
CORRESPONDENCE – INFORMATION REPORT

Background

1. Following most Committee meetings, the Chair writes a letter to the relevant Cabinet Member or senior officer, summing up the Committee's comments, concerns and recommendations regarding the issues considered during that meeting. The attached correspondence is for information only.

Issues

2. At the Committee meeting on 18th September 2012, Members considered the Proposed Equal Pay Settlement. A copy of the Chair's letter to Councillor Goodway following the meeting is attached at **Appendix A**. The response is attached at **Appendix B**.
3. At the Committee meeting on 24th October 2012, Members considered Welfare Reform. A copy of the Chair's letter to the Corporate Chief Officer for Corporate Services is attached at **Appendix C**.
4. At the same meeting Members considered the Transformation Portfolio. A copy of the Chair's letter to Councillor Goodway following the meeting is attached at **Appendix D**.
5. On 16th November the Committee held a joint meeting with the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee to consider the called-in decision regarding Callaghan Square. A copy of the Chair's letter is attached at **Appendix E**.

6. On 28th November the Committee considered the Complaint Policy and the Connect to Cardiff service. Attached at **Appendix F** is the Chair's letter to Councillor Thorne.
7. The Committee also considered the Draft Attendance and Wellbeing Policy at the same meeting. The Chair's letter to Councillor Goodway summing up Members' comments is attached at **Appendix G**.

Legal Implications

8. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers of behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

9. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that

goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to note the content of the letters attached to this report.

MIKE DAVIES
Head of Scrutiny, Performance & Improvement
10 January 2013

Date: 20 September 2012

Councillor Russell Goodway
Cabinet Member, Finance, Business & Local Economy
Cardiff Council, County Hall
Cardiff. CF10 4UW

Dear Councillor Goodway

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thank you for attending the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee on the 18 September 2012 during the scrutiny of the Proposed Equal Pay settlement and Implementing the Living Wage.

I set out below the Committee's concerns and observations for your reflection, as you prepare for consideration of the issues at the Cabinet meeting.

Proposed Equal Pay Settlement

Following the receipt of the evidence, the Committee felt that the advised approach seems to be a satisfactory way of dealing with the situation. The Committee acknowledged the benefits of a good working relationship between the Council Officers and trade unions during the discussions.

The Committee asked for Council Officers to give the appropriate advice to staff regarding the pension implications of the proposal. We also ask to be kept updated of the outcomes of the data cleansing exercise. The Committee look forward to receiving details of the costs of the legal advice to secure the Equal Pay settlement as offered during the meeting.

Living Wage

The Committee were pleased to hear about the proposal to ensure that Council staff received the Living Wage. The Committee looked forward with interest to observing how the initiative is implemented.

I would be grateful if you would ensure that the Committee's comments are passed on and responded to as appropriate. I look forward to welcoming you to the Committee again in the future.

Yours sincerely



COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH CLARK
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Philip Lenz, Corporate Chief Officer (Shared)
Christine Salter, Corporate Chief Officer (Corporate)
Jo Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager

**CABINET SUPPORT OFFICE
SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y CABINET**

My Ref: CM23015
Your Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Com Papers/Sept 2012
Date: 10 December 2012



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Councillor Elizabeth Clark
Chair Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny
Cardiff County Council
Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff Bay
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Dear Councillor Clark

Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee - 18 September 2012

I refer to your letter dated 20 September 2012 in respect of a query raised at your Committee and apologise for the delay in responding.

As requested I set out below an analysis of the spend on outside legal advice associated with the Equal Pay Settlement. Costs have been incurred over a number of years and this is set out below:

2007/08 - £113,347
2008/09 - £102,299
2009/10 - £113,490
2010/11 - £125,771
2011/12 - £125,678
2012/13 - £60,180

Total - £640,765

I trust this clarifies the position.

Yours sincerely,

**COUNCILLOR RUSSELL GOODWAY
CABINET MEMBER FINANCE, BUSINESS & LOCAL ECONOMY**

PLEASE REPLY TO: Cabinet Support Office, Room 529, County Hall,
Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff CF10 4UW
Tel (029) 2087 2479



My Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Com Papers/Oct 24 2012
Date: 12 November 2012

Christine Salter
Corporate Chief Officer
Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Christine,

POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WELFARE REFORM

Thank you for attending Committee on 24 October 2012 with Gary Watkins, Operational Manager (Revenues) and Jane Thomas, Operational Manager (Benefits, Finance and Tenant Services) to brief the Committee on the implications of the Welfare Reform for the Council.

