
**POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT
2013-14**

Reason for this Report

1. To seek Committee's approval for the draft Annual Report 2013-14 prior to its consideration by Full Council.

Background

2. The Cardiff Council Constitution requires all Scrutiny Committees to '*report annually to the Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.*'
3. A copy of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee's draft Annual Report 2013 -14 is attached at **Appendix A**. This report lists all items considered from June 2013 to May 2014 and highlights those topics where the Committee has had greatest impact.

Legal Implications

4. 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 of 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 on 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

5. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to consider, if necessary amend, and approve the attached Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2013-14 for presentation to Council.

MARIE ROSENTHAL

County Clerk and Monitoring Officer
28 May 2014

s c r u t i n y



**Policy Review and Performance
Scrutiny Committee**

Annual Report 2013–2014

June 2014



County Council of The City and County of Cardiff

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POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



[Councillor Nigel Howells](#)
(Chairperson)



[Councillor Phil Bale](#)
(From June 2013 to March 2014)



[Councillor Garry Hunt](#)



[Councillor Sam Knight](#)



[Councillor Kathryn Lloyd](#)



[Councillor Mark McGarry](#)
(From April 2014 onwards)



[Councillor Jim Murphy](#)



[Councillor Gretta Marshall](#)



[Councillor Adrian Robson](#)



[Councillor David Walker](#)

Chair's Foreword

[To be completed once report is approved.]

Councillor Nigel Howells

Chair, Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee

DRAFT

Introduction

1. The Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee has a corporate policy and performance overview responsibility. In its examination of service performance and policy development across a range of corporate services, it is central to the Council's governance arrangements.
2. The Committee's terms of reference, agreed by Full Council on 29 May 2014, are:
 - To scrutinise, monitor and review the overall operation of the Cardiff Programme for Improvement and the effectiveness of the general implementation of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, including:

Council Business Management and Constitutional Issues	Cardiff Local Development
Cardiff Council Corporate Plan	Equalities
Strategic Policy Development	Finance and Corporate Grants
Strategic Programmes	Organisational Development
Community Planning & Vision Forum	E-Government
Voluntary Sector Relations	Information and Communication Technology
Citizen Engagement & Consultation	Council Property
Corporate Communications	Commissioning and Procurement
Contact Centre Services and Service Access	Carbon Management
International Policy	Legal Services

- To scrutinise, monitor and review the effectiveness of the Council's systems of financial control and administration and use of human resources;
- To assess the impact of partnerships with and resources and services provided by external organisations including the Welsh Government, joint local government services, Welsh Government Sponsored Public Bodies

and quasi-departmental non governmental bodies on the effectiveness of Council service delivery;

- To report to an appropriate Cabinet or Council meeting on its findings and to make recommendations on measures which may enhance Council performance in this area.

3. As well as performing its corporate overview function, the Committee's Terms of Reference allow for it to consider specific areas of the organisation's current structure in depth. This largely comprises:

- The **Resources Directorate** including Finance; Legal Services; Human Resources; Commissioning & Procurement; ICT Central Transport Services and Facilities Management; Performance and Information Management;
- The **County Clerk and Monitoring Officer Directorate** including Scrutiny, Democratic Services, Member Services, Media and Communications;
- Parts of the **Economic Development Directorate** in terms of the Council's asset management and international policy functions;
- Parts of the **Communities, Housing and Customer Service Directorate** including the Council's customer services, consultation, voluntary sector relations and equalities functions.

Work programme overview

4. This Annual Report covers the work of the Committee between June 2013 and May 2014. The work programme has been varied and responsive to the Council's priorities throughout the year, although with a clear focus on the Council's performance management and budgetary pressures. The Committee has aimed to undertake as much pre-decision scrutiny as possible, as well as helping to drive improvement through scrutiny of the Council's response to external assessments.
5. The items considered by the Committee are listed in the 'Programme Overview' below, whilst those areas of greatest impact are reported in 'Highlights of 2013/14' from page 11 onwards.

6. During the 2013/14 municipal year the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee held 13 meetings. This included 11 standard Committees and two special meetings called to consider items of some urgency. This culminated in 28 letters to the Cabinet and Senior Management Team sharing the Committee's comments, concerns and recommendations following the scrutiny of items.
7. In addition to its regular full Committee meetings, the Committee has led on the last stage of a task and finish inquiry examining the Draft Deposit Local Development Plan, and will soon publish the findings of its inquiry into Information Governance.
8. In reviewing the year it is notable that the Committee has as far as possible concentrated its efforts on pre-decision scrutiny, but it has scrutinised a wide variety of areas, including:

Call-In – Where a Member invokes the Call-in procedure under the Council's constitution, to review a Cabinet decision prior to implementation. The Committee did not consider any Call-Ins in 2013/14

Inquiries – Where the Committee has undertaken an examination of a topic over a period of time, resulting in a formal report to the Cabinet. In 2013/14 this included:

- Local Development Plan Deposit Plan task and finish inquiry (July – October 2013)
- Information Governance inquiry (December 2014 –).

Joint Scrutiny Work – Where the Committee has joined together with one or more scrutiny committees to examine a topic of a crosscutting nature to enable collective consideration of the issues or preparation for individual scrutiny. This has included:

- Community Hubs Proposals (Joint Sub Committee of the Policy Review and Performance, Community and Adult Services and Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committees).

Policy Review – Where the Committee has considered the implementation and impact of policies, providing the Cabinet with Scrutiny Members' views about whether any changes are required. In 2013/14 the Committee considered the following subjects:

- Budget Strategy 2014/15 (September 2013)
- Updated Budget Strategy 2014/15 (November 2013)
- Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment Arrangements (5 June 2013)
- Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report & Letter (15 October 2013 – special meeting)
- Welsh Local Government Association Peer Review Arrangements (5 June 2013)
- Welsh Local Government Association Peer Review report (15 October 2013 – special meeting)
- Welsh Local Government Association Peer Review Cabinet response (26 November 2013 and 7 January 2014)
- Budget 2014/15 – Directorate Budget Briefings (29 October and 26 November 2013)
- Attendance & Wellbeing Policy – six month review (4 March 2014).

