

## POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 JUNE 2019

Present: Councillor Walker(Chairperson)  
Councillors Berman, Bowen-Thomson, Henshaw, Lister, Mackie  
and McKerlich

### 1 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

### 2 : APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON & COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Noted that the Council at its Annual Meeting held on 23 May 2019 appointed Councillor David Walker as the Chair and the following Members to this Committee:

Councillors Berman, Bowen-Thompson, Henshaw, Lister, Mackie, McKerlich and Walker.

The Chairperson welcomed back the returning Members to the Committee. The Chairperson recorded the Committee's thanks to Cllr Joe Boyle and Cllr Lyn Hudson and welcomed Councillor Jane Henshaw, a new member elected to the Committee at the start of this 2019/20 municipal year.

### 3 : TERMS OF REFERENCE

Noted that the Annual Council, at its meeting on 23 May 2019, agreed the following terms of reference for the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee:

To scrutinise, monitor and review the overall operation of the Cardiff Programme for Improvement and the effectiveness of the general implementation of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, including:

- Council Business Management and Constitutional Issues
- Cardiff Council Corporate Plan
- Strategic Policy Development
- Strategic Programmes
- Community Planning & Vision Forum
- Voluntary Sector Relations
- Citizen Engagement & Consultation
- Corporate Communications
- Contact Centre Services and Service Access
- International Policy
- Cardiff Local Development Plan
- Equalities
- Finance and Corporate Grants
- Organisational Development
- Cardiff Efficiencies Programme

- E-Government
- Information and Communication Technology
- Council Property
- Commissioning and Procurement
- Carbon Management
- Legal Services
- Public Services Board

To scrutinise, monitor and review the effectiveness of the Council's systems of financial control and administration and use of human resources.

To assess the impact of partnerships with and resources and services provided by external organisations including the Welsh Government joint local government services. Welsh Government Sponsored Public Bodies and quasi-departmental non-governmental bodies on the effectiveness of Council services delivery.

To report to an appropriate Cabinet or Council meeting on its findings and to make recommendations on measures which may enhance Council performance and service delivery in this area.

#### 4 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

#### 5 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

#### 6 : WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2018-21

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation and Performance; Philip Lenz, Chief Human Resources Officer, and Anita Batten, HR People Partner to the meeting.

The Chairperson advised Members that in line with the Committee's constitutional responsibility for scrutiny of the implementation of the Council's human resources policies, Members would receive a progress update on the application of the Council's Workforce Strategy 2018-21. The Committee were involved in policy development of this 3 year strategy in May 2018, it was agreed by Cabinet in July 2018 and this meeting would assess progress to date.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement in which he said that this was scrutinised before Cabinet last year and there had been value in looking at the 5 key priorities over the past year.

Members were provided with a presentation after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members made reference to Agile working and asked what this means and how is it measured. Officers explained that a working group had been established under the Digital service area to look at how best to improve smarter working using technology.

With regard to Directorate Workforce Planning Action Plans, Members asked if they could contact any Director and ask to see their Plan with details. Officers advised that the Workforce Strategy has 5 components, the Workforce Plan is 1 component. Directorate Workforce Plans are produced yearly and cover appointment to retirement. There is also a retention policy, learning and development policy and engagement and support through Health and Wellbeing.

Members asked what was happening with PPDR's and performance reviews to individuals and teams. Officers stated that Performance Review is a day to day business activity; staff were currently closing down stages of the PPDR and setting objectives for the year ahead, this was part of corporate reporting. The Cabinet Member added that PPDR's are essential but they are business as usual, the target is 100% and high 90's are usually hit, this feeds into the workforce strategy. Members asked why PPDR's weren't integrated into the strategy, and were advised that they are now embedded. Outcomes are acted upon and the strategy supports the outcomes from PPDR's.

Members were interested to know more about GP services/Community Wellbeing and were advised that GP's promote Council Health and Wellbeing services at their surgeries; these are promoted internally too. Community Wellbeing was delivered by United Welsh and funded by Welsh Government, dealing with issues such as isolation, housing, debt etc. to which the Council signposts.

Members asked about the take up by staff of the Health and Wellbeing services and were advised that data is kept on attendance at Health and Wellbeing fayres, Manual Handling training, Sports massage etc. Members considered sight of this data would be useful.

With reference to Customer Service training, Members asked for more information on its roll out, targeting and measuring its effectiveness. Officers advised that the Customer Services Manager was leading on this, there were 3 levels of training and an e-learning aspect provided through the Academy and Customer service team. This was part of the Council's induction; dates are set for training, there is benchmarking and Action Plans set out measuring effectiveness. The Cabinet Member added that this could warrant a Committee review.

Members noted that in relation to Equality and Diversity lots of work had been undertaken on disability and stonewall, but more needed to be done with regards to BME. Members asked if there was a sense of a shift amongst the 51% more people applying for jobs, take up of jobs and also carers. Officers explained that there are regular meetings chaired by the Chief Executive /BME Equality Network, and Action Plans look at areas to prioritise. The profile of the Council is changing and more confidential information from employees would be useful for monitoring purposes. The Action Plan includes the recruitment process and in future there will be further development on the Race at Work Charter. A new portal would also help with anonymising application forms. The Council is committed to zero tolerance and

managers are expected to support equality in the workplace. Members considered it would be good to see progress over the next year and Officers stated that they will have a full year's cycle of data.

Members considered it would also be good to see information on progression as the equality strand needs to follow through learning and development. The Cabinet Member agreed with this and added that the Council has opened up, is now advertising vacant posts to internal and external applicants with the aim of reflecting the City we live in. There needs to be opportunity through application, take up of the position and further development; the Council needs to be advertised as an Employer and as an attractive place to work. Officers added that there had recently been an increase of up to 25% in the number of applications from a younger cohort.

Members made reference to the numbers of staff FTE's, noting a 20% drop over the last 10 years, and consequently budgetary expenditure had been considerably re-profiled. Members asked if there was a danger in slicing budgets year on year and there not being enough resource in the future. Members also asked if zero base budgeting had been considered in relation to workforce planning. The Cabinet Member stated that zero base budgeting was not under consideration, the Cabinet assesses through the budget and the Corporate Plan with short/medium/long term plans against Corporate priorities/services etc. He added that there was no doubt that the budget impacts upon workforce planning. Members considered that there had been a big change in the last 10 years in the services the Council offers and the employee profile, and that there needs to be a fundamental look at this. The Cabinet Member stated that every area had been forced to look at their own service areas as part of the budget setting process and workforce planning by Directorates; all services had been looked at, how they are run and whether the service is needed.

Members noted that the presentation detailed lots of processes and asked how success is measured and what outcomes are expected, as sickness absence is still increasing. The Cabinet Member stated that there are many outcomes to measure such as delivery against objectives within the Corporate Plan; delivery against all Wales performance figures; school results; productivity; ability to deliver services and serve our customers. Sickness Absence whilst critical is not the only outcome. Members considered it would make sense to link it with outcomes and report it to Committee, with evidence to show how outcomes are being met. Officers added that they are trying to change the workforce to reflect the people the Council serves, they would be able to provide figures that evidence that; this was an objective and is happening now; it a golden thread throughout the Corporate Plan. Members considered that outcomes, what we do and evidence of achieving them could be linked more clearly.

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

## 7 : SICKNESS ABSENCE

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation and Performance; Philip Lenz, Chief Human Resources Officer; Anita Batten, HR People Partner; and Gaynor Collins, Occupational Health Manager to the meeting

The Chairperson advised Members that they would now review the Council's Sickness Absence outturn for 2018/19, and its progress and plans for tackling sickness absence. Committee has tended to monitor sickness absence on a six monthly basis, particularly since January 2018.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Human Resources, Councillor Chris Weaver, to make a statement in which he said that he valued the focus the Committee and Works Council has on this serious issue for the Authority. The outturn is not the position the authority thought it would be in, or wants to be in.

The Chairperson invited the Chief HR officer Philip Lenz to present the position in respect of sickness absence; after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members were disappointed that despite PRAP recommending that officers look at Merthyr, they didn't do this until quarter 3 so the benefits of any lessons learned would not be seen in this year. Members gave examples such as Merthyr moving to half pay after 3 months sickness, whereas Cardiff moves the half pay after 6 months; and Merthyr only accepting self-certification for 3 days, whereas Cardiff accepts self-certification for 5 days. Members noted that 8 LA's in Wales are hitting target or better and asked what has gone wrong in Cardiff. The Cabinet Member stated that actually Merthyr's sickness absence has increased in the past year; Glasgow was excellent last year and is now in the bottom five; he added that there was lots going on nationally /external factors; Cardiff will always look at best practice and Merthyr's policy was examined in relation to what would work in Cardiff; there are different drivers for sickness absence especially in LA's of differing size. Cardiff has seen success in reducing and managing sickness absence in recent year, currently the bulk of sickness absence is non-work related stress. The Cabinet Member added that there had been decreases up to 2015 and a rise since.

Members could see there was an attempt to manage the issues but considered more could be done regarding preventative measures previously suggested by Committee. Members considered it was difficult to differentiate between work/non-work related stresses so this should be looked at as one; Members also noted that musculo-skeletal could also be stress related. Members considered there needed to be a push to proactively prevent sickness by looking at how we work, the systems are there but the take up is not. Officers stated that they do some preventative work such as physio following Risk Assessment not just after injury. Members stressed the importance of looking at issues identified in risk assessments and addressing them.

