

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 MARCH 2023

Present: Councillor Williams(Chairperson)
Councillors Ash-Edwards, Chowdhury, Henshaw, Hunt,
Thomson and Waldron

59 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Ferguson-Thorne and Stubbs

60 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

61 : CABINET RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE'S HOME & AGILE WORKING INQUIRY

The Chairperson advised Members, that this item was a report back to the Committee by Cabinet with the formal response to an inquiry that was undertaken by the previous PRAP committee, under the chairmanship of Cllr David Walker. Cllr Henshaw was a member of the task group that undertook this research, and as such presented it to Cabinet in July 2022. The Cabinet response was agreed in January, and Members have an opportunity to hear how the 9 recommendations were received, whether they have informed policy development work on hybrid working to date and why some recommendations were not fully accepted.

For this item, the Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation and Performance and Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Weaver to make a statement then asked Chris Lee to take Members through the Cabinet response and presentation. Members were then asked for their comments, observations, and questions.

Members were pleased to hear there was a process of continual review and renewal as it was important not to lock ourselves into things that cannot be changed.

Members asked if the Committee would be looking at the policies and officers advised they would come back to committee in April.

Members considered it to be a good report and agreed with its conclusions. Members added that homeworking is a good option for more experienced staff but were concerned about new starters lacking the social aspect of physically being in a team. Members asked what managers were doing to humanise the experience. Members were advised that staff were surveyed about their experiences during lockdown and more recently where there is more flexibility. Most people expressed a preference to work from home with some time spent in the office. Managers will need to ensure there are opportunities to work as a team to encourage bonding, to consider staff morale, to provide in person training and consider the social aspects. It

is important to remember that different people have different needs and flexibility is key. There is guidance and training for managers around this.

Members asked how it could be ensured that staff at different levels will be fully engaged in the reviews and stressed the importance of not losing sight of workforce development and career development. Members were advised that this is considered as part of the workforce strategy and the wellbeing strategy which both take into account the impact on the workforce. The Cabinet had accepted both strategies and now work will start on the detailed policy work, which will come back to committee.

Members discussed Directorate Delivery Plans and asked about timescales. Officers advised that the 2023/24 plans will show the hybrid policy has been embedded.

Members discussed the recommendation around SMT and regular reviews and noted the huge shift from office based to homeworking and hybrid working. Members were assured that senior management statements are important. Members were advised that there are opportunities to monitor this through Scrutiny, Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet. Workforce matters are considered as part of the performance framework. The Cabinet response is based on advice from the Chief Executive, Members are invited to test this and ensure it is working.

AGREED: that the Cabinet response be noted.

62 : PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

For this item, the Chairperson welcomed Councillor Julie Sangani, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Equality; Davina Fiore, Director of Governance & Legal Services; Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services; Gareth Newell, Head of Performance and Partnerships, Dylan Owen, Operational Manager for Policy and Performance and Claire Owens, Principal Research & Consultation Officer

Members were reminded that in line with Committee's Terms of Reference they have responsibility for any Council policy developed to address citizen engagement and consultation. Councils across Wales are required to develop and publish a strategy on encouraging participation in decision making to comply with the Local Government (Wales) Act 2021. The legislation also requires that the Participation Strategy addresses ways of promoting awareness among local people of the work of members and how to become a member of the council. Therefore, delivery of this strategy is a collaboration between the Council's Policy & Performance function and its Democratic Services function.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Sangani to make a statement on the Participation Strategy, after which Officers provided a presentation. Members were then asked for their comments, observations and questions.

The Committee welcomed the opportunity for policy development scrutiny of the Participation Strategy. Members were pleased to see a comprehensive presentation of development work to date, particularly in respect of seldom heard groups in the city. Members agreed that representation matters, the strategy is all about listening

and must reach all communities to ensure Cardiff Council is open and ensures local voices can influence local decision-making.