Policy Development – Where the Committee has contributed to the Council's policy development processes. In 2013/14 these included:

- Customer Services – Cardiff Council Web Refresh project (June 2013)
- Review of Council Grants – Advice Package Procurement (29 October 2013)
- Performance Benchmarking (4 March 2014)
- Cardiff Council website – governance arrangements (1 April 2014)
- Performance Review (1 April 2014)
- Social Inclusion (6 May 2014).

Pre-Decision – Where the Committee has evaluated and commented on policy proposals before they go to the Cabinet. In 2013/14 this included:

- Review of the Post of Chief Executive (June 2013 – special meeting)
- Budget 2014/15 - Proposals for a Review of Council Grants (1 October 2013)

- Revised Redeployment Policy (26 November 2013)
- Draft 2014/15 Budget Proposals (13 February 2014)
- Draft 2014-17 Corporate Plan (13 February 2014)
- Organisational Change programme (6 May 2014).

Monitoring – Where the Committee has undertaken monitoring of the Council’s performance in implementing actions previously agreed. In 2013/14 this included:

- Quarterly Performance reports (Outturn 2012/13 - 9 July 2013, Quarter 1 2013/14 - 29 October 2013, Quarter 2 2013/14 – 7 January 2014, Quarter 3 – 1 April 2014)
- Budget Monitoring reports (Outturn 2012/13 – 9 July 2013; Month 3 2013/14 – 29 October 2013, Month 6 2013/14- 7 January 2014, Month 9 2013/14/ - 4 March 2014)
- Budget 2013/14 - Central Transport Services (7 January 2014)
- Budget Monitoring 2013/14 - Facilities Management (7 January 2014)
- Council Tax Single Person Discount inquiry update (7 January 2014).

Briefing Information - Where the Committee receives information on a specific subject which comes under its terms of reference. In 2013/14 this included:

- Improvement Framework (12 September 2013)
- Audit Committee minutes
- Corporate Risk Register (7 January 2014)
- Annual Complaints Report (7 January 2014)
- Public Sector Asset Management (7 January 2014).

Member Development

9. As Scrutiny is a Member-led function, and its success is closely linked to the capacity and capabilities of the Members who sit on Scrutiny Committees, the Scrutiny Team works closely with colleagues across the Council to provide a continuous range of opportunities for Members to build or refresh their Scrutiny skills, and extend their knowledge and insight into a range of issues relevant to

their Scrutiny role. Members of the Committee have actively participated in training sessions, briefings, and awareness-raising sessions. The Scrutiny development and training programme is an ongoing process and further opportunities will be identified to help Members in fulfilling the full span of their duties as an elected representative and community champion.

Inspection and Assessment of Committee

10. The work of the Committee has been assessed by the Wales Audit Office as part of their Corporate Assessment of Cardiff Council, as well as by the Welsh Local Government Association as part of the Peer Review which was commissioned by the Council. The former has yet to report, but the WLGA team was “impressed” by Cardiff’s scrutiny, feeling that there is “much other authorities can learn from the way scrutiny is undertaken in Cardiff Council”.

Increasing Partnership Scrutiny

11. Welsh Government has commissioned a range of studies in recent years (including the Beecham Review and the more recent Simpson Review) which have substantially advanced thinking on the role of collaboration in public service administration.

12. Cardiff was the first local authority in Wales to introduce scrutiny to its Local Service Board in 2009. Following the successful evaluation of its award-winning pilot LSB Scrutiny Panel, Cardiff continued to resource its successor Cardiff Partnership Board Scrutiny Panel in 2013/14. Including the Chair of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee, the Panel played an important role in scrutinising the effectiveness of the Cardiff Partnership Board. It has helped to optimise the implementation of the ten-year “What Matters” integrated strategy for advancing wellbeing across seven key outcomes for people living in, working in or visiting our city.

Highlights of 2013/14

Local Development Plan – Deposit Plan inquiry

Context

13. Following the deposit of Cardiff's Local Development Plan (LDP) in April 2009, it was submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government for examination in November 2009. In view of issues raised by the Inspectors examining the Plan, and following agreement from the Welsh Assembly Government, the Council withdrew the LDP from the Examination in March 2010 and commenced work on preparing a new Plan.
14. Scrutiny has considered the Council's progress towards securing an LDP at each stage of the Plan's development, via a joint task and finish group comprising volunteers from all five scrutiny committees, led by this Committee. Following consideration of the Draft Preferred Strategy and the Draft Masterplanning General Principles in the 2012/13 municipal year, the Group considered the Draft Deposit Plan, considering it against the 'ten tests of soundness'.

Scrutiny Outcomes

15. The Task and Finish group recommended that:
- The public consultation be made as accessible as possible and that communication with both new and existing communities should be further considered in order to create an open dialogue;
 - Monitoring arrangements should be established via the provision of an Annual Monitoring Report to this Committee;
 - The Cabinet should work with partners to ensure appropriate phasing of delivery of community facilities and infrastructure;
 - A Public Sector Asset Management Strategy via the Cardiff Partnership Board should be progressed;
 - Transport proposals should be improved in discussion with Welsh Government and other partners with regards to a regional transport solution, and that early

communication should take place with those residents who may be affected by any regional transport solutions;

- Site specific masterplans should take into account integrated facilities which make sustainable transport solutions viable, and ensure that they specify how affordable housing will be placed within each site;
- Members should be fully engaged in the development of the necessary policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance to support the delivery of the LDP;
- The Cabinet should pursue a regional solution for Gypsy and Traveller provision;
- A further inquiry should be established to consider the implications of the Community Infrastructure Levy and changes to Section 106 funding in more depth.

