

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 OCTOBER 2018

Present: Councillor Walker(Chairperson)
Councillors Bowen-Thomson, Boyle, Cunnah, Hudson, Lister,
Mackie and Murphy

24 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

25 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members had a responsibility under Article 16 of the Members' Code of Conduct to declare any interests and complete Personal Interest Forms at the commencement of the agenda item in question.

26 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on the 12 September 2018 were approved as a correct record.

27 : ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2017-18 - WALES AUDIT OFFICE

The Chairperson welcomed the following:

Representing the Wales Audit Office

- Sara-Jane Byrne
- Ian Phillips
- Samantha Clements

Representing Cardiff Council

- Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation and Performance
- Paul Orders, Chief Executive
- Christine Salter, Corporate Director Resources
- Joseph Reay, Head of Performance & Partnerships

The Chairperson explained this was an opportunity to consider the Annual Improvement Report for 2017/18. This was an annual report issued by the Wales Audit Office in September 2018, having audited the Councils improvement planning and reporting arrangements, to assess whether the Council would meet its statutory improvement duties.

The Chairperson invited Sara-Jane Byrne of the Wales Audit Office to give a verbal update.

The Committee was advised that improvement could be seen and the Auditor General believed that the Council was likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure.

The Chief Executive explained that the Council's Senior Management Team worked closely with Wales Audit Office, contributing to national studies, developing an ethos and a culture in the organisation to improve and operate positively to address and support current issues.

The Chairperson invited the Committee to ask questions.

The Committee drew attention to the contents of the report and asked why the Joint Healthcare Inspectorate Wales & Care Report had not been included in the report.

The Committee was advised that the Joint Healthcare Inspectorate Report would be issued shortly. Unfortunately, there had not been enough time to include on today's agenda.

Members of the Committee were advised that the Annual Fee for work carried out by the Wales Audit Office was £471,097, in order for the Council to meet its statutory requirements.

The Wales Audit Office outlined how they assessed the Council's Improvement Plan and analysed performance. It was the responsibility of the Council to self-assess its performance against indicators and have a robust procedure in place to support this before publication. Mechanisms were in place to analyse the content, especially the Wellbeing Plan going forward and how the Plan linked to the objectives within the Corporate Plan, and how the Council complied with the Local Government Measure.

The Committee drew attention to the recommendations in the report and how these could be better understood in order to inform scrutiny.

Members of the Committee were informed that WAO undertake follow up work on recommendations to assess how the Council has taken forward its previous recommendations. This work is tracked and considered by the Council's Audit Committee. Intensive work was in place to track activity and support performance management, linked to the aspirations of Capital Ambition.

The Committee was concerned that the information contained in recommendations should be addressed through scrutiny.

Members were assured that reporting mechanisms were in place to pass information from Audit Committee to Scrutiny. WAO external auditors were in attendance regularly at Audit Committee and trackers were in place.

The Committee was provided with information on how Councils dealt with homelessness demand, how reporting mechanisms fed into the scrutiny process, and implemented recommendations.

The Committee was informed that Estyn, CCIW, and the Welsh Language Commissioner were examples of some of the external organisations that scrutinised the 22 local authorities in Wales.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey their comments and observations.

28 : OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY REVIEW - FIT FOR PURPOSE?

Representing the Wales Audit Office

- Sara-Jane Byrne
- Ian Phillips
- Samantha Clements

Representing Cardiff Council

- Councillor Huw Thomas, Leader of the Council
- Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation and Performance
- Paul Orders, Chief Executive
- Christine Salter, Corporate Director Resources
- Joseph Reay, Head of Performance & Partnerships
- Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services

The Committee also welcomed Councillor Patel – Chairperson, Environmental Scrutiny Committee and Councillor McGarry, Chairperson Community and Adult Services Committee.

To set the context for this item the Chairperson explained to the Committee that each year the WAO undertook a number of national inspections in delivering its work programme. The Fit for the Future review was undertaken between October 2017 and January 2018. Representatives of the Wales Audit Office observed Committee proceedings in November 2017 as Committee scrutinised the Public Services Board; meeting documentation provided to members to support their scrutiny role, such as reports and presentations were reviewed; officers were interviewed; and some participated in focus groups held with key groups of Members and officers. In July 2018, WAO published the results of its review and this was an opportunity for Committee to hear the outcome and how the Council planned to address proposals for improvement going forward.

Huw Thomas, Leader of the Council explained that Cardiff Council had a strong scrutiny function and it provided a valuable input into the decision making process.

The Wales Audit Office explained that work had taken place with the 22 local authorities in Wales to establish how council's had implemented and developed their scrutiny functions since its introduction with the Local Government Act 2000, along with changes that had taken place. The challenges that councils faced and the future issues that were going to be experienced. Cardiff had a good platform going forward and was in a position to build and strengthen to meet future challenges. The Council had an Action Plan and proposals for improvements were listed in the report.

The Cabinet and Scrutiny arrangements were developed and sound challenges were made by scrutiny members. Training requirements were being reviewed, to develop members skills in line with new procedures including the Wellbeing & Future Generations Act, and also to develop members skills and understanding of the

challenges faced. The Committee also noted there were proposals for resources to be cut and therefore it was essential to use the current resource to support the service going forward.

The Wales Audit Office gave a more detailed summary of findings, drawing attention to how scrutiny was run and the support provided to Members. . There was scope to improve Forward Work Programmes and whilst some public engagement was acknowledged was a need to do more. Scrutiny's profile on the Council's website was discussed and it was recognised that navigating the website to find scrutiny work programmes could be difficult. Efforts to engage stakeholders were acknowledged along with good Task & Finish Group work. However agenda prioritisation could be refined. Scrutiny was considered effective but the Council was challenged to maximise the impact of its work and consider how issues could be scrutinised by using alternative methods other than formal meetings.

The Committee drew Cabinet's attention to scrutiny Task & Finish recommendations. The majority of the recommendations had been implemented, however, Members considered there was little update on their progress or status.

The Committee received a presentation from Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services which outlined the Action Plan developed to address the following WAO Proposals for Improvement:

P1 – The Council should build on its experience of using different ways of working to consider more innovative methods for undertaking scrutiny activity.

P2 – The Council should consider the skills and training that scrutiny members may need to better prepare them for current and future challenges and develop and deliver an appropriate training programme, including providing additional training on the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

P3 – The Council should make scrutiny committees' forward work programmes (FWPs) more accessible to the public and consider how it can involve the public in its scrutiny activity more effectively.

P4- The Council should publish final versions of scrutiny committee meeting minutes on its website in a more timely manner.

P5 – The Council should review the type of scrutiny support required to enable the scrutiny function to respond to current and future challenges.

The Chairperson invited the Committee to ask questions.

The Committee drew attention to alternative ways of working and asked WAO to advise on what innovative methods could be used.

The WAO referred to other Councils such as Lincolnshire, to the Centre for Public Scrutiny and to the newly formed scrutiny network, suggesting methods should place the service user at the heart.

Members of the Committee were of the view that Forward Plans could be more focused, and commented how difficult it could be to engage members of the public with some of the PRAP agenda items. In relation to the minutes, Members enquired whether there was an easier way of producing them, including webcasting all meetings.

The Committee was advised that currently some meetings were being webcast, this also included links to Facebook live. There was a cost for webcasting, however some councils had used audio minutes and these audio recordings were available on their websites.

Councillor Patel, Chairperson of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee explained that all Scrutiny Chairperson's operated differently. His Committee had found pre-meetings extremely helpful and allowed the Committee to focus on the agenda items in question. He considered that some in-house training services were not adequate to support the needs of Scrutiny Chairs and Scrutiny Committee Members. Good external training had been received, which provided more in depth development for members. He considered there was a need to webcast all scrutiny committee's and it was essential to lobby Welsh Government for funding to support the development of public engagement through webcasting.

Councillor Huw Thomas Leader explained that it was essential that Scrutiny Committees engage with the public and raise public awareness. Webcasting would support this engagement but funding should be in place before progressing.

Councillor Patel explained that the Scrutiny Chairs Liaison Forum had suggested writing to Welsh Government in order to fund webcasting.

Members of the Committee were concerned with the number of red RAG status in the action plan and asked what was being done to alleviate this. Was the prioritisation of scrutiny items satisfactory, and was scrutiny performance being tested.

The committee was advised that the action plan was a living document and that the RAG status would be updated as the actions were progressed.

