

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 OCTOBER 2022

Present: Councillor Williams(Chairperson)
Councillors Chowdhury, Ferguson-Thorne, Henshaw, Hunt and Thomson

20 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr Stubbs

21 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A personal declaration of interest was made by Cllr Henshaw as she has two family members that work for the Council.

22 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

23 : PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

The Chairperson advised Members that it is Committee's statutory responsibility to undertake strategic overview scrutiny of the Cardiff Public Services Board's performance. Publication of the Board's Annual Report for 2021/22 provides a good opportunity for that. The Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Council's Constitution confers on Committee the power to make recommendations to the PSB in respect of its functions or governance arrangements and copy Committee's recommendations to Welsh Ministers and the Future Generations Commissioner. As this is the new committee's first exposure to partnership scrutiny of the partnership, Officers have been asked to share a presentation of the partnership's work with Members. Having set the context for the meeting the Chairperson welcomed to Committee:

- Alun Michael, Police & Crime Commissioner
- Charles Janczewski, Vice Chair of Cardiff PSB & Chair of Cardiff and Vale University Health Board – remotely.

And from Cardiff Council:

- Councillor Huw Thomas, Chair of Cardiff PSB & Leader of Cardiff Council
- Paul Orders, Chief Executive of Cardiff Council.
- Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities
- Gareth Newell, Head of Performance & Partnerships, Cardiff Council

The Chairperson invited statements from witnesses, after which Officers provided their presentation. Members were then asked to make any comments, observations and to ask any questions.

Members discussed partnership working and the Committee was reassured to hear all partners speak in positive terms of the strength, benefits and effectiveness of the PSB, particularly as a vehicle to facilitate understanding, and to powerfully convene public sector organisations to practically solve system issues. Members noted the Cardiff PSB culture means new members of the partnership feel welcomed, and Members considered that significant trust has developed between PSB partners.

Asking about the relationship between Welsh Government, the PSB and the Future Generations Commissioner (FGC), Members were assured that this was considered to be appropriate and was strengthened by positive access to Ministers on key issues.

Members were keen to learn more about the public understanding of the PSB, as they felt that the Board does not currently have a public facing profile. The PCC explained that he considers there to have been improvement within communities which was very important, rather than a high profile for the PSB itself. The PCC reflected that, at its best, the PSB should be invisible, as its work is evident in communities despite the public being unaware of work behind the scenes to secure improvement.

Members considered that the PSB could do more to celebrate its collaborative successes more visibly, particularly where a significant public challenge has been overcome.

Discussing the consultation approach, Members were keen to ensure that the consultation approach for the Well-being Plan 2023/28 secures a good level of response and has a clear strategy for mitigating a low response, particularly from minority communities. Members were advised that achieving a good response to any consultation on a strategy document is a particular challenge and that officers have met individually with ward Councillors to better understand individual community needs, networks and groups. Members sought clarification of the plans to mitigate communities that do not engage.

Members were interested to hear all partners in agreement that there had been no fall in demand for public services over the summer months of 2022, as would usually be the case and that across the public sector summer demand has felt like winter demand. Members noted the dual challenges of workforce and finance. Both UHB and PCC reported they face significant recruitment challenges, due to both Covid sickness and stress. Members were therefore assured that the PSB is delivering a joint response to workforce pressures, and work is ongoing to analyse comparative terms and conditions between partners.

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.

The Chairperson advised Members that in line with Committee's responsibility for scrutiny of the Council's Corporate Planning, performance assessment and reporting arrangements, this item provided the Committee with an opportunity for pre-decision scrutiny of the Council's Annual Well-Being Report for 2021/22. This is the report that summarises the Council's end of year performance and looks forward to the challenges ahead. It would usually come before Committee in July however it has been delayed due to this being an election year.

Committee's key role is to consider whether the Council has processes in place to effectively monitor performance. Members were reminded that the Scrutiny Performance Panel, a sub-committee of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny committee engages in informal discussion with the Cabinet at three key points in the year. The Panel has already met informally to discuss the end of year position recently, and Members have been circulated the list of observations made to Cabinet, and Cabinet's response.

The Chairperson welcomed, for this item;

- Councillor Huw Thomas, Chair of Cardiff PSB & Leader of Cardiff Council
- Paul Orders, Chief Executive of Cardiff Council.
- Gareth Newell, Head of Performance & Partnerships, Cardiff Council
- Cllr Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation & Performance
- Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources;
- Sarah McGill, Corporate Director, People & Communities
- Dylan Owen, Head of Cabinet Office - *on screen*

The Chairperson invited the Leader to make a statement and the Chief Executive provided his overview of 2021/22 and the performance challenges ahead. Members were then asked to make any comments, observations or to ask any questions.

Members noted the significant challenges highlighted in the Annual Well-being Plan; increasing demand in Children and Adult Services; recycling rates; cost-of-living pressures; and the overall financial position, which meant that very difficult decisions had to be made. The Chief Executive assured Members that the Council has in place an improved, more effective, performance framework, together with a robust self- assessment procedure based on a broad number of data sources that enables a balanced assessment of performance.