Cabinet response

16. *The Committee is awaiting a formal response.*

Information Governance inquiry

Context

17. At its January 2013 meeting, the Committee considered the Council's Corporate Risk Register, which sets out the key strategic risks faced by the Council. The Register identified Information Governance as one of these risks, citing the risk of 'a lack of clarity around information governance leaving the Council exposed to the Information Commissioner's intervention and financial penalties'. The Committee subsequently received a briefing from the Leader and Officers setting out the Council's framework, resources and policies for the management of information in March 2013. Having concerns about the level of risk posed to the Council, the Committee resolved to establish a task and finish inquiry to consider the issues in more depth. The Inquiry Group has to date heard from the Assistant Commissioner for Wales and her team from the Information Commissioner's Office, the Wales Audit Office, the Welsh Government and the WASPI (Wales Accord for the Sharing of Personal Information) Team. They have also visited the Council's internal

Records Centre and commissioned a review of the Council's information governance resources and processes.

Scrutiny Outcomes

18. The Task and Finish group will report in the near future.

Budget Scrutiny

19. As noted above, the Committee has maintained a strong focus on the Council's budget this year, in terms of both the Budget Strategy for 2014/15 and in undertaking robust monitoring of the implementation of the 2013/14 Budget. Members of the Committee have also taken a robust interest in developing and improving the Council's arrangements of the scrutiny of the budget in future years. Some of the details of their scrutiny activity are set out below.

2014/15 Budget Strategy

Context

20. The Committee discussed the 2014/15 Budget Strategy in September 2013 and an updated report in November 2013. The Strategy clearly set out the serious financial position which Cardiff Council faces. Based on indicative Welsh Government funding levels, a significant funding gap had been identified which the Council must close through savings, increases in Council Tax or through using the Council's reserves.

21. The Budget Strategy set out that savings could be business-process led savings, made from traditional directorate-based savings, or through policy-led drivers, including:

- Establishing new organisations to deliver services;
- Setting up or exploiting existing partnerships to deliver services;
- Identifying collaboration opportunities to deliver services;
- Exploiting opportunities to sell services or trade services;

- Consideration of whether to make or buy services as part of the wider consideration of commissioning and procurement;
- Consideration of reducing services or closing service provision.

22. In terms of the Council's future Capital Programme, the Budget Strategy made it clear that there was little scope for new schemes, given the financial pressures on the Council. New schemes would have to be self-financing over a prudent period of time; attract partner or grant support; be self-financing by releasing land and property or be unavoidable as a result of pressures.

Scrutiny outcomes

23. The Committee wrote to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development to:

- Request to be kept informed as business-process led changes were developed;
- Recommend that a holistic view of savings proposals must be taken, in order to consider the impact of savings from one directorate on the service pressures felt by others;
- Note that proposals were under development for reviewing the Council's grant funding to external bodies. The Committee welcomed the more timely approach which was being taken to ensure that third sector organisations had time to mitigate against likely funding cuts;
- Make a number of comments about the need to improve the Budget Scrutiny process. These comments focussed on the availability of information; the need for earlier scrutiny access to Budget Proposals; and an improved, accessible, consultation process, to allow citizens to comment about the Proposals from an informed position. The Committee particularly recommended that the results of budget consultation should be made available to all Scrutiny Committees to aid their consideration of the budget.

Cabinet response

24. *The Committee continued to work closely with the Cabinet as the 2014/15 Budget Proposals developed and has since scrutinised proposals to establish a three-year*

*Organisational Development programme to help meet the challenges it is facing.
Further details of this activity are included below.*

2014/15 Budget Strategy – Directorate Budget Briefings

Context

25. During the 2012/13 municipal year, the Committee was robust in recommending that improved information should be provided to Cardiff's Scrutiny Committees to enable strong scrutiny of the Cabinet's budget proposals and a fuller understanding of the context in which proposals were developed. All Scrutiny Committees received briefings from Cabinet Members and Directors in late autumn, setting out an overview of each Directorate including key budgetary and staffing information. Directors also informed Committees about the main challenges and opportunities facing their services.

26. Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee received briefings from the Corporate Director for Resources; the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer, the Director for Communities, Housing and Social Justice (regarding Customer Services, Third Sector relations and Equalities), and the Director for Economic Development regarding Strategic Estates and International Policy.

Scrutiny outcomes

27. The Chair wrote to the relevant Cabinet Members with a number of comments:

- The Committee welcomed the more rounded view of the budget which the Directorate Briefing Packs provided Members, feeling that it was useful preparation for the scrutiny of the final Budget Proposals;
- The Committee felt that all Directorates should address their Capital forecasting and slippage;
- The Committee noted that Directorates were investigating income opportunities;
- Members noted that decisions around budget transfers had been taken which would seem to subsidise some Directorate budgets;

- The Committee also queried decisions taken to delete some senior management posts.

Budget Monitoring 2013/14 – Central Transport Services

Context

28. As part of the Committee's strong focus on the Council's Budget this year, Members considered the Council's Central Transport Services section in some depth at its January 2014 meeting, in the context of the 2013/14 Month 6 Budget Monitoring report. Central Transport Services (CTS) was created in 2009 and is responsible for transport and vehicle provision within the Council. It is now part of the Resources Directorate. Budget Monitoring reports had highlighted CTS as a significant issue to the Council's monitoring position, with an overspend of over £1 million projected at Month 6, including significant shortfalls against the service's savings targets for the 2013/14 financial year. As a result of this risk to the Council's monitoring position, the 2014/15 Budget Strategy set out that, as significant savings proposals had been accepted from CTS in 2013/14, requiring further savings through efficiencies was deemed to be unreasonable.

29. The Committee discussed CTS in some depth with the Corporate Director – Resources and the Operational Manager Facilities Management (who was at that point undertaking a caretaker role for the service), receiving considerable background information in terms of the service's structures, overall budget, and performance, as well as regarding proposals to develop a business case for investigating the income opportunities.