Members noted that often people have to wait a long time for hospital appointments and this was out of their hands. The Cabinet Member stated that it was difficult to tell if long term sickness was increased by outside factors. He added that quarter 1 was lower than 2015/16 and a multiplier is used for quarter 4 which is generally reliable and is why the figure was projected originally. This did not pan out this time and it was important to know why this was.

Members noted that the pension age was increasing, therefore it was possible that sickness rates could increase as the workforce ages; Members asked what

measures were in place to keep the workforce healthy as they approach retirement age. The Cabinet Member noted that the Council workforce age may be different to the rest of the population but this was a valid point to test.

Members asked if there was any data to determine any patterns in certain service areas etc. when the figures increased later in the year. The Cabinet Member reiterated that the multiplier had not proved accurate this time and discussions on this were ongoing, he committed to bringing this back to Committee later in the year when the data has been drilled down and analysed.

Members noted the percentage increase in the age range 45-64 years and that given the age range, caring responsibilities for young children and elderly parents could be a factor. Members asked if a breakdown of these factors is analysed. Officers stated that there is an Employee Carers Network and numbers have significantly increased, but attendance can be low due to caring responsibilities. The Carers Policy has been reviewed and they are looking at system developments in HR so that employees can indicate if they are a carer. Members considered this would be useful and a potential shift to line manager support through stages of sickness absence would be interesting to see. Officers referenced the Carers passport, where employees can talk through their requirements for support with their managers; this was particularly helpful where there is a change of manager.

Members considered there to be 2 different parts to the problem; Long-term and Short-term. With regard to Long term, Members noted that there used to be an option to access private health care with terms negotiated by the Council, employees could also add family members at a subsidised rate. This enabled quicker access to appointments and a quicker return to work. With regard to short term, Members were surprised by the number of people dismissed and how many periods of absence they had had and would be interested to see how long these people had worked for the Council. The Cabinet Member stated that it would depend on the reasons for absence such as chronic illness etc. Case conferences are carried out to get to the root of the problem and determine support or a way forward. Officers added that they have reflected some elements of private health care in some occupational health services provided as well as the counselling service. The Cabinet Member said that if private health care was something Committee wished to be explored then they could include in the letter to him and he would look into evidence of this.

Members noted that some service areas have higher sickness absence than others and noted that in waste the average was 3 weeks per year per employee, and asked why this was. Officers stated such analysis was part of the APSE review, and action plans have been put in place where there are higher levels of absence. The Committee has the ability to call back and review individual service areas. APSE data confirmed some local government roles carry a higher sickness absence risk, and there are some recommendations around prevention which Cardiff are already implementing in their Policy. Members reiterated that the results are not seen yet though and asked how long before targets are met and improvements made. The Cabinet Member said that from the responses of people taking up support services they are seeing pain reduction, however it was too early to see an impact on the net absence level.

In relation to 8 LA's performing better than Cardiff, Members asked if these LA's would be looked at to see what they have done to improve in this area. Officers said that the final position from all LA's was not known as yet but they would look at this collectively and share good practice; looking at general good practice and what would work for Cardiff.

Members asked for more information on referrals to Occupational Health. Officers stated that there are more people on long term sick than the previous year; whereas there used to be automatic referral at 4 weeks this had been stopped; there has been an impact on Occupational Health that wasn't expected. It was added that absences in relation to Mental Health and musculo- skeletal would be longer term absences; primary health care doesn't have capacity and are referring to the Council's Occupational Health services.

Members asked for more information on the Physio service at Lamby Way and were advised that the primary reason for this was preventative, to target those in work and maintain them in the workplace; the feedback shows there has been pain reduction and improved mobility.

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

## 8 : DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

The Chairperson asked if Members had any comments or amendments they would like to make before the report is presented to Full Council.

RESOLVED: to approve the Draft Annual Report 2018-19 for submission to Full Council.

## 9 : FORWARD WORK PROGRAMMING

Members were advised of forthcoming items for the next Committee.

The Chairperson advised Members that at this point in the year, Committee needs to consider its approach to constructing a work programme for the municipal year to July 2020. Committee's responsibilities fall within *three Cabinet portfolios*: the Leader; the Cabinet Member for Investment and Development; and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance.

Committee was advised of the options for approaching work programming and agreed that the Chair and Principal Scrutiny Officer gather potential items and circulate to members. The final draft incorporating all Members preferences, would be agreed at the September Committee.

Members were asked to inform the Principal Scrutiny Officer of any issues they want to scrutinise within the terms of reference.

10 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next committee will take place on Wednesday 10 July 2019, commencing at 4.30pm, and will take place in Committee Room 4.

The meeting terminated at 6.50pm