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CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

Committee POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date and Time
of Meeting** TUESDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2015, 4.30 PM

Please find below correspondence send by the Committee Chair following the meeting,
together with any responses received.

For any further details, please contact scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk

8 **Correspondence following the Committee Meeting** *(Pages 1 - 12)*

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

Date: 12 October 2015

Councillor Graham Hinchey,
Cabinet Member, Corporate Service & Performance,
Cardiff Council,
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW



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Dear Councillor Hinchey,

**Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 6 October 2015
Employee Survey and Employee Engagement**

Thank you for attending Committee on 6 October 2015 to present the Council's work on the Employee Survey and the wider Employee Engagement agenda. Members felt the contribution of all officers accompanying you, including the four staff ambassadors, was clear, informative and honest. I will be grateful if you can pass on my appreciation to Philip Lenz and his officers Katie Richards and Helen Witham, and to staff ambassadors Theo Callender, Lorraine Gilmore, Julie Reed and Tye Whithear, for giving up their time to attend the meeting.

As Chair I have been asked to pass on the Members' comments and observations raised during discussion at the Way Forward. First, they have asked me to convey their opinion that from the wide range of views presented, there is clear evidence of improvement underway in the conduct and arrangements for the Employee Survey, and on the efforts made to widen communication and general engagement of employees. This appears to be paying dividends in a number of areas.

So, in general terms we are broadly content with the strategic approach and practical implementation of the work, the benchmarking activity undertaken and the pains taken to widen consultation and engagement with employees.

As you are aware, our role is that of a critical friend, and Members shared a number of suggestions based on the evidence presented at the meeting, designed to further stretch improvement. I hope that these comments will be useful to you and officers in further optimising performance on this agenda.

EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Members were initially keen to test what methodology lay behind your choice of questions within the survey. They understood why you have chosen to reduce the number of questions, and your wish to take the “pulse” of the organisation on a number of issues intrinsic to the Workforce Strategy at a time of change.

The risk behind this approach is that you do not receive a rich data set of information on the issues beneath the headline, to give granularity in interpreting and designing improvement actions in response to the findings. We understand that through your officers’ efforts, led directly by the Chief Executive, you now have a whole new set of opportunities for qualitative follow up with Ambassadors, Cardiff Manager Forum and other employee engagement to dig beneath the headline, and we urge you to ensure that you go beyond relying on the headline figures.

It is encouraging to note that the Ambassadors are being given a key role in designing the Corporate Commitments, and we will be interested to return to this topic when analysing a future round of quarterly performance, to see what is changing on the ground within Directorates as an outcome from this work.

Results seem to have improved in three ways in 2015: levels of completion; the wealth of free text comments and suggestions for improvement; and the scores themselves. This is to be commended. But had these first two welcome outcomes not been delivered, Members wondered whether strategic lessons could be learnt from the results themselves. We were not sure whether there had been much forecasting or developing expectations of targets for improvement, or what those targets would look like. Perhaps you could consider this when planning your next iteration – for instance how far should the percentages increase, what might constrain this, and what might good look like?

Members remained sceptical of the value of asking if employees would recommend the Council as an employer to a friend. Although somewhat encouraged that the results of this question have marginally increased since it was last asked in 2013, it is difficult to discern what conclusions to draw from the 0.36% increase. Unless your

follow on work clearly uncovers key findings from the way employees have responded to this headline question that can be translated into compelling actions to improve staff morale, we do not see much value in its continuation in future surveys.

Members understand the practical value of deriving mean scores from responses to each of the questions as a communication tool within the organisation, but would be disappointed if efforts were not invested to consider the range of answers to each question. In particular, where detailed analysis of responses showed a measurable number of employees diverging from the mean (particularly to the more negative ends of the scoring spectrum) particular effort should be invested in exploring how to address this negativity, its causes and potential solution.