The Committee felt it had been important to hear about the challenges ahead with the introduction of welfare reform and Members have therefore asked me to capture their key concerns and observations to inform the Cabinets future discussions on this matter.

Timescales

The Committee noted that timescales are short between the Council receiving its final budget settlement from the Welsh Government in December 2012 and the Council agreeing its Council Tax Benefit Scheme at the end of January 2013, recognising this makes factoring the required support into budget discussions difficult. Members agreed to monitor developments closely, will programme further consideration when the Cabinet considers its Council Tax Benefit policy and wish to receive briefing papers as appropriate.

Council Tax Collection

Members took on board that the Council, as a tax collection body, has a legal responsibility to collect Council Tax; that the welfare reform implications for Council Tax Benefit will mean significant numbers of households previously eligible for full Council Tax Benefit will now be required to pay a 20% bill; and therefore the Council is facing a potential increase in Council Tax debt for 2013/14.

The Committee was concerned that the changes may result in increasing costs of Council Tax collection to a point at which it becomes uneconomic to recover the debt. Members heard it would be unlikely that Council Tax debts would be written off, though this may be the case in extreme situations. Therefore the Committee wishes to encourage the Council to offer options of part payment and payment over twelve months rather than ten.

Regional Solutions

Members noted there are currently all Wales software solutions under development and wish to encourage participation in such regional solutions, and particularly in respect of training. The Committee had concerns that the Information Technology (IT) costs of supporting welfare reform are to be funded in England but not by the Welsh Government.

Lobbying

Members consider it appropriate for the Council to continue lobbying Welsh Government through the various working groups in which it participates, and would like you to forward a copy of the Council's response to the Welsh Government Consultation to the Committee.

Staffing

The Committee felt it was a matter of concern that it is difficult to predict what numbers of additional staff will need to be in place by January, and for how long the requirement will be.

Communications & Support

Finally, given the significant changes ahead and the potential impact on many Cardiff residents, the Committee feels it is essential that a communications strategy is put in place at the earliest stage to enable a significant impact on the number of queries the Council receives.

In addition, the Members identified that Council support to Advice Agencies, and for Councillors in delivering their community advice roles, will be critical.

Thank you once again for attending the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee. It has been much appreciated by myself and the Members of Committee.

Yours sincerely



COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH CLARK
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc: Councillor Russell Goodway, Finance, Business and the Local Economy
Gary Watkins Operational Manager Revenue Services
Jane Thomas, Operational Manager, Benefits Finance and Tenant Services
Jo Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager

My Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Com Papers/24 October 2012
Date: 12 November 2012

Councillor Russell Goodway
Cabinet Member Finance, Business & the Local Economy,
Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Councillor Goodway,

POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - TRANSFORMATION/EFFICIENCY PORTFOLIO

The Committee was pleased to welcome Andrew Kerr, Chief Operating Officer, to give an update on the Transformation/Efficiency programme on 24 October 2012. During discussion of the way forward the Members expressed the following observations and concerns and have asked that as Chair I relay them for your consideration.

Future Progress

The Committee has routinely received six monthly progress reports on the above portfolio of projects and noted that whereas previously consultants had been used to introduce change quickly, the number of consultants has been significantly reduced, there are likely to be adjustments to the programme; a move to embed change into the organisation and greater engagement with service areas. Members suggested it may be beneficial to look at the change programmes of other authorities.

Spend to Save

Throughout its engagement with the Transformation programme the Committee has often highlighted that potential savings may require some investment up front. Members noted that spend on Information Technology (IT) has been low to date. They also heard that spend to save is currently higher than would be expected as the programme progresses. The Committee were pleased that projects were resourced and prioritised according to their savings potential and there remains a commitment to identifying savings.

Monitoring

Members expressed an interest in how the projects are monitored, and are particularly interested in the service benefits from a customer service perspective. They were interested that in future there is to be a business plan for each project and that it would be useful to revisit projects in 4-5 year cycles.

Further information

The Committee requested more information in respect of the Wave 2 projects. They would like a clear list of Wave 2 projects which identified those it was felt inappropriate to proceed with and those that remain.