Scrutiny Outcomes

30. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Business and the Local Economy had been unable to attend the meeting. The Committee wrote to him to:

- Express concern that some savings proposals relating to the service had been deemed to be entirely unachievable. Several of these had been assessed to be 'Amber/Green' in terms of achievability as they had gone through the 2013/14 budget development process and Members were concerned that the budget

assessment process seemed not to have provided Members with reliable information. Members had been informed at the meeting that a more rigorous assessment process was being put in place for 2015/16, which would include a 'planning' status showing whether there were detailed delivery plans in place for each saving proposal;

- Convey its positivity about the service's plans for the future, such as proposed Service Improvement initiatives;
- Request further details of the cost of officer mileage versus use of the council's pool cars;
- State that some members of the Committee had reservations about the viability of CTS becoming a Trading Company and its ability to compete with the private sector;
- Express concern about the service's recent move to a new facility at Coleridge Road on an invest to save basis, querying whether this investment would still pay off, should CTS move in a new direction. The Committee particularly hoped that lessons would be learnt in future and Invest to Save schemes would be subject to more rigorous assessment processes. Members later referred the issue of Invest to Save to the Audit Committee, during the Committee's consideration of the Draft Budget Proposals 2014/15.

Cabinet response

31. *The Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development, Councillor Russell Goodway, responded reiterating that the new 'planning status' assessment has been put in place for the development of 2014/15 Budget proposals. He also provided a further assessment of the costs of mileage and pool cars.*

Budget Monitoring 2013/14 - Facilities Management

Context

32. The Committee also focused on the Council's Facilities Management section at its January 2014 meeting, in the context of the 2013/14 Month 6 Budget Monitoring report. Facilities Management (FM) had been created in 2011 from a number of budgets previously disaggregated across the Council. The service manages

Council building in terms of maintenance, cleaning, and security. Similarly to Central Transport Services, discussed above, FM projected a high overspend at Month 6, of £924,000, mainly due to shortfalls in savings targets.

33. The Committee discussed FM with the Corporate Director – Resources and the Operational Manager Facilities Management receiving considerable background information in terms of the service’s structures, overall budget, and performance.

Scrutiny Outcomes

34. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development had been unable to attend the meeting. The Committee wrote to him to :

- Welcome the work which officers in Facilities Management were undertaking to develop a strategy for the future of the service;
- Note that developing a strategy was made more difficult because he had not given a public position on the future of the Council’s operational buildings and in particular on the future of County Hall;
- Query how the maintenance backlog on Council buildings could be effectively addressed without this public position; and
- Repeat its concern that the budget proposal assessment process had not been effective.

Cabinet response

35. *The Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development responded noting the Committee’s comments about the budget assessment process, reiterating that the new ‘planning status’ assessment has been put in place for the development of 2014/15 Budget proposals.*

Budget 2014/15 – Proposals for A Review Of Council Grant Funding

Context

36. The Committee met on 1 October 2013 for pre-decision scrutiny of proposals to review the Council’s grant funding to external bodies as part of the 2014/15 Budget

Strategy. Hearing from the Cabinet Member and officers, as well as the Chief Officer of the Cardiff Third Sector Council, the Committee was told that an initial assessment had established that at that time the Council awarded £2.7 million in 123 separate grants to 94 organisations. The draft report which the Committee considered set out that while many were being used to deliver key services, others were awarded on a historic basis and a link to strategic need to alignment to policy was often difficult to establish.

37. The report therefore made a number of recommendations about the future of grant funding, which would be communicated and consulted upon with affected organisations. These would be subject to final agreement with the Budget Proposals report in February 2014. It was proposed to split grants into several categories:

- Those delivering key services would continue at 2013/14 funding levels, split into three separate packages which would be commissioned in future;
- Those to infrastructure and key equality organisations would continue but with a 10% funding cut;
- A number of grants would also cease as of 1 April 2014. Equality Impact Assessments had been partly undertaken by Council officers and would be completed in consultation with affected organisations;
- Finally, some grants which had been identified by directorates as delivering strategically important services would be retained within directorate base budgets and be commissioned for service-specific purposes where appropriate.

38. The report also set out proposals to establish a neighbourhood fund of £180,000 for Cardiff's six neighbourhood partnership areas. Applications would need to secure the 'sponsorship' of a ward Member and outline the evidence of need in the area as well as the intended outcomes of the funding.

Scrutiny outcomes

39. The Committee wrote to the Cabinet Member for Communities, Housing and Social Justice to:

- Welcome the longer period allowed for consultation with recipients of grant funding, having been concerned during the 2013/14 budget setting process that Third Sector groups had not been allowed sufficient time;
- Welcome the shift towards an outcome focus;
- Request full engagement with Scrutiny as the commissioning approach developed to ensure that it would deliver as intended;
- Seek to understand the costs involved in administering these changes, as the Committee had some concerns that increased administration could make the savings negligible;
- Recommend that the operation of the neighbourhood fund should be as transparent as possible and to request further details of the allocation criteria. The Committee was also concerned that smaller organisations should be supported through the application process;
- Request the results of consultation with the Third Sector on Equality Impact Assessments prior to scrutiny of the final budget proposals;
- Recommend that it was made clear that the 'reserve' referred to in the 'advice' procurement package was very much a contingency;
- Request further details regarding the decision to transfer the entirety of two grants into directorate budgets without being subject to a cut.

Cabinet response

40. *The Cabinet Member for Communities, Housing and Social Justice responded that she shared the Committee's concerns about ensuring that organisations had the maximum possible time to plan for potential funding reductions. She confirmed that workshops would be held with current providers in order to develop the commissioning approach. Business Wales would help to deliver the workshops, one of which a Committee member later attended. The responses also stated that there would be no additional costs incurred in terms of administering the new approach to grants. The Cabinet Member confirmed details regarding the administration of the neighbourhood fund. With regards to the 'reserve' the Cabinet Member agreed that the Committee's point would be clearly communicated. She*

also stated that the full transfer of two grants into directorate budgets would still leave those grants subject to savings requirements as part of the usual budget process.

Budget 2014/15 – Review Of Council Grant Funding – Advice Package Procurement

Context

41. Following on from the Committee's consideration of the proposals to Review the Council's Grant Funding arrangements, the Committee considered the procurement arrangements for the Advice Package at its 29 October 2013 meeting. The scope of the scrutiny was to consider the procurement and consultation arrangements. Members were informed that a two-year Advice contract, covering income maximisation advice, budgeting and debt, housing issues, family & employment law, immigration, equalities and discrimination, and consumer issues. This would bring commissioned advice services under one supplier to ensure that the service was 'consistent, high quality and cost effective'. Subcontracting would be possible to enable smaller providers to participate. The contract would be procured to a value of £500,000 with a small reserve for unforeseen need. The Committee was informed that independent advice and support would be provided by Business Wales and supplier workshops would be held to give providers a chance to inform the final specification and network.