A Member asked about how the organisation was planning to engage the significant number of school-based staff who were not included in this survey. The Committee recognise the different employment relationship of schools staff and the need for more specific relevant questions to this staff group, but want the organisation to be able to run an organisation-wide survey and compare as far as possible the results of this significant segment of the City's workforce alongside that of the existing respondent sample. We urge you to do all you can to avoid a two tier data set, which would feel like a wasted opportunity.

Members understand the rationale for the "confidential", anonymised approach taken in encouraging honesty and openness in the answers provided. They did feel however, that a potential trick had been missed in not offering employees who provided specific suggestions for improvement the chance to have an individual response from the Chief Executive – perhaps you could consider this next time around. It will now be important to communicate widely across the workforce to ensure that employees who made suggestions can see that their suggestion is being considered, and how that consideration is turning into improvement.

The Committee welcomed Philip Lenz' offer to share the suggestions received with this Committee, and will be grateful if this could be provided to Paul Keeping as soon as available.

STAFF AMBASSADORS

Members gathered from the valued contributions of the four Staff Ambassadors that:

- The engagement around this Staff Survey was the best they had encountered. The quality of engagement is improving, employees are opening up and are more trusting that their views will be listened to.
- The survey is just one tool of engagement, and there is a need to drill down to a greater level of detail in interpreting the survey results and understanding employee perspectives.
- Staff on the front line may not be noticing the improvements as much as centrally-based staff. There is still a perception of “them” and “us”, and that messages about improvement need to be tailored to the individual job roles of front line employees (particularly if they are part time or specialised staff).
- Communication was definitely improving at a corporate level, and there were signs of improvement at a Directorate level, but it was at the Team and individual line management level where the messages were being lost, or not being correctly applied.
- At the start of the Ambassador Programme, it was clear that some Directorates were more effective at communicating with their employees than others. Initially, for instance in Highways there were few staff ambassadors, and employees needed to rely on ambassadors based in other Directorates for their information. This is now changing, with consistency emerging.
- PPDRs are much more widely and consistently undertaken. The focus now needs to shift onto the quality of the reviews, the clarity of performance objectives and the usefulness of the reviews to prompt meaningful development plans.
- It might be useful for Members to spend more time directly meeting employees to hear their views.

These are generally positive views, and even the negative comments give you the opportunity to build improvements into your engagement work. We will be pleased to receive the list of Ambassadors, indicating which Directorate they work for, which you said you could provide to Paul Keeping for distribution to Members.

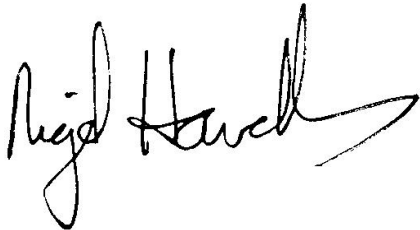
To re-cap, the Committee will be pleased to receive:

- the list of employees suggestions received through the Survey.
- The list of Staff Ambassadors, broken down by Directorate.

Please can you arrange for this to be sent to Paul Keeping when available.

Finally, on behalf of the Committee, I wish to thank you and the officers for your continued support for the internal challenge of important issues that can improve the quality of services the Council is delivering to its customers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Howells', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**COUNCILLOR NIGEL HOWELLS
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc

Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee ;
Philip Lenz, Chief Human Resources Officer
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Business Manager;
Matt Swindell, Principal Administrative Officer
Katie Richards, Human Resources
Helen Witham, Corporate Communications and Media
Staff Ambassadors: Theo Callender, Lorraine Gilmore, Julie Reed and Tye Whithear

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

Date: 15 October 2015



Councillor Dan De'Ath,
Cabinet Member for Skills, Safety, Engagement and Democracy,
Cardiff Council,
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Councillor De'Ath

Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 8 October 2015
Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2016/20

Thank you for attending Committee on 8 October 2015 to help Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee scrutinise the Council's draft Strategic Equality Plan 2016/20. Please can you also pass on my thanks to Marie Rosenthal, Andrew Lucas and Caryle Alleyne for presenting the draft Scheme, and for providing honest and full answers to Members' questions? I will write separately to Martyn Jones of Diverse Cymru to thank him for his independent contribution to the item.

