

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2020

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

1 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Jane Henshaw.

2 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2020 were approved by the Committee as a correct record.

4 : CARDIFF CITY TRANSPORT SERVICES

The Committee received a report setting out the Cabinet's proposals to invest in Cardiff City Transport Services Limited and to secure the continuity of bus service provision in the City.

Members were advised that Annexe A and Appendices 1 to 8 to the report are not for publication as they contain exempt information of the description contained in paragraphs 14 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person {including the authority holding that information}) and 21 (public interest) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Appendix 6 to the report is not for publication as it contains exempt information of the description contained in paragraph 16 (Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED – That the public be excluded from the meeting at this point during consideration of this item as the Committee discussed exempt information of the description contained in paragraph 14 and paragraph 16 of Part 4 and paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The public may be excluded from the meeting by resolution of the Committee pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during discussion of this item.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member of behalf of the Committee to convey their comments.

5 : HOME & AGILE WORKING

The Committee received a report providing Members with a policy development briefing on the Council's home working and agile working arrangements and future

challenges following the Covid-19 pandemic. Members were given an opportunity to consider the Council's approach and specifically examine the delivery of services during the pandemic; understand the elements of those working arrangements; and identify opportunities for task and finish work that could inform the evolving approach to workforce planning.

Members were advised that in June 2020 the Cabinet considered a report entitled 'Restart, Recover, Renew' which addressed the immediate strategic issues facing the Council as it re-introduced Council services. The report set out a three-stage approach to the easing of lockdown and the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. The three elements were outlined as:

- Restart: Restarting and adapting a wide range of council services in the context of extended stringent social distancing requirements, in tandem with the evolution of national advice.
- Recover: Implementing a strategic response to help the city recover from the immediate crisis while adapting to an extended period of social distancing.
- Renew: Working closely with city partners, staff and citizens to set out the future we want for Cardiff post-crisis and how, together, we will make it happen.

Following the Committee's consideration of the 'Restart, Recover, Renew' report the Chairperson requested a written update on the issue of remote working. In response officers provided the summary attached at Appendix A of the report.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance; Paul Orders, Chief Executive; Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources; Isabel Bignall, Chief Digital Officer; Donna Jones, Operational Manager, Health and Safety; Tracy Thomas, Acting Head of Human Resources; and Phil Bear, Head of ICT.

The Cabinet Member made a brief statement and wished to put on record his thanks to the officers for the work they did at the start of the crisis to enable the major shift towards home and agile working. The Cabinet Member invited the Committee to consider what follows the Covid-19 crisis in terms of the opportunities for home and agile working.

Officers were invited to deliver a brief presentation on the home working model, the key services that enabled that to happen, the Council homeworking policy framework and the key principles emerging.

Members were invited to comment, raise questions or seek clarification on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- A Member asked whether the authority has the leadership, management supervision and performance management systems in place to manage the homeworking scenario effectively. The Cabinet Member considered that the crisis had demonstrated that there is strong leadership in the Council. However, it was fair to challenge the Senior Management Team in order to assess that. The Chief Executive considered that the performance of the organisation over the past six months had been highly corporate. There has been substantial cross-directorate working and the organisation has overwhelmingly achieved what has been asked

of it. Some issues have been identified in terms of management supervision but managers are managing staff well in terms of their outputs. Good industrial relations have also allowed the authority to deploy staff flexibly in order to address emerging issues. The Chief Executive accepted that the authority would need to further develop its performance management systems.

- The Acting Head of Human Resources stated that more work needed to be done to help staff understand how to work differently. In addition to the homeworking policy there will be mechanisms put in place to support it. For instance, managers and staff have been provided with a 'Homeworking Etiquette' document. A management development exercise is needed focussing on the differences between managing staff in an office environment compared to managing staff remotely. One of the biggest culture changes in this regard will be managing the outputs of staff.
- Members asked how managers are to marry their support to staff in terms of their health and wellbeing against their performance in terms of output and the fact that the two issues may be interlinked. The Chief Executive welcomed the comments and supported the view that health and wellbeing and performance are interlinked. The authority has restarted the PPDR process which provides an opportunity for supportive conversations between management and staff. There is also an increasing emphasis on staff wellbeing sessions and the counselling service. The Operational Manager Health and Safety provided a summary of the position in terms of health and wellbeing and the organisational approach to supporting staff. The officer supported the view that at the end of a prolonged crisis, such as the coronavirus pandemic, staff will need additional support in terms of their health and wellbeing, particularly mental health issues. A small number of staff are already receiving support because they have been shielding or are medically vulnerable and have felt isolated.
- The Chief Executive stated that one of the challenges facing the authority in policy terms was getting the balance right between agile working and time in the core office accommodation.
- A Member asked whether the authority was undertaking assessments of personal circumstances, as there would be some staff who may not be able to work from home due to any number of personal or domestic reasons. Those staff may be reluctant to bring those issues to the attention of the employer. The Operational Manager Health and Safety stated that the homeworking survey undertaken included a number of questions around personal circumstances. It was accepted that some staff were unable to accommodate homeworking. Assessments are being undertaken. Some staff have been brought back into the workplace because their home environment is unsuitable. A Homeworking Project Group has been established where representatives from each service area are able to share experiences and good practice.
- The Chief Digital Officer provided an overview of the achievements made in terms of providing staff with ICT equipment and the systems supporting home working whilst transitioning to agile working over a very short timeframe. The Corporate Director Resources stated that some of the cost has been offset by the Welsh Government's Covid Recovery Fund. The Head of ICT advised Members that

there has been a move towards mobile enabled equipment in recent years. At present 58% of staff have mobile enabled kit that support agile working.

- A Member asked whether, in order to support health and wellbeing of their staff, managers are encouraging staff to take their annual leave and not work longer hours etc. The Chief Executive stated that the Senior Management Team is focussing on that precise issue. The Operational Manager of Human Resources advised that staff will be permitted to carry over additional annual leave at the end of the leave year. SMT have received a report on identifying how much leave has been taken and booked across every service area. Managers discuss how best to encourage their staff to take annual leave and spend some time away from work.
- Officers confirmed that long-term agency staff have continued to be paid during the pandemic. Other agency staff are also paid if they have symptoms or are required to self-isolate so that they don't feel that have to come into work.
- Members asked whether there have been any developments in terms of the Core Office Strategy. The Chief Executive advised that there are a number of workstreams relating to that strategy, some of which have been discussed. Modelling and a discussion now needs to be undertaken in relation to agile working policy and the implications for the core office accommodation. A report on the core office accommodation issue is anticipated to be brought forward in December or January. The Chief Executive considered that the experience the authority has had during the year will have implications for the strategy.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member of behalf of the Committee to convey their comments.

6 : WORK PROGRAMMING 2020/21

RESOLVED – That the Committee:

- (1) notes the schedule of Policy Review & Performance (PRAP) Scrutiny Committee meeting dates for 2019/20;
- (2) agreed that an informal task and finish research exercise proceeds, focusing on remote/home working;
- (3) approves the continuation of the Committee's Performance Panel, an extension of the Panel's work, and agree nominations to the Panel.

7 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were presented.

8 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 4.30PM 10TH NOVEMBER 2020

The meeting terminated at 7.00 pm