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Eich Cyf/Your Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Comm Papers/Correspondence
Dyddiad/Date: 29 March 2019

Councillor David Walker
Chairperson – Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee
Room 271
Atlantic Wharf
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Annwyl / Dear David

Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 13 March 2019

Thank you for your letter dated 19 March 2019. I have looked at the issues you have raised and would respond to each bullet point as follows:

Service Reviews

- It was acknowledged that there were potential benefits for service areas to voluntarily undertake service reviews but there did not appear to be a process or set of criteria for identifying those services areas which would benefit by having their services reviewed. This can leave the impression of random rather than systematic selection of reviews.*
 - The service reviews carried out to date were endorsed by SMT. They were areas where it was felt a service review would lead to the identification of significant savings and more efficient ways of delivering a service. Both budgetary and performance data has been used to identify potential areas for service review.
- Members indicated that councillors could contribute to such selection, using appropriate criteria, and would welcome the opportunity to assist the identification and selection of those service areas which should be prioritised.*

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- Members input into potential areas for service reviews was welcomed. The Corporate Director Resources is looking to engage with other Directors and their management teams during the early part of quarter 1 of the forthcoming financial year so that a new programme of service reviews can be developed. This new programme could then be reported back into the Committee for consideration.
- *The Committee was uncertain of how reviews were then allocated to the Modernisation or Resilience portfolios. Again there would need to be clear criteria for making this choice but this process was not clear.*
 - Under the Capital Ambition Delivery Programme, all service reviews are managed through the Modernisation Portfolio.
- *The Committee proposed that wide scale use of available benchmarking data should be utilised to determine what good practice looks like in reviewing performance and be clearly set out in the review terms of reference. It was stated that benchmarking did have a role and the committee would be interested to see evidence of where and how such benchmark data is researched and used and from what sources.*
 - During all service reviews, benchmarking data will be utilised where it is available. In addition, other local authorities are contacted to learn from best practice and their ways of working. As one example, when the Civil Parking Enforcement review was conducted, the review team obtained benchmarking data from councils including Bristol, Swansea, Bromley, Harrogate, Solihull, Sheffield and Bristol. The Wales Penalty Processing Partnership were also contacted to obtain relevant data.
- *How the challenge of productivity measurement and improvement features in the service reviews is unclear. The committee would be interested in learning where the issue of productivity features in each review.*
 - During all service reviews, current ways of working are reviewed between the senior business analyst working on the review and staff from the service area.
 - Processes are reviewed by engaging with service area staff to understand how they currently operate. This is done via staff workshops, one-to-one's and observing staff actually carrying out their duties.
 - A software tool called Engage Process is used to capture and analyse the process being reviewed and all processes are mapped using this tool. This is then used to evaluate process's lead-time, costs and more to automatically find bottlenecks, waste and duplication.
 - From this analysis, new processes are mapped out, and by using the Engage Process software, cost savings associated with this new streamlined process are identified and captured as part of the review.

Digital First

- *The Committee appreciated of the success of C2C in switching the low value, simple queries, which customers raised using the telephone, to a less resource intensive digital platform. They noted that this is likely to lead to fewer staff being employed on telephone answering work. Members were assured that there would always be a need for employees to handle the*

more complex and digitally difficulty queries from customers and that some reskilling would take place.

- I note and agree the committees concerns on the potential impact on staff, and would like to reassure you that even with the switch to digital platforms there will always be a need for employees for the more complex enquiries. I would be happy to bring further updates on this subject in future committees.
- *The step change increase in the use of the app was mapped to the inclusion of additional services to this digital platform. It was proposed that other services and functionality should be added to continue to grow the number of customers using the App. Opportunities to promote the App and its use could be provided at community hubs. Hubs could also provide tuition for potential or new users to encourage its use.*
 - The team were pleased to hear of your comments in this area and happy to note that this is very much in line with our plans for the App. We have a roadmap of new services to bring to the platform over the coming year and will also add these improvements to our web offerings if they don't already exist. We are advertising the App currently, in particular, in line with the issuing of new council tax bills in an effort to encourage people to switch to the digital platform to manage their account, checking balances, changing direct debit details and taking advantage of e-billing. The use of the community hubs to both support the digitally disadvantaged as well as to act as champions for the use of the App and web facilities is happening currently and is very much part of our future strategy promote the take up of self service for our citizens. I welcome the opportunity to update the committee on progress over the coming months.
- *The increased use of the Cardiff App was noted, but the development of functionality also needed to include the provision of a digital response to customers who initiated the queries on the app. The digital response could be a response via the app and email or link to the council's website where further information could be provided.*
 - Thank you for your response in regards to the development functionality. The concept of "closing the loop" and keeping our customers better informed on the progress and status of reports is an area that the Council is keen to develop. Significant research and mapping has taken place in this area, however, it is complex and not without its challenges both in terms of preserving the security of data but also linking individuals to records held within the authority. This work forms part of the wider strategic data approach under discussion in developing our Data Strategy. The team are focused on making improvements for customers who choose to self-serve and a level of digital response is a future aspiration for digital services.
- *The Committee was eager for Elected Members to actively participate in the Connected Elected Members project. Concerns were raised regarding the provision of appropriate casework software and suitable hardware to Elected Members. It was proposed that appropriate hardware and software solutions should be identified, together with the provision relevant training to meet the individual needs of each Elected Member in fulfilling the intentions of this project.*

