POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 MARCH 2020

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

65   :   APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lister, Councillors Ahmed,
Berman, Mackie and Bowen-Thomson may have to leave the meeting early due to
prior commitments.

66   :   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received in accordance with the Members Code of
Conduct.

67   :   MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2020 were agreed as a correct report
and signed by the Chairperson.

68   :   DIGITAL STRATEGY

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver (Cabinet Member Finance,
Modernisation & Performance with portfolio responsibility for human resources),
Isabelle Bignall (Chief Digital Officer), Chris Lee (Corporate Director, Resources) and
Emlyn Nash (Corporate Customer Services Manager – Digital Services) to the
meeting.

The Chairperson advised members that an introduction to the Digital Strategy had
been provided previously, it had been developed to deliver a 'Digital First' approach
as set out in the Corporate Plan. A great deal had been planned to enable the
Council to work more efficiently, reassign resources to more critical services, manage
rising costs and demand pressures whilst becoming a more agile and flexible
organisation.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Weaver to make a statement in which he said that
the launch of the strategy had been 2 years ago, however, it was still at an early
stage but a very exciting project.

The Chief Digital Officer provided Members with a presentation after which the
Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members:

- The Committee were advised that the Digital team were more than
  happy to provide a 'Bobi' demonstration during the course of
  another meeting.

  Members asked whether there are digitalisation plans which are

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not going so well. It was explained that there is support from a very good team and there has been a level of investment in Bobi which has enabled incredibly good progress. The organisation has come a long way. Bobi is limited at the present time but is still learning. It is a process being done every day. For example there were 50 conversations today 16 of which were not understood by Bobi, that figures is reducing all the time.

Members sought reassurance in relation to the default language and were advised that it immediately asks your language preference.

Members were advised that currently there was no competition from other authorities, other projects have been abandoned due to the difficulties with the Welsh language. Microsoft were challenged to build something that worked correctly in Welsh. People use Welsh to different levels and the Council now owns the language capabilities.

- Members noted the huge challenge of agile working particular given the present health scares and how performance management would be monitored. The Committee were advised the people have to be right, the process has to be right and then the technical backing needs to be right. The authority is technically prepared, lessons from other service areas have been learned, for example the trip undertaken to Amazon. People need to feel empowered and not to feel isolated whilst agile working. A strategy will be forthcoming in December.

Members commented that Office 365 is certainly better than the previously system but were concerned that due to the high level of security on the system, which is often being accessed out of hours, there was no facility to access out of hours support. It was noted that unfortunately, as a result of financial considerations, out of hours support will not be made available. Both the Council and Welsh Government are held to high standards in terms of cyber security. 51% emails received into the organisation are either spam or phishing.

Multi factor authentication has to remain to enable the Council to retrain the necessary certification. Whilst frustrating it is a requirement.
- Members queried the financial impact and impact on staff of the various digital items. Members were advised there is a business analyst and project manager and work is undertaking with the service delivery team and with the public before a process is added to the app or website. Fly tipping was a very challenging area bearing in mind the information that was provided for the return for Welsh Government. The process has to be right for all of those involved.

Members were interested to know whether the increase in reporting has affected the response/return time, whether staff have been overloaded and whether staff to be redeployed. It was noted that the data is on the return to Welsh Government, there has to be information as to how long each report takes. There was an increase when the service was digitised but it has now settled. People will report more, ie, fly tipping if it is easy to report. It helps to understand where resources need to be focussed.

Members were advised that even though there has been an increase in fly tipping report, the number of teams collecting the rubbish has not increased. The nature of the information obtained via the app enables routes to be planned, reports are condensed and the geo tag provides precise details of the location.

- Members commented that there is still information missing from the presentation including impacts, outcomes, benefits and the downsides of the various activities and whether or not those activities are managing the rising costs and demand pressures and increasing productivity.   It was explained that at the current time the technology is still being put in place to allow the efficiencies to come through. Whilst calls to C2C in some areas has reduced, it has increased in other areas. For the first period it was not going to reduce costs but overall it would. Reporting increases have not reached the point that it is costing the Council money.

The agile working pilot with social services provided both positive and negative material. The technology worked however the processes failed. As a technologist we are ready as an authority not quite.

Members asked whether information is collected from the app in relation to its use, the areas in which people are using and whether there is shifts in areas where fly tipping is being reported – particularly areas where historically there is an issue with fly tipping but there are less frequent reports from areas where people may not be in a position to engage in use of the app. Whilst Members were told that heat maps are created showing areas of fly tipping and reports are run on a regular basis, there is not requirement to provide personal details. However, consideration would be given to accessing historical information as to fly tipping areas to see whether there have been any shifting in areas so that the question of whether engagement with the app is the reason for the shift.

The CD, Resources advised that there is a business to deliver savings in the longer term. As the tool bed in, there will need to be a return to the business case. The first years saving against the Chat Bot has been realised.

Members sought information in relation to Smart Parking, the

awareness of parking sensors in parking spaces and how they are accessed? Members were advised that it is a 2g app which the Council did not develop. On the whole it is being downloaded by people coming into the city. It does need upgrading as it is not quite where it needs to be.