Members were advised that the strategy is at an early stage, that the statutory guidance officers are following is draft and may change, and that, despite the Council's grand vision for placing communities at the heart of decision-making and its aspiration for inclusivity, this strategy must be delivered without the benefit of additional resources.

Mitigating low response rates from minority groups.

Members were pleased to hear there has been an improvement in general consultation response rates, particularly given members conversations with the research team to gather community intelligence, and stakeholder mapping to improve reach.

Members noted that the response of minority language groups to the recent Budget Consultation was low and were pleased to hear Officers will continue working on this and will take the opportunity to integrate council wide resources and intelligence as they develop the Participation Strategy.

Closing the feedback loop

Members considered that glossy publications were rarely the answer to feeding back consultation results. Officers acknowledged that the Council needs to improve on this matter.

Strengthening the link to performance

Members were pleased to hear of the intention to strengthen corporate practice on engagement by linking citizen perception data collected by all service areas into the performance framework, and by developing a citizen perception element to the Directorate Delivery Plans.

Partner opportunities

Members concurred with officer's views that there is scope for significant collaboration with the Council's partners on inclusive consultation, particularly given the financial implications of reaching out to all minority languages. Members noted that digital translation has already been explored and also noted that partners have undertaken citizen perception analysis and have an insight into communities that we might share.

Socio-economic barriers

Members were particularly interested in how to overcome the barriers to consulting with low-income socio-economic groups. Members noted the focus on geographic indications in development work to date, and that there is recognition that face-to-face engagement with these groups is very important, but that there is an opportunity to examine any barriers that may be alienating these groups further.

Policy development consultation

Members highlighted that consultation with residents on policy development would stretch the council's engagement from one focussed pre-dominantly on service development and design to one of greater influence. Members were advised that this would be reflected on.

Supporting diversity in standing for election

In respect of the Democratic Services requirements of the Participation Strategy, the Committee concurred that Members hold the key to community intelligence and welcomed the plan to hold an all-Member engagement event in May 2023 as part of the ongoing development of the Strategy. Members also noted the importance of communications and welcomed the development of a democracy communication plan.

Political party collaboration

Members from all parties on the Committee were of the view that there is an opportunity for collaboration/closer pre-election links across political parties, in preparing prospective new candidates who are considering whether or not to stand in an elected role, and in supporting candidates as they prepare for election. This collaboration should be founded on the role of a Councillor in serving their community. Members noted the intention to include extra support for independent members and ensure better communications between the council and political groups.

Protected characteristics.

Members welcomed the proposed initiatives to ensure that the representativeness of Council membership more closely mirrors the communities it serves. Members considered there may be more work required to examine the support provided to Members in respect of all protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010.

Assistance fund

Officers referred to an assistance fund available to support prospective candidates from minority groups in standing for election. Members requested that more information on this, its purpose and how individuals can access the fund is shared with the Committee.

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.

63 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Members were provided with a brief update on the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2022/23, which they were asked to agree as an accurate summary of the committee's work to date. Members were reminded that there is one Scrutiny Annual Report to Council each year, capturing the work of all 5 scrutiny committees.

RESOLVED: to accept the report taking into considerations observations made by Cllr Ash-Edwards.

Members were advised that Scrutiny Chairs have agreed that a joint scrutiny task and finish group be established, consisting of the Chairs of the five Scrutiny Committees and two volunteers from each committee. The Task group needs to be established as soon as possible to plan work around the RLDP Preferred Strategy, scheduled to go out to consultation in July 2023. The Task and Finish Group will establish the Terms of Reference itself. And, following approval of the Preferred Strategy, it is anticipated that the group will continue to meet periodically, to undertake scrutiny of future stages of the Replacement LDP. The Chairperson sought expressions of interest in joining this task group.

RESOLVED: that Cllrs Hunt, Henshaw, Chowdhury and Thomson expressed interest in joining the task group.

Members noted the correspondence between committee and the Cabinet.

64 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received

65 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

24 April 2023 at 4.30pm