

**POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

9 February 2015

DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2015-17

Reason for the Report

1. To provide Members with an opportunity to consider the draft Corporate Plan 2015-17, attached at **Appendix A**. The Corporate Plan will be presented to Cabinet for approval to refer to Council in March 2015.

Background

2. This Committee's role is twofold in considering the Corporate Plan: firstly, to scrutinise the overall structure and direction set out in the Corporate Plan and the process for its development, as the Council's key strategic documents linking the outcomes set out in 'What Matters' Plan, Directorate Delivery Plans and individual officers' objectives. The Committee also has a role in scrutinising the linkages between the Corporate Plan and delivery of the specific services under its remit. Copies of the other Committees' letters will be tabled at the Committee meeting to enable Members to take these views into account when considering both the Corporate Plan and the Budget Proposals

Issues

Draft Corporate Plan 2015-17

3. The draft Corporate Plan 2015-17 sets out the aspirations for the Council for the next three years, identifying four priorities:
 - Education and skills for people of all ages;
 - Supporting vulnerable people;
 - Sustainable economic development as the engine for growth and jobs;
 - Working with people and partners to design, deliver and improve services.

Previous external assessments of the Council's Corporate Plan

Wales Audit Office Improvement Letter – Assessment of 2013-17 Corporate Plan

4. In September 2013, the Auditor General issued an Improvement Letter¹ assessing how the Council had addressed its improvement duties through the Corporate Plan 2013-17. He concluded that the Council had complied with guidance by publishing its Corporate Plan at the start of the financial year and that the identification of five themes in the Plan, as well as the grouping of activities under Cabinet Portfolios had the 'potential to strengthen accountability for improvement'. However, he found that there were a number of areas which should be improved as follows:

- “The Council is not fully meeting Welsh Government guidance because the Corporate Plan includes a wide range of proposed activities making it difficult to identify the improvement objectives for 2013-14.”
- The Plan identified more than 100 proposed activities, many of which referred to “preparing or developing plans; implementing or delivering plans or strategies; or describe the day-to-day business of the Council such as delivering the Local Development Plan.”
- Some objectives did not meet guidance “because they are too broad and aspirational, for example, ‘creating safer communities’ or because they are too narrow or operational, for example, ‘deliver a portfolio of events’.”
- “The absence of clear and measurable targets means the Council will be unable to fully evaluate its performance. [...] Some actions/milestones are clear and have measurable targets, many are not accompanied by clearly defined measures of success. Where portfolio performance indicator baskets are listed, they are generic to the portfolio area. They also do not include details of intended outcomes or targets and are not explicitly linked to the specific improvement actions contained within the Delivery Plan.”
- The Plan “could more specifically outline the links between consultation results and the prioritisation of improvement objectives, including the selection of the five ‘themes’”.

¹ Available with 10 October 2013 Cabinet papers on the Council's website at:
[http://www.cardiff.gov.uk/content.asp?nav=2872%2C3250%2C4875&id=&parent_directory_id=2865&textonly=&language=&\\$state=calendarmeting&\\$committeeID=12950&\\$meetingdate=10/10/2013](http://www.cardiff.gov.uk/content.asp?nav=2872%2C3250%2C4875&id=&parent_directory_id=2865&textonly=&language=&$state=calendarmeting&$committeeID=12950&$meetingdate=10/10/2013)

Welsh Local Government Association Peer Review

5. The Peer Review undertaken by the Welsh Local Government Association also made an assessment of the 2013-17 Corporate Plan², concluding that:

“The Corporate Plan is an extensive document which would benefit from distillation down to a shorter and crisper set of objectives that would be readily understood and easy to communicate both internally and externally.”

Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement report and Corporate Assessment

6. The Wales Audit Office published its latest assessment of the City of Cardiff Council in September 2014, seeking to answer the question: ‘Is the Council capable of delivering its priorities and improved outcomes for citizens?’. In reviewing the 2014-17 iteration of the Corporate Plan, the Auditor General found that it ‘still lacks sufficiently clear measures of success, and delivery plans against which performance can be reviewed are in an early stage of development’.³ He also noted that “in response to criticism of the previous Plan by the Peer Review and Wales Audit Office, the Council produced a more concise document with the aim of establishing a clearer focus on priorities”, and that it included sections aligning the portfolio responsibilities of the former Cabinet setting out what directorates propose to do in respect of delivery and the outcomes the Council wishes to see. It also noted, however, that “there is some confused use of this term”.

Previous Scrutiny

7. During its scrutiny of the 2014-17 draft Corporate Plan in February 2014, the Committee made the following comments and recommendations:

- The entire corporate planning and budget-setting process should be brought forward;
- The Plans should be drafted to suit the needs of its various audiences: the public and partners, regulators, and staff;
- The Plan should set out a clearer vision for the Council beyond that financial year and should help to prepare communities for the difficult choices in future service delivery;

² Welsh Local Government Association Peer review, available on the Council’s website at: [https://formerly.cardiff.gov.uk/committeebrowser.asp?\\$state=meeting&\\$committee=12950&\\$meetingdate=10/10/13](https://formerly.cardiff.gov.uk/committeebrowser.asp?$state=meeting&$committee=12950&$meetingdate=10/10/13)

³ Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment, page 6, available at: <https://www.wao.gov.uk/news/improvements-not-being-made-key-service-areas-cardiff-council>

- Many of the 'outcomes' set out in the draft Plan did not clearly demonstrate benefits for citizens, and many were in fact outputs; several measures were unclearly defined and some were not the Council's sole responsibility to deliver against.

8. The Committee scrutinised the 2015-17 Corporate Planning framework at its 2 December 2014 meeting. Members were informed that the Plan would be structured around four priorities, following an analysis of the approach to corporate planning undertaken in the Core Cities. The refreshed plan would include a glossary of terms to address Wales Audit Office criticism in relation to confusion between "outcomes" and "objectives", and would be subject to an extensive programme of stakeholder engagement including:

- Early consideration by PRAP to help inform development;
- Consideration by Challenge Forum;
- All Members Engagement Session.

9. Members made the following recommendations at that meeting:

- The Plan should be developed to suit the needs of its various audiences;
- More thought should be given to appropriate training for staff to avoid confusion around terminology such as outcome, perhaps through the manager training programme;
- More emphasis should be put on specific issues such as NEETs, the environment, the City's status as capital, and cross-boundary working;
- Suitable comparative data should be included in the Plan.

Scope of the Scrutiny

10. This item will give the Committee the opportunity to make recommendations regarding the draft Corporate Plan 2015-17 before it is presented to Cabinet and then Full Council for approval. It will also allow the Committee to test the Budget Proposals, at Agenda Item 5, against the Cabinet's stated priorities.

Way Forward

11. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Phil Bale; the Chief Executive, Paul Orders; and Martin Hamilton, Chief Officer Change and Improvement, will be in attendance to present the Plan and answer Members' questions.

Legal Implications

12. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers of behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

13. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

To review the draft Corporate Plan and agree any recommendations or comments for consideration by Cabinet.

MARIE ROSENTHAL

County Clerk and Monitoring Officer

3 February 2015