Scrutiny outcomes

42. The Committee wrote to the Cabinet Member for Community & Neighbourhood Regeneration and Social Justice to:
- Welcome the approach which had been developed to include suppliers in the development of the specification. The Committee requested further details so that a Member of the Committee could attend one of the supplier workshops;
 - Note that should service pressures require further funding this would require a financial pressures bid through the budget-setting process;

- Highlight potential issues with subcontracting under a single supplier contract and recommend that the Council very clearly set out its expectation to be informed when subcontractors are used;
- Emphasise that the monitoring of the contract and the selection of appropriate performance indicators will be vital to ensure that outcomes for citizens are delivered;
- Express the concern of some Members that it was possible that these services would be brought in-house at the end of the contract period;
- Reiterate that the Committee wanted to see the results of the overall Grants consultation to aid its consideration of the final 2014/15 Budget Proposals.

Cabinet response

43. The Cabinet Member replied noting the Committee's comments and offering to report back as the contract process went forward. One Member of the Committee later attended a supplier workshop to hear from providers and Business Wales. Following a change in Cabinet structure, the Committee received a further letter from the Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Wellbeing in April 2014 to update Members on progress. The supplier workshop had been held in November 2014, at which the way forward for the procurement of advice service had been set out. Comments on the principles were requested, but none were received by the deadline. Further consultation took place on the detail of the services to be commissioned, which led to changes in the services being commissioned and comments were used to inform the drafting of the specification.

Draft Corporate Plan 2014 - 17

Context

44. The Committee considered the draft refresh of the Council's Corporate Plan 2014-17 at its February 2014 meeting. When the Committee had considered the 2013-17 Corporate Plan, Members had made a number of comments about the measurability of its outcomes and the suitability of the milestones included in terms of their consistency, measurability and definitions. Many of these points were later picked up by the Wales Audit Office and Welsh Local Government Association.

The Committee had also recommended that further input should have been sought from the citizens of Cardiff.

Scrutiny outcomes

45. The Committee wrote to the Leader to:

- Express concern that the Corporate Plan had not been available in time to be sent out with all Scrutiny Committee papers and that the accompanying detailed 'Delivery Plan' had also arrived late. Members of the Committee were clear in their view that the drafting of the Corporate Plan should be done earlier in the year in order to ensure proper scrutiny consideration;
- Emphasise that the Corporate Plan should be drafted with several audiences in mind – the public, partners, officers and regulatory bodies for instance – and state that they were not convinced that this was currently the case;
- Recommend that the Corporate Plan should set out more clearly the difficult choices which the Council would have to make in the medium- to long-term;
- Suggest that although the Corporate Plan had improved, there were still improvements to be made in terms of the measures it contained.
- State that the Committee was sceptical as to whether the Plan clearly set out the links between the Corporate Plan, the Cardiff 'What Matters' integrated partnership strategy;
- Emphasise that the Council's performance management framework should be addressed as a matter of urgency;
- Request a date to be confirmed urgently when Directorate Delivery Plans would be ready for scrutiny.

Cabinet response

46. *The Committee has since considered proposals to review the Council's performance management arrangements, further details of which are below. The Committee will consider the Directorate Delivery Plans at its June and July 2014 meetings.*

Performance Scrutiny

47. Following on from considerable activity in 2012/13, the Committee has made consideration of the Council's performance and performance management arrangements a key priority in its work programme for 2013/14, noting that this was an area subsequently highlighted by the Wales Audit Office and the Welsh Local Government Association Peer Review. The Committee has monitored the Council's corporate performance reports on a regular basis, as well as using performance information when scrutinising specific services in more depth, such as during its consideration of Central Transport Services and Facilities Management in January 2014.

Welsh Local Government Association Peer Review Arrangements

Context

48. In May 2013, the Cabinet approved a proposal to invite the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to undertake an independent Peer Review of Cardiff Council. This would provide the Cabinet and senior managers, including newly-appointed directors, with additional 'critical friend' input in terms of the Council's strengths and areas for development, as well as the risks it was facing. The Committee was briefed on these arrangements in June 2013 and was told that a team of reviewers would be brought together, comprising of a Leader or Chief Executive of a comparable local authority, and specialists on corporate working and service delivery. The Review, the cost of which would be met by the WLGA, would comprise of both a desk-based review and onsite engagement with Members and officers.

Scrutiny outcomes

49. The Committee wrote to the Leader to:

- Request details of the Peer Review team, as these had not been confirmed at the time the Committee met;
- Recommend that the Review should ensure that the views of customers were taken into account;
- Recommend that Trade Union colleagues should be fully engaged in the review process and not simply treated as a stakeholder group; and

- Request that the Committee receive the results of the Review.

Cabinet response

50. *The Leader, Councillor Heather Joyce, wrote to the Chair confirming that the Committee's comments regarding engagement with customers and Trade Unions to the WLGA to take into account when planning their activities. She also confirmed that Scrutiny consideration of the results of the Review was an important part of the Council's overall consideration.*

Welsh Local Government Association Peer Review report

Context

51. The Committee next considered the Peer Review once the WLGA's report had been formally presented to the Cabinet on 10 October 2013, at a special meeting on 15 October 2013. The Review highlighted a number of areas where the Council needed to develop, including internal communications; senior management capacity; the connection between the Council's priorities and those set out in service business plans; long-term financial planning; the Council's performance management; its approach to workforce planning; as well as the alignment between the Council's ICT and Enterprise Architecture functions. The Review team highlighted the need for urgency in addressing these points, recommending that a responding action plan should be developed within 30 days. The accompanying Cabinet report set out a number of areas which had already been addressed since the Review team had been on-site, including actions to move the Administrations education and economic development priorities forward, the commissioning of a Communications and Media Review; and senior managers coming into post. The Cabinet report also stated that an action plan would be developed for approval at the November Cabinet meeting, and that an overarching Delivery Plan would follow by the end of December 2013.