As Chair I have been asked to detail in this letter the Members' comments and observations raised during discussion at the Way Forward. Before I do this, I will also provide feedback on the question on Equality Impact Assessment asked at the meeting by Mrs Sheila Hendrickson-Brown of Cardiff Third Sector Council.

THIRD SECTOR QUESTION: Equality Impact Assessment

Members felt that the inclusion of a Third Sector question on this Committee's agenda, posed by Sheila Hendrickson Brown of Cardiff Third Sector Council, to have been helpful in developing useful and productive debate on the topic.

The question was:

“The Council is having to make very difficult decisions and choices about cuts to local services. There is potential for specific groups of vulnerable people to experience disadvantage as a result of these decisions. Could you therefore give your view on how effective the Council’s arrangements for assessing the equality impacts of these decisions are, how do Equality Impact Assessments feed into and inform service planning, and how is the effectiveness of the agreed mitigating actions monitored once the decisions are implemented?”

We noted from your answer that while you felt that the Council is still on a learning journey in developing its equalities practice, the Council’s practice had improved in recent years. The quantity of assessments undertaken had increased significantly, and the resultant documents provide a good point of reference for Cabinet Members, scrutiny Councillors and citizens campaigning on individual issues to ensure that the Council makes effective, evidence-based decisions.

We also gathered that you felt our process and practice could further improve, and that you were planning to invest effort in ensuring that this happened. Particular points we noted were that:

1. the EIA process should extend beyond the budget process to encompass decisions made at other points in the year;
2. The Council should work to a consistent level of quality in the assessments undertaken;
3. EIAs should evidence the input and advice of third sector organisations and data; and
4. the impacts and mitigation measures identified in EIA documents should be explicitly referred to when decisions were subsequently brought for review and monitoring, so that Scrutiny Committees, officers and Cabinet Members could

see how effective they had been, and so that the EIAs have a legacy through the life cycle of the decision.

You felt that these issues could be picked up by our Strategic Equality Plan consultation, and actions built into our action plan to continue improving our performance in this area.

You also welcomed the suggestion in Sheila's supplementary question to build co-operation between the Council and its third sector partners in working together to proactively identify and manage potential impacts before budget proposals had been published, and generally support the process of co-production.

We support your aims to see improvement in this area, and will seek to monitor the progress of the Council's work on equality impact assessment during the coming budget cycle.

STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2016/20

Members were in general supportive of the arrangements set out in the draft Strategic Equality Plan, and wish you success in consulting upon and finalising the Plan in coming months. The points shared by Members at the Way Forward which emerged from Member questioning and evidence received during the item were:

- **Linkage between Objectives and the Corporate Plan:** Members queried the move away from the previous Plan's linkage between the Council's Equality Objectives and the What Matters! Strategy towards linkage with the Corporate Plan priorities. They noted officers' views that the linkage with What Matters! still remains, and that the objectives in question are ones that have tended to remain in place in successive corporate plans, but would want to ensure that our four year Equality Plan objectives will transcend topical administration priorities.
- **Resources to deliver:** I asked whether – given reductions in specialist personnel to drive equality work in recent years – the Council's current and

foreseen financial and resource pressures would be sufficient to deliver the Strategic Equality Plan. Members noted and welcomed your commitment and that of the Director of Governance and Legal Services to drive mainstreaming via managerial and political leadership. We trust that managers and Cabinet Members will deliver that leadership and make the difference in their own areas of responsibility, and will be interested to monitor this when we next review the Council's equality agenda.

- **Martyn Jones' commentary:** Members felt that Martyn Jones made a number of helpful comments in his commentary on the draft Plan. We were pleased to hear that the Council had already undertaken pre-consultation with Diverse Cymru and a number of other local groups, and also his view that the Council's linkage of its equality and scrutiny functions was an exemplar that should be considered by other local authorities.