- I appreciate the committees concerns around participation in the Connected Elected Members project, and we would welcome further member engagement with this initiative. During the course of 2019/20 it is planned that the Customer & Digital team hand over ownership of the defined action plans to colleagues within Democratic Services who will work closely with members on delivery. Members have been involved previously in choosing the types of devices they are able to use to support them in their role and we would welcome further discussion on how best to move the Connected Members initiative(s) forward together.
- *Although the Authority had recently won an award for the accessibility of its website, committee members explained the difficulties they had experienced when undertaking searches. The Committee welcomed the offer of additional training being provided to support Elected Members in the effective use of the website.*
 - Thank you for your response on the difficulties members have experienced using the website. We would be keen to support any members who feel that they would benefit from some assistance in getting the best out of our website and can facilitate drop in sessions or arrange to meet with individuals.
 - The web team have conducted a number of user testing sessions with Cardiff residents at Hubs in Grangetown, Ely and Llanedeyrn as well as a recent session at the Central Library Hub in February 2019. Overall feedback was positive and residents responded well to improvements to the site. Some of the latest improvements made by the web team include a dynamic search which provides logical suggestions based on data we have gathered from customer searches of the site. A Recycling A – Z search where customers can enter items and see which bag / bin they can use to dispose of them. The response will also let them know whether the item can be taken to HWRC or collected via the bulky item service. The web team have also redesigned some online services in-line with the app project. These include recycling and waste collections – check dates and set up reminders and report fly tipping or a highway problem to continue the overall theme of creating self-serve options for residents. Development work on reporting missed collections is also due to go live later this spring.

Corporate Landlord

- *Elected members explained that there was still some work to do to address the historic reputational damage in relation to the council's maintenance service to schools. Overturning this problem, particularly in relation to schools would be challenging as they were able to utilise contractors other than the Council. The Committee noted that with 90 of 127 schools signing up to the "One front door project" and the access that it provided to any planned works was an opportunity to bring more schools back to using the Council for providing work services.*
 - A key role of the one front door (OFD) is to encourage schools to utilise the Council for providing building services work and as the committee has noted the challenge has been around the fact that schools are able to procure works themselves. However, the schools then bear responsibility

for vetting and approving their contractors, scoping the works to be completed, appointing contractors according to H&S and Construction, Design and Management (CDM) regulations, managing contractors on site, ensuring building works are done according to codes of practice and that works are signed off as compliant. These responsibilities have now been clearly communicated to the schools via the new Schools handbook and through the OFD training around the works request and consenting process. As schools become more aware of their statutory and regulatory obligations when using third party contractors it is considered that more and more schools will look to the Council Building Services (BS) team to deliver the work safely, compliantly and utilising the new frameworks, cost effectively. It will also help schools understand why doing the work through the Council may also seem more expensive. All schools have been advised of the introduction of the new 2nd generation frameworks and the OFD officers along with the newly appointed Schools dedicated Health and Safety Officers will continue to develop relationships and provide guidance/advice to the schools around the introduction of the new frameworks.

- *There was also the issue of the poor reputation of the council's management of property maintenance, including council house repairs. It was stated that upskilling of staff in project and contractor management would lead to improved supervision and better quality work and the avoidance of contractor 'on costs' which affect budgeting and cost control. The committee will be interested in learning further about progress in this area.*
 - It is recognised that historically the Council's management of property maintenance for schools and the operational estate (residential building maintenance is not within the remit of the Economic Development Directorate) may have had a poor reputation, and it was clear that there were issues associated with the historic frameworks around management/delivery and the commercial terms within the frameworks. We believe the new 2nd Generation Frameworks due to go live on 1st April are far more robust and the legal Framework Agreements are better drafted and place requirements on the contractors to provide specific management information at specified periods. Building Services (BS) has also introduced more commercial terms to include retentions, liquidated ascertained damages, warranties, parent company guarantees, and bonds which can be utilised where deemed necessary.
 - In addition BS have set out a training programme for staff to include:
 - Customer relationship management
 - Commercial Terms and Conditions of the Contracts
 - Contractor and Framework Management
 - National Schedule of Rates – pricing
 - Staff management and engagement
 - In conjunction with the development of the One Front Door (OFD) new and transparent communication processes have been developed within Building Services with the OFD consenting team providing the schools with clear communications and scheduled updates on progression of any works requested from first point of contact until full completion and commercial resolution, including planned inspections and sign off in agreement with the clients.

- BS has also been reviewing and re-aligning internal processes and procedures to align with the new frameworks including additional commercial controls around tender settlement reviews, contract award sign off and approvals, variations, and payment applications and as well as making changes to improve efficiencies including restructuring of teams and improved triaging and planning of works requests.
- BS will be undertaking a public relations exercise to promote the value that the service brings to the maintenance of the Council's Estate making sure that any building work done, using its services, is done safely, compliantly and cost effectively. In summary, BS has a new Framework, with a better set of tools and is better prepared to manage it than it has been in the past.
- *When the Committee queried how the rationalisation of depots would be undertaken they were assured that the review would be led by the suitability of the property and the health and safety requirements. Members were informed that an options report on site rationalisation was being developed and they requested that this report be circulated to the Committee for their consideration and potential further scrutiny, including the options for the Wedal Rd site replacement.*
 - As mentioned in the meeting the options paper is still being developed. Work is currently ongoing to gather the requirements from the existing depots. Once this has been completed the options paper will then go to the Asset Management Board for discussion. This is not likely to happen until early summer. Once this has been discussed at Asset Management board then we can look to engage with Scrutiny.

I hope this clarifies the situation for you.

Yn gwyir
Yours sincerely



Cynghorydd/Councillor Chris Weaver
Aelod Cabinet dros Gyllid, Moderneiddio a Pherfformiad
Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance