

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 JANUARY 2021

Present: Councillor Walker(Chairperson)
Councillors Ahmed, Berman, Bowen-Thomson, Cowan,
Henshaw, Lister and Mackie

1 : APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON AND MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE

Noted.

2 : TERMS OF REFERENCE

Noted.

3 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Cowan advised the Chair that she may need to leave the meeting early.

4 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

5 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

6 : RACE EQUALITY TASK FORCE

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Huw Thomas, Leader of Cardiff Council, Cllr Saeed Ebrahim, Chair of the Race Equality Taskforce, Gareth Newell, Head of Performance & Partnerships; and Sian Sanders, OM Community Cohesion & Equalities to the meeting.

The Chairperson reminded Members that in July 2020 the Covid-19 Scrutiny Panel undertook pre-decision scrutiny of the Leader's proposal to establish a Race Equality Taskforce for Cardiff. Following the scrutiny, commenting on governance of the Taskforce going forward, the Panel wrote to the Leader recommending that the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee be afforded an insight into the Taskforce's activities and requested that representatives attend Committee once Terms of Reference and plans were in place. The Leader welcomed the Committee's insight and suggested an update would be valuable once the Taskforce had set the direction for what it wanted to achieve. This was Committee's first progress update.

The Chairperson had also invited Councillor Ramesh Patel as a Scrutiny Chair and Member of the Covid-19 Scrutiny Panel with a particular interest in this area.

The Chairperson invited the Leader to make a statement in which he thanked Cllr Ebrahim and all the people who had put their names forward and those who have

been selected for the Task Force. He considered there was a strong blend of people on board. The Leader also thanked Sian Sanders and her team who have made a lot of progress since the establishment of the Task Force, and in the middle of a pandemic. It was early days and it would be possible to secure some quick wins and also put in place some longer term changes.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Ebrahim to make a statement in which he said that he was delighted to have been selected as the Chair of the Race Equality Task Force and he has been heartened to see so many colleagues and partners eager to be involved in this work and see it achieve its potential in the months ahead.

As Chair, he stated his commitment to ensuring the Taskforce refocuses efforts on race equality as a city and drives forwards much needed change. The challenge of inequality is by no means unique to Cardiff, but there is much we can do as a city to widen opportunity and inclusion for Black and Minority Ethnic Cardiff citizens.

The Taskforce is be charged with doing just that- scoping the possible, making the right changes happen, and treating these issues with the urgency and profile that they deserve.

Officers from the Policy and Partnerships Department, provided an update on work completed so far and what the Taskforce aims to deliver during the course of the current administration.

Members received a presentation after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members asked if there were representatives from businesses on the taskforce and were advised that there was a cross representation of people from local entrepreneurs to solicitors, and there were also discussions taking place with the Chamber of Commerce and the Tech industry, among others.

Members discussed Educational representation and were pleased to see a Head Teacher on the taskforce. Members were advised that a pupil from Fitzalan and a lecturer from the Open University also sat on the taskforce; the Educational working group would be chaired by education colleagues/schools. When asked if there was enough education data available officers considered there was.

Members discussed the importance of having representation from the youth justice service including BAME reps. It was noted that this will be a strong focal point; there are also people on the taskforce with experience of the Criminal Justice System.

Members asked about diversity and the Cabinet Member explained that when selecting representatives from the candidates, many things including diversity, ethnicity and background were taken into consideration. The Cabinet Member was happy the taskforce was diverse.

Members further discussed diversity across senior management in the Council and the importance of introducing career progression programmes, mentoring, apprenticeships etc. The Leader stated it was important to understand perceived barriers; he was pleased to see how well represented people of colour are in the

apprenticeships coming through currently; he considered it important to look at Cardiff Commitment to ensure it is representative.

Members asked if the task force was ongoing or time limited, and whether there would be different reports on different aspects at different times. Members were advised that the task force was sitting for the term of this administration, in relation to reporting there would be regular updates through relevant boards/Cabinet as soon as is practicable. The Leader added that the recommendations from the task force would only be effective if there is political support and he hoped this would continue after May 2022.

Members asked if the Covid impact on BAME people would be included in the Health and Social Care work stream and were advised that it would, alongside other health considerations.

Members noted the figures relating to the low number of Bangladeshi women employed and asked if this would be a focus. The Cabinet Member stated it would be, there would be a working group on labour market issues.

Members referred to the data on education performance of BAME groups and asked what could be learned from this data. Members and officers noted that BAME groups often have excellent educational attainment but it was important to look at the bridge between education and good quality jobs, looking at personal skills and mentoring not just exam results. A discussion took place around people's networks, well educated people falling into circles and the importance of analysing why this happens.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

7 : BUDGET CONSULTATION 2021/22

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance Modernisation & Performance; Chris Lee, Director of Resources; Gareth Newell, Head of Performance & Partnerships; and Sian Sanders, OM Community Cohesion & Equalities to the meeting.

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Council's Budget Consultation for 2021/22 is now live having been agreed at a special Cabinet on 13th January. It runs until 10th February 2021. Therefore Committee's task, having had a briefing on the approach this year, was to contribute to the consultation and feed any concerns and observations to the Cabinet to inform Cabinet discussion and debate in preparing their final 2021/22 budget proposals.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Weaver to make a statement in which he said that Cardiff had received a slightly better settlement from Welsh Government which has resulted in a slightly reduced budget gap. He considered it was important to reflect that there had been a truncated process due to the General Election last year and it had been hoped that regular timescales would be resumed this year. This had not

happened this year however. It is appropriate that people adapt to the situation we are working in this year.

Members received a presentation after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members asked how the previous years' consultation had influenced this year's budget. The Cabinet Member explained that they look at the priorities outlined, these inform decisions on the allocation of the FRM etc. and begin to anticipate what the public want and build this into the future budget and shape decisions.

Members discussed consultation with young people, whether there was an easy accessible child friendly format of the consultation and whether there was engagement with schools and the youth justice service. Officers explained that there was not currently a separate version but they would continue to approach schools and other stakeholders to gain access to young people, noting it was difficult to reach young people and get responses. Members considered that previous successful surveys could be looked at, the best bits teased out and sense checked to support further engagement with young people going forward.

Members discussed the pay award assumptions and the Cabinet Member explained that the UK Government had given an indication but no certainty so assumptions have to be made; it will be moderately prudent so if it changes it can be dealt with without pressures on services.

In relation to consultation, Members asked if lessons had been learned on how to increase the response rate using social media. The Cabinet Member stated it was difficult to predict the impact of a non-face to face engagement on response rates. They know paper doesn't work, the click rates on adverts would need to be reviewed, and it was important to continually monitor to ensure they are talking to the right audience. It was noted that the adverts need to entice people to take part and that numbers of responses were important but the responses were more important.

Members referred to the Grant Income referenced in paragraph 18 of the report, noting it was a substantial amount and asked if it was expected. Officers explained it refers mainly to the Social Care Grant, they had not yet seen the LA allocation and would not see this until the settlement is received. It was important to not underestimate the Covid risk too; there would be a full assessment on recovery. The Cabinet Member stated that there are movements in grants every year, sometimes significant but the important part is seeing the full detail for Cardiff.

Members noted the consultation ends one and half weeks before the scrutiny of budget proposals and asked if this was enough time to feed back the results. The Cabinet Member noted it was a tight timescale and he would have preferred the provisional settlement in the early autumn as it leaves more time for everyone. Digital results will speed things up. Members requested to see the consultation document before it is published next year.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

8 : CABINET RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEES REPORT ENTITLED SCRUTINY IMPACT ASSESSMENT MODEL

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance Modernisation & Performance; Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services and Dylan Owen, Head of Cabinet Office to the meeting.

The Chairperson reminded Members that last year Committee completed its inquiry to develop a model to capture the benefits of scrutiny activity as an established function of the Council's decision making process. The Committee made seven recommendations to the Cabinet and in December the Cabinet agreed its response to the Scrutiny Impact Assessment Inquiry. Committee will now hear how the organisation is progressing those recommendations that have been accepted.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Weaver to make a statement in which he said that Cabinet had welcomed the recommendations and could see how they would enhance the clarity of scrutiny and feed into performance reporting. He noted that 6/7 recommendations had been accepted and the seventh recommendation had been partially accepted and an exact process for tracking has now been developed.

The Chairperson invited Dylan Owen to address Committee. Members were advised that there was now a system to formally track and record all recommendations made; which are accepted, partially accepted or rejected. When recommendations have been accepted there is a clear pathway with SMART objectives and Cabinet and Scrutiny will be updated twice yearly on progress so there is full oversight. Information used by Scrutiny colleagues to inform the impact of Scrutiny work would also be reported twice yearly at half and year end performance stages.

The Chairperson invited Gary Jones to address Committee. Members were advised that the report had been co-produced with Scrutiny, Cabinet Office and Senior Management Team. Scrutiny now self-assess and review their processes, recommendations and outcomes and these will be reported into a new style Annual report.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members discussed the importance of the letter to Cabinet Members setting out clearly whether recommendations are made. It was also noted that for it to work properly, clarity was needed on what a recommendation is and that Cabinet provide explicit responses on whether they accept/partially accept or reject the recommendations.

Members asked how it would help self-assessment and were advised that it would be used as part of the improvement process with a lead officer assigned to take it forward; objectives need to be SMART and have a timescale. This would be brought in line with mid/end year assessments and give a performance picture for the Council. To ensure it adds value it would be used in the forward programmes.

Members noted the amount of work undertaken and asked if it could be offered to other council's as a model. Officers advised that the Head of Democratic Services as

chair of the South East Wales scrutiny officers network, has made them aware of the model, after the pilot he would feedback as to how they can adapt it, if it works well it can go the Centre for Governance for Scrutiny for the whole of the UK.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

9 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

Bus Emergency Scheme 2

The Chairperson advised Members that this item was unavailable prior to publication of the Committee agenda but its consideration by scrutiny is deemed urgent as it requires pre-decision scrutiny prior to Cabinet meeting tomorrow.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning & Transport; Jason Dixon, Operational Manager, Transport, Development & Network Management; and John Gibson, Principal Engineer, Public Transport to the meeting

The Chairperson reminded Members they are scrutinising the proposed Bus Emergency Scheme 2 arrangements that formalise Welsh Government's commitment to support the recovery of bus services following the impact of Covid-19.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Wild to make a statement in which he said that he was grateful for the urgent consideration by scrutiny. He stated that since the start of the pandemic there had been work to ensure that bus services were available despite a reduction in services. The previous Bus Emergency Scheme 1 expires in March so the next phase was needed to seek to establish a longer term agreement with Welsh Government to enable better management of the recovery of services.

Members received a verbal update after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members asked if this covered private buses too and were advised that it did.

Members asked if there had previously been monies from the WG hardship fund. Officers advised that there had been from April 2020, all administered by Welsh Government directly but as this was procurement it takes a different route.

Members discussed the how the future of bus companies could look with Transport for Wales; increasing the use of public transport, the quality of public transport and improved routes were needed.

Members asked if the group would have any say in vehicles, renewing, carbon neutral etc. Officers explained that the quality of vehicles, air quality, noise etc. are all considerations.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

10 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 10.00AM 24 FEBRUARY 2021

The meeting terminated at 6.49 pm