Members were concerned that the workforce faces many additional pressures, not least from the uncertainty of the Council's budget position. Officers advised that they will continue to provide well-being services and encourage management visibility. Officers added that the Council has in place structures to reassure staff, to maintain good communications, drawing on and enhancing existing well-being services. Officers are working more closely with trade unions.

Members discussed inequality across the city in regard to life expectancy between the North and South of the City and considered it important that the Well-being Plan supports residents of all ages and avoids working in silos. The Leader acknowledged this and stressed it was a joint approach of Cabinet and they would consider a more focussed way of looking at the detail in future.

Members considered that an opportunity has been missed within the Well-being Plan to acknowledge the impact that Arts and Culture can have on general well-being. Current references and indicators for Arts and Culture are focussed on economic development rather than well-being.

Members would also like to see more focus on the quality of footways, given the Active Travel aspirations.

Members re-iterated the concern of the Performance Panel that customer satisfaction with Council services in 2021/22 is 47% against a target of 70% for 2021/22 (WBO 7.17). Members were concerned that levels of satisfaction have fallen by 20% and are at their lowest level in 5 years but noted this represents a general trend across public service organisations and that the Leader would like to see an improvement in this area.

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.

25 : BUDGET STRATEGY UPDATE 2023/24 - TO FOLLOW

The Chairperson advised that this item enabled Members to receive an update on the budget for 2023/24 and an estimate of the gap forecast. Committee had scrutinised the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan in July 2022, at which point the indicative budget gap for 2023/24 was forecast at £29.080million.

The Chairperson welcomed, for this item;

- Cllr Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation & Performance
- Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources, and welcome to:
- Ian Allwood, Head of Finance

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement after which officers provided an update on the budget position looking ahead to 2022/23. Members were then asked to make any comments, observations or to ask any questions.

Members were keen to know what the implications were for Council Tax in light of the forecast £53m budget gap. Officers advised that Council Tax alone would not close the gap needed to continue services as they are currently delivered, and savings would need to be identified. Members sought more information on what percentage of the gap will be closed through increased income, staff reductions and efficiencies savings. Officers explained that this is currently under discussion and were currently unclear about what the gap would mean for shaping council services.

A discussion took place around the Capital Programme and the economic challenges of increasing interest rates and building costs. Officers advised that all projects have gone through a robust business case and were subject to continual review. Members

requested details of all capital projects, setting out clearly the associated costs, together with information on the treasury management position, in readiness for further scrutiny of this in November.

In relation to Employee Consultation, Members were pleased to hear there is a clear commitment on both sides to working in partnership with trade unions.

Members asked whether Welsh Government had a full understanding of the financial pressures the Council is working within and asked what discussions were being had about this to date. Officers advised that there are regular conversations at officer and political levels, where the scale of the challenge is always highlighted.

Members discussed School reserves and were keen to establish that the Council has a good understanding of the reasons some Cardiff schools may hold large financial reserves. Members were advised that discussions on schools' financial plans were currently feeding into the Council's budget planning conversations.

Members highlighted the risk of the Council facing large items of expenditure, such as the ongoing review within Waste Management by HMRC. Officers advised that all potential levers would be explored.

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.

26 : SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

The Chairperson advised Members that this item provided an opportunity for pre-decision scrutiny of the Council's Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy 2022-2027 prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 20 October 2022.

The Chairperson welcomed, for this item

- Cllr Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation & Performance, and
- Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources, and welcome to:
- Steve Robinson, Head of Commissioning and Procurement.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement and Officers to provide a brief overview of the Strategy, after which Members were asked to make any comments, observations or to ask any questions.

Members welcomed the strategy and congratulated Officers on an excellent, concise and exciting piece of work, clearly written and laid out, and focussed on the right seven objectives. Members noted that it was an Officer report and were keen to receive tangible examples of what could be done or has been achieved in the form of real stories of socially responsible procurement.

In relation to SME's, Members noted the significant difference between a small company of around 5 employees and a medium size company of around 250 employees. Members asked that Officers look more closely at the data and further

analyse the size of businesses bidding for council contracts. Officers advised that small business would be a focus throughout the strategy, as would looking at ways to support small businesses through supply chains.

Members discussed making the procurement process more accessible to local businesses and providing the support to meet the requirements. Members also pointed to the increasing numbers of minority communities in Cardiff and businesses owned by members of those communities. Officers advised that current systems do not provide the Council with information as to the ethnicity of business ownership and those bidding for contracts. Members suggested that the Council analyses how effectively its procurement strategy is in reaching businesses within minority communities. Members also asked Officers to look closely at the barriers that might be preventing third sector locally based organisations accessing the procurement opportunities for Council contracts. Officers advised that they were planning to refresh the Selling to the Council Guide, Members welcomed this approach.

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.

27 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

15th November 2022, 4.30pm.

The meeting terminated at 8.25 pm