Members have also asked me to arrange for consideration of the category management approach to procurement on their work programme.

Please could you convey the Committee's thanks to the Chief Operating Officer for attending the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee. It has been much appreciated by myself and the Members of Committee. I look forward to your continued support in briefing the committee on this matter in a timely manner.

Yours sincerely



COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH CLARK
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Andrew Kerr, Chief Operating Officer
Natalina Cottrill, Operational Manager, Transformation Management
Jo Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager

My Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Com Papers/Call-in 16 November/

Date: 6 December 2012

Councillor Russell Goodway
Cabinet Member - Finance, Business and the Local Economy
Cardiff Council
c/o Cabinet Support Office
Room 529
County Hall
Cardiff CF10 4UW



Dear Councillor Goodway

**POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE and ECONOMY & CULTURE JOINT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - CALL IN OF THE CABINET DECISION REGARDING
LAND AT CALLAGHAN SQUARE, CAB/12/037, 16 NOVEMBER 2012**

On behalf of the Policy Review & Performance and Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committees, thank you for attending their meeting on Friday 16 October with a range of officers to assist the Committees in considering the Call-in made by Councillor Jayne Cowan on the above Cabinet Decision.

I am aware that some time has passed and that the Decision has now been overtaken by events, but wish to confirm that the Committee decided not to refer the decision back to the Cabinet. However, the Members agreed that I should write to you to outline the key observations, concerns and requests made by the Committee Members.

ISSUES DIRECTLY RELATING TO THE CALL-IN

The main purpose of the meeting was for Members to satisfy themselves that the evidence presented to the Joint Committee answered the concerns expressed by Councillor Cowan in her Call-in Request. In particular, that sufficient information was provided to make an informed decision on the merits of the Council acquiring the land in Callaghan Square, and that the purchase of the land is in the public interest.

During the meeting you informed the Committee that Cardiff Council needs to show strong leadership to deliver the vision in the draft Master Plan for the City Centre and potential Enterprise Zone that your officials are currently developing. You detailed previous instances of this approach, including the redevelopment of Cardiff Bay, the International Sports Village and St David's 2.

If the Council did not step in and purchase the land at Callaghan Square, Members noted your view that it could remain fallow for several years, preventing essential infrastructure development (including north-south and east-west road infrastructure and the possible development of a major office building, convention centre and indoor arena in the nearby environment).

The Committee was told that procuring the site could enable further regeneration of the City Centre and Cardiff Bay, and potentially resolve issues facing the Council in terms of its own office accommodation and head quartering needs. It could enable the Council to benefit from the extensive marketing of the Enterprise Zone to be undertaken by Welsh Government, and could even open up the prospect of Assisted Area Status being extended.

You advised that it was in the Council's interest for the Council to gain the developer's profit by purchasing this site, rather than allowing a third party to secure this profit. In response to questions about the funding implications, Members heard the Deputy Section 151 Officer confirm that the Council had the resource to purchase the land. You also said that the other interested parties, including Welsh Government and the current owners of the site, saw that the public interest lay in the Council taking ownership of the land.

In response to Member's questions about the appropriateness of purchasing this site before the Master Plan had been communicated and owned more widely across the Council's Membership, the Committee was told that that the publication of a Master Plan could lead to inflation of the value of land and property the Council might wish to procure, weakening the Council's negotiating position.

Member's noted the apparent divergence in view between the Council and the Welsh Government about the use and role of an Enterprise Zone. It was felt that there needs to be greater clarity given regarding the benefits of an Enterprise Zone in the Welsh context. For example, in England, apparently, there are additional Broadband facilities and potential for reduced business rates.

Members were told by the Deputy Monitoring Officer that the Council would only proceed to conclude the Heads of Terms agreement and purchase the land if the restrictions and encumbrances (including overage) could be removed from the title to the land, and if a preliminary contamination report (expected imminently) did not identify excessive potential remedial works to be undertaken.

Finally, Members were advised that the unauthorised leaking of commercially confidential information on yellow paper had seriously weakened the Council's negotiating hand, and while it may not prove fatal to the Council's ability to complete this land purchase in the proscribed timescale it would almost certainly cost the taxpayer an additional six or seven figure sum.