Scrutiny outcomes

52. The Committee wrote to Leader, Councillor Heather Joyce, to:

- Recommend that the Action Plan should be presented to Full Council for debate in order to ensure shared ownership to drive through the necessary changes to the Council's culture;
- State that the Committee had agreed that it also wished to consider the Action Plan in detail at its November meeting, or if possible in pre-decision at its late October meeting;
- Share its concern that the development of the Action Plan seemed to be officer- rather than Member-led, and to state that the impetus should very much come from elected Members;
- Recommend that the Action Plan should be developed in order to clearly demonstrate outcomes for citizens;
- Note that the findings of the Review endorsed the Committee's own comments about the 2013-17 Corporate Plan;
- Request to consider the results of the Communications and Media review, in order to inform the Committee's planned inquiry into public engagement, and to recommend that employee engagement ;
- Highlight the Review's recommendation that the internal resources devoted to economic development be replaced with externally-funded resources where possible;
- Reiterate its recommendation that the Council's asset management should be addressed as a matter of urgency;
- Note the issues highlighted with the Council's internal Personal Performance and Development Review process, and emphasise that the process should be about the quality of the reviews and management of individual staff performance and not simply about compliance levels;
- Communicate the Committee's concern regarding the Council's budget monitoring position.

Cabinet response

53. The Leader responded that many of the issues highlighted by the Peer Review had been ones about which the Cabinet was already aware, such as the lack of senior management capacity. She stated that a high-level response would be considered by the Cabinet in November 2013, followed by an overarching Delivery Plan in

early 2014 and that she envisage the latter would be more appropriate for the Committee to consider. The Cabinet's high-level response was presented to the November 2013 of Full Council, as recommended.

Welsh Local Government Association Peer Review – Cabinet response

Context

54. The Committee the high level response to the WLGA Peer Review at its 7 January 2014 meeting. The response stated that, while it had originally been envisaged that an Action Plan would be developed responding to each specific recommendation, it had since been recognised that a more strategic response to the wider context of the challenges identified was required. This would include a refresh of the Corporate Plan, improved service planning and a series of service reviews. The new Chief Executive, attending the meeting, informed the Committee, that these strands would be brought together into a 'road map' for the Council for the next three years.

Scrutiny outcomes

55. The Committee wrote to the Leader, Councillor Heather Joyce, to:

- Note the changed approach to responding to the recommendations of the Peer Review, in terms of using a more holistic methodology, but to also emphasise that the need for urgency which was apparent in the Review's findings, should not be forgotten;
- Stress that the Council's direction of travel should continue to be communicated to staff and citizens, given the financial pressures was needed. The Committee further emphasised that a comprehensive approach to employee engagement should be taken;
- Note that the Chief Executive was intending to address the Council's management structure in a holistic way and state that Members hoped that this was something in which the Committee would continue to be engaged.

Cabinet response

56. *The Leader responded that she was pleased that the Committee appeared to endorse the more holistic approach and noted the Committee's recommendations about external and internal engagement. An engagement strand has since been added to the Council's organisational development initiative, as presented to the Committee in May 2014.*

Wales Audit Office Improvement Report and Letter

Context

57. At its special meeting on 15 October 2013, in addition to considering the WLGA's Peer Review, the Committee also heard from the Wales Audit Office with regards to their assessment of the how Cardiff Council is performing its improvement duties. The WAO has a duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to produce an Annual Improvement report as well as an Annual Improvement Letter assessing:

- Integrating Strategy and Delivery
- Improvement
- Improvement Information
- Collaboration
- Accounting for Improvement

58. A representative of the WAO attended Committee to present the Auditor General's findings, which this year were set out in one document. The WAO's report made one proposal for improvement, for the Council to urgently establish its priorities for improvement for 2013/14 (something which had been addressed by the Cabinet at the same meeting which received the WAO's Report). Echoing comments previously made by the Committee, the WAO also made a number for comments about the need for the Council to review its performance management arrangements, in terms of ensuring robust measures and targets were in place to track delivery of the Corporate Plan and improvement objectives. The Auditor General made further proposals for improvement, recommending that the Council should develop its performance management arrangements to ensure that

objectives were clear and alignment with service delivery was plainly set out, and that the Council's Improvement Report was made more accessible.

Scrutiny outcomes

59. The Committee wrote to the Deputy Leader, Councillor Ralph Cook, to:

- Urge the Cabinet to consider the recommendations made at the meeting in terms of making the Council's Improvement report more accessible, for example by providing an 'easy read' summary linking to the more detailed data behind it; by providing the report in other community languages or by targeting its distribution to certain stakeholder groups;
- Reiterate comments the Committee had made when it considered the draft 2013-17 Corporate Plan in February 2013, that clear and measurable targets should be set out and outcomes for citizens established;
- Note the Auditor General's comment that comparative performance data should be included in future performance reports. Given the Committee's own interest in this area, Members decided to commission research from the Scrutiny Research Team about performance benchmarking. Further details are below.

Cabinet response

60. *The Deputy Leader confirmed that a summary version of the Council's Improvement report would be completed and published in English and Welsh on the Council's website. It would also be signposted using avenues such as the Council's twitter feed, the Capital Times and at various buildings across the city. The Deputy Leader confirmed that a refreshed version of the Council's Corporate Plan would be published in February 2014 and that this would include more measurable outcomes. He also welcomed the Committee's decision to commission benchmarking research.*

2013/14 Performance Monitoring

Context

61. The Committee scrutinised the delivery of the Administration's vision for the city through consideration of quarterly performance reports to the Cabinet.

Scrutiny outcomes

62. Across its various considerations of corporate performance, the Committee wrote to the Leader and to:

- Welcome the inclusion of further sickness absence data, as previously recommended by the Committee;
- Recommend that further information request data should be included to ensure that this important area was kept at high up the Cabinet's agenda;
- Recommend greater challenge around performance targets being set by Directorates;
- Request further details of the Plan which was under development to transform the Council's services;
- Recommend that the Corporate overview of Council performance should be improved.