The Wales Audit Office explained that every Council prioritised its own workload. Scrutiny should be in a position to make a difference by scoping what could be scrutinised and holding the Cabinet to account.

The Committee was advised that the Forward Work Programmes would be reviewed every three months. The items changed frequently and the work Programme would be fluid to reflect this.

The Committee discussed the Youth Service and the on-going work of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. A short pilot was taking place to encourage the involvement of more young people in Scrutiny.

Councillor Patel drew attention to public engagement with the possibility of having meetings away from County Hall. There were numerous hubs located across the city and Scrutiny could benefit from using these external venues.

Councillor Mary McGarry, Scrutiny Chairperson for Community and Adult Services explained the current scrutiny procedures in place were good and that the Council should continue to have five Scrutiny Committees.

The Wales Audit Office indicated they were not in a position to advise on the resources required to support an effective Scrutiny service. Legally the Council was statutorily required to have one scrutiny committee. Their improvement review was about innovative working and considering alternative ways of delivering scrutiny for the future.

Members of the Committee drew attention to work commitments as some Scrutiny Committee Members had full time jobs, and were unable to commit to T&F Groups.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey their comments and observations.

29 : CARDIFF COUNCIL'S WELL-BEING REPORT 2017-18

The Chairperson welcomed the following:

- Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation and Performance
- Paul Orders, Chief Executive
- Christine Salter, Corporate Director Resources
- Joseph Reay, Head of Performance & Partnerships
- Andrew Simms, Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

The Chairperson advised that as of 2018, the Improvement Report had been re-branded as the Well-being Report. This statutory document reviewed the Council's performance over the previous year, using evidence that demonstrated the delivery of its Well-Being Objectives. The Report should communicate improvement information that was timely and accurate to Members, officer, citizens, communities, stakeholders, other Council's, the Welsh Government and regulators.

Councillor Weaver explained this was a retrospective report which outlined the performance indicators.

The Committee received a presentation on Cardiff Council Annual Statutory Well-being Report 2017-18 which outlined the following:

- Legislative Requirements
- The Annual Statutory Well-Being Report 2017-18
- Self-Assessment of our Well-Being Objectives
- Key Messages
- Areas for further improvement
- Annual Statutory Well-being Report – Future Developments

The Committee was informed of the new legislative procedures in place and the previous performance analysis compared to the rest of Wales.

Members of the Committee were concerned with the credibility of the targets, noting that some targets for 2017-18 remained lower than the 2016-17 attainment. They felt tougher targets were required for some Performance Indicators

The Committee was advised that targets were ambitious. Improved targets were in place to support progress going forward and ensure credibility.

The Committee drew attention to the RAG rating in the report, and referred to Safeguarding and Transformation, listed as red and asked why this was the case and if the targets set were unrealistic.

The Committee was advised of the criteria used to set the targets and assured Members that improvements could be seen in red areas.

Members of the Committee asked for further information on the statistics in order to understand the figures, particularly linking to Looked After Children and People wanting to live in Cardiff.

The Committee was referred to the performance indicators in place for Children Services and how they were recorded. Currently the area was in a reasonable position even though there was demand pressure. There were a high number of vacancies in Children Services. However, significant improvements were beginning to show and a greater narrative on progress would be provided.

The Committee discussed Corporate Parenting and the support provided to Looked After Children. The key performance indicators in place to support children who returned home and those who were placed in more than one placement.

The Committee was advised that it was difficult to address individual cases through the performance indicators that affected safeguarding.

Members heard that all Directorates were aware of financial resilience issues and were addressing critical priorities. Improvement Progress was being made following the Wales Audit Assessment in order to focus on and improve performance.

The Committee was concerned that there was no evidence in the papers to show how the figures came about. Members considered greater narrative and consistency of self-assessment would provide a more robust assessment.

Members were reassured that detailed assessments involving the directors had taken place to achieve the figures. There had been significant analysis of unsatisfactory progress in some areas, and there was an awareness of the need for further improvement and consciousness of growing targets, as performance was not always as good as it should be. The Chief Executive recognised there are areas of the organisation that would benefit from a stronger scrutiny focus and ongoing internal scrutiny challenge, such as tackling sickness absence levels, delivery of the Corporate Landlord model, managing demand in Children's Services, and the Waste Management service.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey their comments and observations.

30 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None

31 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 14 NOVEMBER 2018 AT 4.30 PM