills within the Council. With reference to the courses that the Council run, Members wondered if there was a commercial opportunity to charge for these courses and use that income to grow, develop and protect the team. Officers stated that this is already done and Members noted that this needed to be advertised more to the business community.

Members discussed the work being done with homeless people and noted that 39 people had been engaged. Officers stated that the 39 are specifically young homeless vulnerable people in hostels. Officers added that this is all they can do at the moment with the resources available.

Members noted the Job Club locations and wondered if there were any areas of the City that were not well served. Officers stated that they are mainly all over the City but there was a focus on the Southern Arc of the City. Officers stated that they review these locations regularly and are open to suggestions for any other locations should they be needed.

Members noted the numbers of advice calls taken and asked how a spike in demand would be managed. Officers explained that they would monitor the advice line both by number of calls and how long it takes to answer the calls. This would be monitored and reviewed and resources moved into the area when needed. The Cabinet Member added that there was an intention to link Cardiff Works with the Into Work Service to expand it and to use the agency fees to secure funding for Into Work Services.

Members sought clarification on the budget lines and it was explained that the one line referred to a post whereby the person has left on voluntary severance and the other line referred to management costs used to fund existing posts. Officers added that there are threats on funding and it was important to establish a way of being able to bid for funding such as setting up an arm's length company or charity.

When asked how the service will cope with the anticipated growth and increased demand, Officers explained that if the demand is already there and with increased advertising demand will increase, they will work with volunteers and upskill staff as necessary and move resource into the service. It was added that working with vulnerable people requires small caseloads as intensive support was resource intensive. Promoting the training courses to businesses would also hopefully bring in some income.

RESOLVED: that the views of the Committee would be discussed during the way forward section of the meeting and a letter sent to the Cabinet Member in due course.

45 : ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WHITE PAPER

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Russell Goodway, (Cabinet Member – Investment & Development) and Neil Hanratty (Director of Economic Development) to the meeting.

Members were advised that the current Forward Plan for Cabinet shows a report on the Economic Development White Paper scheduled to go to Cabinet on 13 December 2018. This item was therefore included to enable pre-decision scrutiny of this report. The Chairperson stated that the report has now been withdrawn and that a report will be scheduled to go to Cabinet next year. The Chairperson asked the Cabinet Member to explain the position with regard to the route intended to take the Economic Development White Paper through to decision.

The Cabinet Member explained that there would be a report to Cabinet which would seek authority to publish a White Paper to debate at Council in January. He added that for Major Policy statements he considered that Council should have the first opportunity to debate this as it allows all Councillors to take part in that debate and influence the direction of that policy. He considered that the Council's view should be sought in January, the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee would have an opportunity to scrutinise it and reflect on the Council debate, then convey scrutiny Views when it is taken to Cabinet in February; that way Cabinet can make a full and informed decision on the White Paper and how to proceed. He added that currently the constitution is silent on the processes for Green and White Papers but as the Chair of Constitution Committee this is something that he would be looking at going forward. The Cabinet Member stated that he would guarantee Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to scrutinise the White Paper.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members welcomed the change to making Council meetings more relevant.

RESOLVED: that the views of the Committee would be discussed during the way forward section of the meeting and a letter sent to the Cabinet Member in due course.

46 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Members were advised that this report provided them with an update on correspondence, and update on the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) – Cardiff Capital Region City Deal; an opportunity to discuss the Committee's updated Work Programme 2018/19 and an opportunity for Members to discuss the Committee's forward work plan January – April 2019.

Members were provided with a summary of outstanding correspondence.

Members were updated on the JOSC and advised that Bridgend Council, which is paid by CCR City Deal to manage the JOSC, set up the first training session and official meeting, held on 15 October 2018. The Principal Scrutiny Officer advised that Members had found the training very high level and more training was being arranged around scrutiny questioning etc. A work programme, business plan and visit to the Semi- Conductor facility in Newport were all planned. It was noted that there was still a role for Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee in this and work would not be duplicated. The Chair considered that Committee could look at the JOSC minutes and see if there were any issues that needed to be pulled out.

Members were provided with an overview of the work programme and noted that this still remained very fluid; Members discussed the issues to be considered at each meeting up until May 2019.

Members were advised that the Events Inquiry was underway and more meetings were needed; the report would be ready for the Budget Scrutiny meeting in February 2019.

Members agreed for the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme to be published on the website.

47 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

48 : WAY FORWARD

Members discussed the information received and identified a number of issues which the Chairman agreed would be included in the letters that would be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the relevant Cabinet Members and Officers.

49 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17 January 2019 at 4.30pm.

The meeting terminated at 5.35 pm