Please can you take on board the points raised by Martyn about the potential over-emphasis on younger people in the draft Plan, when Welsh Government is developing a more age-neutral approach in its work? Martyn also made helpful suggestions around the opportunities to develop shared equality objectives with local health and criminal justice partners, the learning from Prudent Healthcare and from the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, and the need to consider the linkage between equality and socio economic deprivation.

- **Partnership between the Council and the Third Sector:** Picking up on the earlier question from Cardiff Third Sector Council, Members can see the value of the Council working closely with its third sector partners, in providing early intervention to ensure that adverse impacts can be avoided by planning services that are inclusive and meet citizens' needs. We can see that this is likely to save money in the long run and mitigate against the need to incur cost in producing an equality impact assessment. We recognise that this partnership is enshrined in the principles of the Local Service Board, and will be interested to return to this theme when we scrutinise What Matters! Later this year.

More specific to the equalities agenda, we welcome the continuing partnership between the Council, C3SC, Diverse Cymru, Race Equality First and other local charities in delivering the Council's equality work, and hope that this will continue to thrive. We noted from Martyn Jones' evidence that Welsh Government had developed a formal relationship with third sector equality advisors, and would consider a similar forum useful for the Council to develop its strategic approach to diversity. Please could you explore this idea and advise on your views?

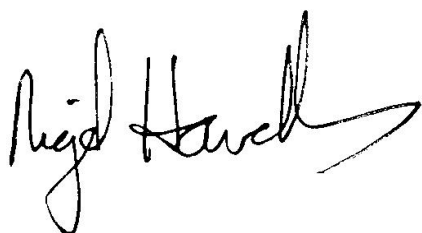
- **Focussing on outcomes:** Members noted your intention that the consultation would allow citizens and local organisations to identify actions that could usefully deliver the Council's Equality Objectives. We welcome this, and acknowledge that the action plan will have a four year duration allowing the Annual Review to measure progress and refine and review next steps. We also feel, however, that – as the equality objectives are not SMART – it will be useful for you and officers to work during the consultation period to identify what success might look like, to optimise the relatively narrow time window between the end of the consultation and the adoption of the final Plan, so that actions are identified and agreed and the Council can “hit the ground running” from the beginning of the Plan period.
- **Reaching seldom-heard citizens and employees:** Members welcome the fact that this Plan is shorter than its predecessor, and that you have produced a six page summary Plan. We hope that you will be able to use this to reach communities and parts of the workforce that have not previously been reached by previous Equality Plans. We note that you will be working through trades unions and staff ambassadors, and urge you to arrange an inclusive and wide-reaching consultation.

The Committee has no further or formal recommendations on this piece of work, but we hope that the points made above will help you to optimise the consultation and finalisation of the Plan. If Committee has agenda time to consider a final version, we will ask for this to come forward to our March agenda. Otherwise we will consider monitoring outcomes in the 2016/17 financial year.

To recap, the Committee is asking you to:

- Reflect on the aspirations you stated for the improvements to equality impact assessment, and factor these arrangements into the equality action plan;
- Ensure that our four yearly Equality Objectives are resilient to and capable of transcending immediate Corporate Plan priorities;
- Ensure that senior management and Cabinet Members explicitly champion equalities work and drive mainstreaming of equalities into everything we do;
- Reflect on the useful comments made by Martyn Jones (summarised above) and factor these arrangements into the equality action plan;
- Continue to develop effective partnerships with third sector expertise, and consider the adoption of a more formal advisory arrangement between the Council and local third sector organisations to shape Cardiff's equalities work;
- Undertake work during the consultation period to gain a clear picture of what outcomes the Council wants to see emerging from the Plan, to facilitate the process of action planning; and
- Do all you can to make the consultation with citizens and employees inclusive and effective.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR NIGEL HOWELLS
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee
Marie Rosenthal, Director of Governance and Legal Services
Paul Keeping, Operational Manager responsible for Equality and Diversity
Martyn Jones, Chief Executive, Diverse Cymru
Sheila Hendrickson-Brown, Chief Executive, Cardiff Third Sector Council