MATTERS IDENTIFIED FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION AND SCRUTINY

Several Members made comments during the Way Forward around questions that, in their view, had not been fully answered during the meeting. Members felt that the following areas should be further considered and scrutinised as appropriate, in particular by members of the Economic and Culture Scrutiny Committee:

- What contingencies has the Council put in place to optimise the success of the Cardiff Enterprise Zone and the city's ongoing economic development if (for whatever reason) the Council does not prove successful in purchasing this land?

- Clarification regarding the use, role and benefits of an Enterprise Zone in the Welsh context.
- What might be the impact of the currently depressed office letting market on the Council's economic business plan? What additional costs might this incur?
- Some Members felt the detail on the Master Plan was insufficient and there needs to be more detail and clarity on the Master Plan
- What consideration has been given to the potentially negative economic impact on existing property resources that could be impacted by the developments you described - such as the Motorpoint Arena and St David's Hall?
- Provision of greater clarity on how the funding will be found for the other major projects identified during the meeting.
- Does the Council consider the purchase of other land is necessary? If so, what other associated pieces of land might the Council need to buy to fulfil its vision for the Enterprise Zone, and how might the funding required to purchase this land be found?
- The process for ensuring that scrutiny is kept closely engaged in each stage of the development of Cardiff's economic strategy.

REQUESTED INFORMATION

The Committee asked for details of the third party who wanted to buy the land. You referred at the meeting to a recent letter from Welsh Government detailing the interest of a third party in purchasing the land and potentially leading to the "economic sterilisation" of the area for years to come. This piece of information is what you were basing the premise of urgency upon in connection with buying the land. Members asked for this letter to be provided for their information, and you said that you would release it if possible. Please could you make the letter available to Members as soon as possible?

GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Members were clearly committed to Cardiff enjoying economic success and vitality. Members commented on the successful scrutiny undertaken during the planning of the new Cardiff City Football Club Stadium, where the Executive involved Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee in an ongoing and rolling programme of scrutiny. Members noted the assurance you made to Councillor Craig Williams, Chair of Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee, that the Cabinet would involve that Committee in a close, creative and collaborative manner on future economic projects. He will look forward to discussing the dynamics of how this can happen with you in the near future.

We were very concerned that both the Policy Review and Performance and Economic and Culture Scrutiny Committees were not alerted to the "Land at Callaghan Square" report before the paper was issued to the Cabinet for their consideration. This meant that the usual Scrutiny Protocols were not followed and there was no scope for pre-decision scrutiny of such an important item. I suspect, if the item had been on the Cabinet Forward Plan it is likely that it would have been classified as red. We welcomed your commitment to scrutiny at the call-in meeting, and were pleased to hear your assurance that such an event should not arise again.

The Council's Constitution clearly details the Forward Plan process, and we would like an assurance that - as soon as there is any serious consideration of an item coming to a future Cabinet Meeting (and at the very latest around the time of the Cabinet Agenda Conference) - officers place a reference to the item in the Cabinet's Forward Plan. I appreciate that Cabinet Members might be concerned about a sensitive matter being released into the public arena by reference to it in the Forward Plan, but there must be a way for you or officials to be able to manage this.

We note there have been a couple of occasions when a lack of advance warning of Cabinet papers has presented implications for effective scrutiny. Members shared a number of thoughts on how future problems like this could be avoided - for example, hearing items in a workshop forum in exceptional circumstances to overcome issues of commercial or legal confidentiality. These are all ideas that I and fellow Scrutiny Chairs welcome the opportunity to discuss with Councillor Joyce and Cabinet colleagues at our planned Cabinet and Scrutiny Interface meetings.

Thank you again for attending the Joint Committee meeting.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Clark".

COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH CLARK
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Neil Hanratty, Chief City Development Officer
Jo Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager

My Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Com Papers/Correspondence

Date: 17 December 2012

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member – Communities, Housing & Social Justice
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Dear Councillor Thorne,

POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 28th NOVEMBER 2012

On behalf of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee, please accept my thanks to you and your officers for attending the meeting on 28th November to discuss Connect to Cardiff and the draft Complaint policy.

Following the consideration of the issues raised during the meeting, Committee members agreed that I should write to you to outline our key observations, concerns and requests.