Cabinet response

63. *The Committee's views have been taken into account as the Council's performance reporting and framework develops and the Committee continues to work closely with the Cabinet on the subject.*

Performance Benchmarking

Context

64. The Committee has for a long time underlined that benchmarking the Council's performance is an essential part of the drive to improve. Members been informed by Cabinet Members and officers that identifying suitable comparators is a difficult task. Comparisons within Wales are often judged to be ineffective, given Cardiff's particular characteristics as capital city, while comparisons outside Wales can be complicated by differing performance regimes and methodologies. The Committee therefore commissioned the Scrutiny Research Team to undertake a research project to examine the feasibility of benchmarking Cardiff Council's performance against other local authorities.

Scrutiny outcomes

65. The Scrutiny Research report considered different types of benchmarking and approaches used, as well as highlight some key challenges in undertaking performance benchmarking. Interviews were undertaken with performance officers across the Council to establish what benchmarking activity was already taking place at a local level and with experts such as the Local Government Data to examine best practice. The research was commended to the Cabinet.

Cabinet response

66. *The Cabinet is keen to put in place more effective benchmarking practices to enhance the Council's performance arrangements. As part of the Council's performance review under the Organisational Development programme, discussed below, benchmarking opportunities are being explored.*

Performance Review

Context

67. Having been informed by the new Chief Executive that reviewing the Council's performance management was a key priority, the Committee were briefed on the arrangements being put in place at its March 2014 meeting.

Scrutiny outcomes

68. The Committee wrote to the Leader to:

- Welcome the Chief Executive's willingness to work constructively with Scrutiny and that he was taking a strong approach in addressing the Council's performance;
- Comment that there is an important balance to be struck between creating an environment in which performance can be openly discussed, but in which performance is also penalised;
- Emphasise Members' view that the Council should aim to benchmark more of its performance as well as share good practice within the Council more;
- Make some brief comments about the new draft quarterly performance template which was presented to the meeting, in terms of the need to allow

satisfactory tracking between reporting periods; the need for more historical data; the inclusion of wider information to reflect the customer point of view; and the requirement for effective challenge of the information put forward by Directorates.

Cabinet response

69. *The Committee is awaiting a response.*

Review of the Post of Chief Executive

Context

70. The Committee scrutinised the proposals for a revised senior management structure during the 2012/13 municipal year. Following an announcement by the then Chief Executive Jon House that he would be leaving the Council in summer 2013, the Committee convened a special meeting to carry out pre-decision scrutiny of proposals to Review the post of Chief Executive, which were to be presented to the Cabinet the following day. Three options were set out to replace the Chief Executive:

- Option 1: Appointment of Shared Chief Executive/Managing Director with a Neighbouring Council
- Option 2: Appointment of New Chief Executive on a like-for-like basis
- Option 3: Appointment of New City Director.

71. The report stated that the Cabinet was minded to follow the third option, which had the potential to generate a financial saving for the Council, given that the role would carry out fewer external-facing duties. The report also proposed interim arrangements while the recruitment process went on, to ensure that the statutory post of Head of Paid Service was filled during this period. The report stated that a member of the senior management team could be appointed on an interim basis so that the Council could accept the offer of the WLGA to provide an individual for three months as part of the Peer Review process, at no additional cost to the Council. The report indicated that the latter was the Cabinet's preferred option.

Scrutiny outcomes

72. The Committee wrote to then Leader, Councillor Heather Joyce:

- Setting out the Committee's concern that the interim solution funded by the WLGA would still present a considerable cost to the public and risked leaving the Council without a Head of Paid Service for a period, given that recruitment would be likely to take more than three months;
- Stating that this option seemed to be at odds with the Administration's intention to use fewer external consultants and instead to build up internal capacity. The proposed appointment also seemed to create a conflict of interest as the Interim appointee would continue as a member of the Peer Review team;
- Recommending that an internal interim acting up arrangement should be put in place until recruitment;
- Outlining concerns around the role of City Director, in terms of the duties which would pass to Cabinet Members, and the status which such a post would have.
- Stating firmly that the Committee was unconvinced by the evidence base for the shift to a City Director role, and similarly had concerns about the option of sharing a Chief Executive with a neighbouring authority. Members recommended instead that a Chief Executive should be recruited, encouraging the Employment Conditions Committee to consider an appointment on a spot salary at the lower end of the post's pay scale.

Cabinet response

73. The day after the Committee meeting, the Cabinet met and adjourned to allow more time to consider the scrutiny comments before reaching a final conclusion about the post. When Cabinet reconvened a week later, the Committee's recommendations were agreed: Cabinet recommended to Council to designate the Corporate Director – Resources as Interim Head of Paid Service; that a recruitment process commence to find a new Chief Executive; and that the Employment Conditions Committee be recommended to agree the appointment on a spot salary. The Leader expressed her appreciation for the Committee's engagement on the matter.

Cardiff Council Web Refresh Project

Context

74. The Committee has taken a strong interest in the development of the Council's website, feeling that its structure and functionality should be improved to better serve Cardiff's citizens. In recent years the website has been rated quite poorly by the Society of Information Technology Management's annual review of local authority websites. In June 2013, the Committee was briefed on a new project to update the Council's website. Members received a further update in April 2014 prior to the new-look website's soft launch, when the Committee was able to scrutinise the governance arrangements which were being put in place to ensure that the website remained fit for purpose.

Scrutiny outcomes

75. The Committee wrote to the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Wellbeing, who at the time had responsibility for corporate communications, and later to the Deputy Leader, to:

- Note that changes to the website were part of a wider initiative to improve customer access to Council services;
- Note the Deputy Leader's commitment following questions at the meeting that Elected Members would be involved in the ongoing governance of the website;
- Express concern about the timescales for making changes to the website;
- Reiterate the point which the Committee has previously made that Council service must remain accessible to all citizens, via different methods;
- Recommend that further thought is given to how social media can be used as an access route to services;
- Recommend a joined-up approach with the Improvement and Information Team to ensure the proper management of information;
- Express the Committee's concern that the website may not be sufficiently future-proof as it may rely on bespoke solutions, and that more thought should be given to future regional collaboration when developing the website; and
- Highlight the benefits of management of the website staying centrally-controlled in order to ensure that the web pages remain consistent.