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

69   :   PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver (Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation & Performance with portfolio responsibility for human resources), Chris Lee (Corporate Director, Resources) Steve Robinson (Head of Commissioning and Procurement) and John Paxton (Strategy and Development Manager) to the meeting.

The Chairperson advised members that the recently refreshed Corporate Plan includes a procurement focussed step to deliver the Modernising and Integrating procurement focussed step to deliver the Modernising and Integrating Our Public Services Well-being objective – to strengthen social partnership arrangements in Cardiff by updating the procurement strategy by 2020.

Steve Robinson provided Members with a presentation after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members:

- The Chair asked for a brief outline of the Foundational Economy to be provided. The outline provided Members with information that it was about the core industries that are used by the public; social care, food and hospitals being examples. Those core industries need to be in a particular place to support everyday life. Through the delivery of those services the spend can be kept local. It was noted that a local provider would not get a weighting for being local; they are not looked on any more favourably. There will be a standard evaluation model.

- Members commented that £435m is an enormous amount of expenditure some of which will vary for year to year and queried what of that amount is day to day expenditure. Officers indicated that ultimately` the responsibility for managing budgets sits with the Directors and their staff but SMT gets quarterly reports on the overall spend. Particular areas of spend can then be targeted depending on when spend is increasing or decreasing.

- Members asked what the figure spent on repetitive expenditure was and whether it was either growing or dropping year on year. Officers advised that in terms of first 9 months of this year, overall spend had fallen due to a decrease in construction projects spend but there was an increase of revenue spend of £11.8m It will vary by category. The single biggest area of recurring spend is on Children's Services, it is being tracked against the reporting.

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- Members discussed the £103m spent on building and estates, much of which must be on maintenance projects where there is reliance on a trusted supplier, and how that the quality of work and value for money is monitored. It was noted that management of the contracts sit within the Directorates that have responsibility for those services. The procurement teams then provide support and challenge.

  Members raised previous issues with the quality and performance of work carried out by contractors and were advised that a set of performance measures are written into the contract which is part of the early management planning and that management of those contracts sit within the relevant Directorate.

  With a view to being able to provide assurance to SMT in respect of the quality and performance of contractors a new approach to contract management is being introduced which will be rolled out across all contracts. The measure will be contained within the new Directorate Delivery Plan which is being redeveloped which will establish and overall understanding about the position of performance and contract.

  Members noted that the current monitoring of quality and performance is inconsistent and inadequate.

- Members discussed delivery of Core, Non-Core and Voluntary Contractual Community Benefits and the changes referred to within the strategy which seeks to deliver Community Benefits across all appropriate Council contracts and utilises Community Benefits clauses in the tendering process. Members queried whether the 10% weighting figure could be higher.

- Members asked for further information in relation to other priorities namely the real living wage and the foundational economy and wow is that going to help with ethically based procurement practices and decisions. Officers referred to the significant increase in terms of the pre-qualification, an example being the increase in questions about modern slavery. It has to be balanced with keeping the document straight forward to allow smaller businesses to be able to respond. There are limitations on the questions that can be asked. Consideration has to be given to the differential between the organisation versus their tender which is about how they will deliver the contract.

  Members discussed the issue of whether there should be a mandatory requirement in respect of the real living wage. Officers advised that Welsh Government has currently consulted and is developing legislation, expected in July this year. They are grappling with the issue of employment legislation and are looking to be stronger in terms of the real living wage, although

employment legislation is not a devolved power.

Members queried whether a difference in the weighting could be applied to those that do pay the real living wage. The Cabinet Member and Officers felt that that suggestion was worth evaluating.

- Reference was made to previously conversations regarding the speed of contract replacements when a contractor has either been dismissed or has quit voluntarily. The urgency and continuity of work needs to be addressed, interim arrangements can be made whilst a tender is being run. The threshold figures will often dictate the length of time the contract takes to deliver. There can be procurement by way of restricted procedure which allows for a series of questions to be returned and considered. Those questionnaires have to follow the relevant procedure. It would be hoped to complete that particular progress within 3 months.

- Members enquired as to how we can help smaller local suppliers participate and engage in the process including those within the 3rd sector. Officers explained that they work closely with larger contractors to encourage use of the local supply chain. Some of the Social Value Measures are centred specifically around rewarding social value for those who commit to work with 3rd sector organisations.

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

70   :   SCRUTINY IMPACT ASSESSMENT MODEL

The Chairperson reminded Members that a Committee Task and Finish Inquiry had been ongoing to review the impact of the Council's Scrutiny function to date, and to develop a model to capture the benefits of scrutiny activity. A proposed model has been developed from two in depth pieces of primary research.

The model and recommendations were outlined by Nicola Newton (Principal Scrutiny Officer). Gladys Hingco (Research Officer) was also present at the meeting. The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members:

- Members discussed the time frame for the pilot and the quantifiable elements and the fact that there needs to be a level of review. It is accepted that the preliminary evaluation can be undertaken once a response is received from Cabinet, however, there needs to be review.

RESOLVED: To agree the report and forward for consideration by Cabinet at its earliest opportunity.

71   :   FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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RESOLVED: That the Forward Work Programme be noted.

72 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

There were no urgent items reported.

73 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 5 MAY 2020

The next scheduled meeting of the Policy Review and Performance Committee is on Tuesday 5 May 2020 at 4.30 pm.

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