CONNECT TO CARDIFF

Please pass on my thanks to your officers for the tour of the Connect to Cardiff service which they arranged for us; it was most informative and helped to set the scene for the consideration of the C2C service.

The Committee noted that the operation of Connect to Cardiff is to be seen as part of the wider Customer Management strategy, which will progress a 'channel shift' to promote web-access as the preferred method for contacting the Council. The Committee was reassured that the strategy would continue to allow customers to contact the Council via their method of choice, including face to face (for example through citizen Hubs) or by telephone if desired. However, Members wish to reiterate comments made by the former Committee membership and emphasise their strong feeling that the Council must avoid the creation of a 'two-tier' contact system, favouring those who have easy access to the internet. Member request further details regarding customer satisfaction levels of those contacting C2C via webchat/email versus those who telephone (although Members noted comments that, as emails from C2C always include a link to a satisfaction survey, this may elicit a higher level of negative comments). The Committee would also like to be kept informed regarding further expansion of twenty-four hour and out of hours provision and may schedule a further consideration of the service into its work programme at an appropriate point.

Members noted comments that some calls which C2C receives may result from difficulties or defects stemming from lack of clarity in communications sent out by



other sections of the Council, and hope that wherever possible you will work with service areas to address these issues.

The Committee was impressed by officers' enthusiasm and dedication to the effective delivery and with the initiatives which have been put in place to encourage C2C staff to become involved in the improvement of the service, such as the suggestion scheme. Further to this, Members would like further information regarding the Service Improvement 'Rapid Improvement Event' which has been undertaken in the area, following comments that it is essential that change initiatives involve staff directly.

The Committee noted officers' comments regarding potential effect of Welfare Reform and that the high number of advice letters which will be sent out in December to those affected may result in a dip in C2C performance, for example in terms of the number of calls which are abandoned before they are answered. The Committee will bear this in mind when considering Quarter 3 performance reports.

Members of the Committee queried whether there are any opportunities to generate income via C2C, noting officers' comments that the service is actively looking at partnership and collaborative working, including work with the Community Alarm service, and the potential to use the service to dial out to undertake surveys of housing repair recipients. The Committee would recommend that this is investigated further.

Finally, the Committee requests a ward-by-ward and service area breakdown in terms of types of enquiry C2C receives.

COMPLAINT POLICY

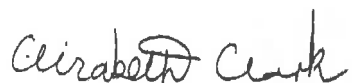
Committee Members were largely content with the draft Complaint Policy and Guidance note, welcoming the reduction of timescales in terms of acknowledgement of complaints. The Committee was concerned that public familiarity with the current Policy may be low and hopes that the new Policy will be sufficiently publicised and accessible to members of the public. Members recommend that a regular piece is included in the Capital Times in order to ensure ongoing and greater visibility of the Complaint procedure. The Committee also questions whether the Policy could be merged into a more general 'feedback' policy, so that the public have a clearer way to contact the Council with any complaints or compliments.

The Committee noted officers' comments that the Ombudsman has steered away from independent review, advocating instead the earliest possible resolution for complaints, but that this may change again in future. The Committee will monitor this situation in any further considerations of the Complaint Policy and Annual Complaint report.

Members also heard that there is some variation across service areas in terms of handling complaints. The Committee would hope that these discrepancies can be rectified as the new Policy and guidance notes are more widely publicised across the Council and is sure that your officers will work with Service Area Complaints Managers to ensure this.

My thanks again to you and your officers for having attended the meeting. I look forward to your response to the issues and queries outlined above.

Yours sincerely



COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH CLARK
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Cllr Heather Joyce
Isabelle Bignall
Rachel Bishop
Emlyn Nash
John Agnew
Members of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee
Jo Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager

My Ref: T:-Scrutiny/PRAP/Com Papers/Correspondence

Date: 29 November 2012

Councillor Russell Goodway
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Dear Councillor Goodway,

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 28th NOVEMBER – DRAFT ATTENDANCE & WELLBEING POLICY

Thank you for attending the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee on the 28 November 2012 to aid its scrutiny of the draft Attendance & Wellbeing Policy. The Committee welcomed your comments regarding the value which the Leader and the Cabinet places on engaging fully with Scrutiny in the development of Council policies, in particular where these affect Council staff. Members welcomed that you were attending the meeting very much to listen to their views. I have set out below the Committee's concerns and observations for consideration as you prepare for the Cabinet meeting on 6th December.