Cabinet response

76. *The Cabinet Member replied that serious consideration was being given to the use of social media in accessing services; that accessibility was a key priority and that arrangements had been made to ensure good linkages with the Improvement and Information Team. A response to the Committee's second letter is awaited.*

Revised Redeployment Policy

Context

77. In November 2013, the Committee scrutinised proposals to amend Cardiff Council's internal Redeployment Policy, before they were presented to the Cabinet for approval. As part of the Council's update 2014/15 Budget Strategy, it had been agreed to consider changes to the Policy, in order to help meet the financial challenges faced by the Council. At that time around 60 officers were in the Council's redeployment pool, twice the number 12 month previously and a number that was expected to increase sharply. Redeployment at that time could last up to six months, during which time staff could be offered trial placements. Proposals had been drawn up to reduce the redeployment period to 12 weeks. The scheme would also be limited to staff with 4 years continuous service at Cardiff Council, rather than in local government. There would be a greater focus on signposting staff to external support, and posts would initially only be advertised to those on the redeployment register.

Scrutiny outcomes

78. The Committee wrote to the Deputy Leader to:

- Welcome the opportunity to consider the proposals at an early stage;
- Emphasise the need for members of staff on the redeployment register to have access to training;
- Recommend that time spent in training should be discounted from the redeployment period if possible;

- Express the Committee’s concern that the Redeployment Team and Panel would not have the capacity to handle a further increase in officers entering the redeployment pool;
- Recommend that these capacity issues should be addressed in the budget or by reallocation of tasks in Human Resources;
- Query how the operation of the Policy would link to the Council’s shift towards alternative delivery mechanisms;
- Recommend that workforce planning should be addressed, given the potential loss of corporate memory and appropriate skills-mix which may result from increasing numbers of officers leaving the authority.

Cabinet response

79. The Deputy Leader replied stating that the recommendation to discount training from the redeployment period had been investigated but disregarded as it may present issues in terms of equality and transparency. Access to training via the Cardiff Academy would be built in at as early a stage as possible, however, and officers had started discussions with Careers Wales and Job Centre Plus in terms of additional support. Temporary funding had also been put in place to bring in temporary staff to support the Redeployment Team.

Social Inclusion

Context

80. The accepted definition of social exclusion is isolation from a “prevailing social system and its rights and privileges, typically as a result of poverty or the fact of belonging to a social group”. In 2002-03, the Committee undertook a lengthy inquiry into the effectiveness of the Council’s Social Inclusion Action Plan. The Committee wished to re-examine the issue to consider current theories of best practice in the field, more recent policy drivers, and in particular in order to explore what other public bodies across Europe are doing to increase social inclusion. The Committee therefore commissioned the Scrutiny Research Team to undertake a review.

Scrutiny outcomes

81. *The research report established that effective practice has been to move away from the traditional custom of putting in place an overarching strategy to tackle multiple forms of exclusion. This kind of action plan had been difficult to implement and monitor given the wide ranging topics and multiple service areas which they had covered. As such, many cities have focused on specific target groups, and concentrated their resources at tackling one issue at a time. The report identified a number of inclusion projects across Europe from which Cardiff could learn. These included Birmingham Council's Arts Champion Scheme which had brought arts and cultural activities into constituencies across the city, for example through Birmingham Repertory Theatre setting up a youth theatre in an area of the city where many young people's families had never worked. Bologna Authority has put social clauses into their contracts to support people through an active inclusion job placement scheme.*

Cabinet response

82. *The Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise was invited to attend Committee as the report was presented and welcomed the research. The Committee has recommended that the issues should be explored further as part of the 2014/15 work programme.*

Organisational Change Programme

Context

83. The Committee scrutinised proposals

Scrutiny outcomes

84. The Committee wrote to Leader to:

- Setting out the Committee's concern that the interim solution funded by the WLGA would still present a considerable cost to the public and risked leaving the Council without a Head of Paid Service for a period, given that recruitment would be likely to take more than three months;

Cabinet response

85. *The Committee is awaiting a response.*

Community Hubs Proposals

Context

86. The Committee nominated five representatives to sit on a sub-committee, with similar sub-committees of the Economy and Culture and Community & Adult Service Scrutiny Committees, to give pre-decision scrutiny to proposals to establish community hubs in Ely/Caerau and Splott/Tremorfa. Community Hubs are at the forefront of the Council's Customer Management strategy. The sub-committee has since reconvened to consider proposals for Pentwyn and Grangetown. The meetings garnered significant levels of public interest, with stakeholders from several communities giving evidence to Members.

Public Sector Asset Management

Context

87. In addition to the issues set out above which were scrutinised in some detail, the Committee also received a report of the Cardiff Partnership Board Scrutiny Panel, dealing with Public Sector Asset Management. The Committee has a longstanding interest in the Council's management of its assets, and in particular its strategic estate, having pushed for some time that the Cabinet should set out a clear vision for its future operation.

Scrutiny outcomes

88. The Committee wrote to the Cabinet Member for Finance & Economic Development commending the report. The Committee is hoping to consider the draft Property Strategy in the near future.

Future work programme opportunities for 2014/15

89. The Committee receives regular work programme updates at which Members have the opportunity to consider items received from members of the public, young people, organisations, Council Members and other Scrutiny Committees, for inclusion on the work programme. Committee Members can also suggest any new issues which may be of interest to the Committee. Presently the following issues are being considered for inclusion in the coming year's work programme, having been identified during the course of the 2013/14 work programme, or because they were not able to be considered due to slippage or pressures of additional items :

- Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment
- Property Strategy
- Communications Review
- Directorate Delivery Plans
- Management restructure
- Social inclusion activity
- Organisational Development programme and Change Challenge Forum
- SAP Customer Relationship Management
- Welsh Language Standards

90. The following items have been suggested for consideration as issues which may be suitable for a Task & Finish Inquiry:

- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Public Engagement

91. It is suggested that the Committee continues to receive the regular progress and performance reports on:

- Corporate Performance Monitoring
- Budget Monitoring.

DRAFT

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