

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 DECEMBER 2023

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

41 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Sarah McGill for item 4 and Cllr Owen Jones for item 5.

42 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Williams and Henshaw declared personal interests in item 4 as they both have family members that work for the Council.

43 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22/11/23 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

44 : MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE 2023/24

The Chairperson advised Members that as the Scrutiny Committee with responsibility for oversight of the Council's corporate planning, performance assessment and reporting arrangements, this item provided them with an opportunity for pre-decision scrutiny of the Council's self-assessment as reported in the Mid-year Performance Report for 2023/24.

A key role of the Committee is to consider whether the Council has processes in place to effectively monitor performance and whether it has assessed its performance in the first six months of 2023/24 accurately. By way of background, Members were reminded that the Scrutiny Performance Panel, a sub-committee of PRAP committee, comprising the chairs of all five scrutiny committees, chaired by Cllr Joel Williams, engages in informal discussion with the Cabinet on performance at three key points in the year. The Panel had recently met informally to discuss the Mid-Year position, and as part of the papers at Appendix B Members had been circulated the list of observations made to Cabinet, and Cabinet's response to those recommendations at Appendix C.

For this item, the Chairperson welcomed,

- Cllr Huw Thomas, Leader of Cardiff Council
- Cllr Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation & Performance
- Paul Orders, Chief Executive
- Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources

- Gareth Newell, Head of Performance & Partnerships
- Dylan Owen, Head of Cabinet Office

The Leader and Chief Executive were invited to make opening statements after which Members were provided with a presentation.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members noted the concerns raised around housing challenges, including rough sleepers, interest rates, and asylum seekers. Members emphasised the importance of early intervention in addressing the housing crisis.

A discussion took place around the improvement in schools and Members asked questions around whether it is due to improved management practices. Members wondered if any learning from this could be shared with other service areas.

Members raised concerns about changes in the education management team, the impact of the pandemic on mental health and behaviour in schools, and the need for greater innovation and a well-being strategy for education.

The Committee highlighted issues related to school attendance, parental work from home, and the suitability of the Education & Lifelong Learning directorate structure.

Members commended the work of the Council's Inclusions Team and the Health and Safety Team in schools.

Members discussed, at length, the Council's understanding of staff pressures and engagement. A review of staff engagement arrangements was recommended to ensure effective corporate service provision.

Committee Members acknowledged the challenges in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and highlighted the importance of innovation, transformation, and early intervention for financial resilience.

Members welcomed the Council's approach to performance assessment through an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and the Well-being of Future Generations Act lens and noted the use of sustainability principles in setting Well-being Objectives.

Committee Members emphasised the role of scrutiny committees in performance review, focusing on spotlighting areas with drift in Corporate Plan performance. Members noted that spotlight reviews are an endorsed approach that can be factored into the work programming of scrutiny committees.

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.

45 : RLDP JOINT SCRUTINY REPORT

The Chairperson reminded Members that over recent months a joint scrutiny inquiry by all five scrutiny committees had been underway. The aim being to inform the *Preferred Strategy*, which would address levels of housing, jobs growth, spatial

strategy, sustainable transport, protecting the environment and delivering quality new development, all of which would inform the preparation of a Deposit Plan.

The final report needed to be submitted to Cabinet for consideration in January 2024. To that end the cross-committee group met in July and agreed the best approach was to prioritise three topics that smaller scrutiny sub-groups would examine. The three priority topics agreed were:

- Securing Planning Obligations/s106 – Chaired by Cllr Joel Williams
- Transport – Chaired by Cllr Owen Jones
- Local and District Centres – Chaired by Cllr Peter Wong.

The findings of the 3 groups had been merged into one scrutiny inquiry report and it was Committee's task to approve the proposed Final Joint RLDP Inquiry report attached at Appendix,1 and authorise the Chair of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee to submit the report to the Cabinet on behalf of all five scrutiny committees.

A great deal of evidence gathering had gone into this task, the three groups had spoken to 20 external witnesses, 11 internal witnesses, and received 6 written submissions. The final draft report at Appendix 1 brought together 133 key findings and 17 recommendations to Cabinet.

For this item, the Chairperson welcomed Cllr Rhys Taylor as Chair of Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Peter Wong and Erica Painter (Principal Scrutiny Officer for Environment Scrutiny Committee). Apologies had been received from Cllr Owen Jones.

The Chairperson invited witnesses to sum up their findings and recommendations, after which Members were invited to make observations, comments and ask questions.

Members discussed and asked questions around the 'unacceptable harm issues and how they could be addressed. Members noted that an SPG is just guidance in Planning Law, and that a statement of Policy Intent in the RLDP would be helpful in case of an appeal etc.

Members discussed Community Infrastructure Levy's (CIL's) noting that Local Authority's can choose to apply either a CIL or a S106 agreement. The inquiry had heard that Cardiff felt that choosing CIL would mean less money available for affordable housing due to priorities within the CIL, whereas with s106, the Local Authority can often negotiate higher contributions which can be used for affordable housing. Members noted this response but felt that CIL can often provide a better infrastructure for sustainable communities.

RESOLVED to agree that the final report be submitted to Cabinet for consideration in January 2024.

46 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Noted.

47 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

48 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10 January 2023, 4.00pm

The meeting terminated at 6.17 pm