Firstly, the Committee has asked me to make clear Members' unanimous opposition to the proposal to withdraw pay for the first three days of any sickness absence. Members feel that such a course would unfairly penalise genuinely ill staff and in particular would affect our lowest-paid officers. Members remain unconvinced by the evidence available to support the implementation of such a suggestion. They noted that only a very small number of English local authorities have put this in place and that no supporting data was provided to prove that this had resulted in lower levels of sickness absence. Furthermore, while the Committee notes that some private sector organisations have followed such a policy, Members would question whether this is necessarily an example which the Council would wish to emulate.

The Committee noted your statement that you did not feel it would have been appropriate to remove the option of non-payment from the proposals prior to their consideration by Scrutiny and that there was support for this course from some officers. However, as the Managing Attendance inquiry recommended that the *option* to remove sick pay for the first three days should be available for line managers where other measures had not been successful, and only on the authority of the Chief Executive, Members would like clarification as to how this was developed into a proposal for removal of payment in all cases.

Members were also concerned that Council employees may have become aware of this proposal via media reports following the publication of committee papers and the accompanying draft policy, feeling that this would have caused great concern among members of staff. The Committee would ask you and officers to ensure that in future there is a sensitive communication plan in place around proposals of a similar nature, making it clear to staff when matters are still under consultation rather than firm Cabinet intentions.



The Committee welcomed that regard had been made to the September 2011 'Managing Attendance' task and finish report of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee report. Rather than comment on each specific element of the current draft policy under consultation, the Committee wishes to highlight the following areas:


- Members would like to commend the more positive approaches contained within the draft Policy, particularly in terms of earlier referral to the Occupational Health Service; the increase in preventative initiatives; and work around mental health issues. The Committee would in particular like to lend its support to the comment from Trade Union colleagues that the Employee Counselling Service should be extended if possible, and would hope that this will be considered as part of the Cabinet's budget proposals.
- Members welcomed your openness to communicating our recommendations to the Cabinet in terms of future targets for the reduction of sickness absence levels. We would therefore wish to endorse the recommendation of the Managing Attendance inquiry that a target of 9 days should be set for 2013/14 and a target of 8.5 days for 2014/15. We hope to see this reflected in the draft Corporate Plan when we consider it in February.
- The Committee also noted the query from Trade Union colleagues as to whether the draft Policy had undergone Equality Impact Assessment. The Committee would be interested to receive the results of any Assessment undertaken, so that Members can monitor any differential impact.
- The Committee notes that the Corporate Chief Officer for Shared Services feels there is sufficient capacity to bring forward case conferences as outlined in the draft Policy and will keep a watching brief on this aspect.
- The Committee wish to monitor the effectiveness and implementation of the training which is available for line managers on the sickness absence policy.
- The Committee requests further information regarding the Mutual Fund, once headteacher conferences have taken place in January 2013.
- Members asked that the sickness figures clearly identify absence which is due to industrial injury.
- Members asked that the current commitment to the critical illness policy be maintained and fully implemented.
- Members asked for flexibility and discretion to be applied in the implementation of the policy if particular circumstances merited it.
- Members asked for an explanation of why the overall sickness absence levels seemed to have remained static despite long term absences reducing.
- One member of the Committee was not convinced by the evidence base which is available in terms of comparative sickness data, across other local

authorities and similar employment sectors, and wished this concern to be voiced.

- The Committee wishes to closely observe the implementation of the Policy and will look to schedule this into its work programme for 2013/14. Members will pay particular attention to the effectiveness of any changes in triggers/stages at this juncture.

I would be grateful if you would ensure that the Committee's comments are considered prior to the presentation of the draft Attendance & Wellbeing Policy by the Cabinet on 6th December, in particular the Committee's recommendation that non-payment for the first three days of sickness absence should be removed from the proposals.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH CLARK
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Philip Lenz, Corporate Chief Officer (Shared)
Lynne David, Centre of Expertise Manager,
Sarah Maunder, Operational Manager, HR People Services
Ken Daniels, GMB.
Angie Shiels, GMB
Lynn Landeg, Unison
Jackie Parsons, Unison
Mike Formosa, Unite
Anna Freeman, Director of Employment, WLGA
Jo Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager
Members of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee

