

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 MAY 2021

Present: Councillor Walker(Chairperson)
Councillors Ahmed, Berman, Cowan, Henshaw, Lister and Mackie

17 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Sarah McGill.

18 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

19 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 20 January 2021 and 24 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

20 : CAPITAL AMBITION: ORGANISATIONAL RECOVERY AND RENEWAL - TO FOLLOW

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Huw Thomas, Leader of Cardiff Council; Cllr Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation & Performance; Paul Orders, Chief Executive; Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resource and Gareth Newell, Head of Performance & Partnerships to the meeting.

Members were advised that this week the Cabinet would consider how the Council aims to adapt to the challenges and opportunities of the new operating environment as the city emerges from the current phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. The reports set out the steps proposed to deliver a *Recovery and Renewal Programme* and this was therefore an opportunity for pre-decision scrutiny as Cabinet approval was sought for the establishment of a Capital Ambition: Recovery and Renewal Programme.

The Chairperson invited the Leader, Cabinet Member and Chief Executive to make statements in which they explained the Council's role in responding to the pandemic; the importance of working with both private and public sector partners going forward; looking at what worked well during the pandemic to underpin business as usual going forward; listed the principals in set out in the report that will inform the effective transformation of services and that a report would be brought back to Cabinet in September for the final strategy after a period of consultation. Members were also advised of the limited return to County Hall while social distancing remains in place; the longer term changes such as hybrid working, a review of staff accommodation and locality working; the assessment of staff roles into four categories and the multi-pronged programme drawn together with various work strands, which was visible to Members and that there would be a review in 12 months' time.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Discussing the Hybrid model of working, Members sought reassurances that employees will have a choice and that their personal circumstances will be taken into consideration when deciding how they work in the future. The Leader and Chief Executive explained that they are alert to employees circumstances and will spend the next 2/3 months working on the model; consideration will be given to personal circumstances and their physical and mental wellbeing; the issues are central to the discussion with Trade Unions going forward and this has been how the initial phase of return to County Hall had been prioritised. Members considered that the wording in the report could reflect this more clearly.

Members discussed homeworking and that while welcoming the reduction in staff sickness levels, they had noticed that there have been some issues around contacting staff and timescales for responses. Members considered that there should be befriending groups for new employees. Officers explained that new employees have been into County Hall socially distanced as well as participating in online training sessions. The young people apprenticeship trainee cohort have been socialising on various social media platforms and doing lots of things together. The Chief Executive added this was an important consideration in the longer term with regards to organisational ethos and that the right balance of virtual and face to face was needed in the hybrid model of working; it was hoped that improved sickness levels would be maintained in the hybrid model but it was important to support managers to ensure a consistency of approach. When asked how productivity is being measured, the Chief Executive explained it was on a service by service basis against the outcomes of the organisation. The Leader considered that contact and timescale issues could also reflect the pressure the Council has been under for the past 15 months. Members appreciated the pressures on staff but could see the need for a report on employee performance and accountability for those working from home. . They pointed out that If there were going to be time delays in service responses then members should be kept in the loop.

With regard to culture, Members asked about who would drive the changes, know what needs to be done and how it would fit into what is required. The Chief Executive explained it would be his responsibility and it would be a case of services reflecting on what has been done well over the pandemic and how this can be locked in and driven forward; it would not be a fast process but sustained work with middle and senior managers, focussing on outcomes and set tasks and checking in with individuals and teams; there needs to be reinforcement of organisational culture. There may need to be realignments in the longer term and structures may change, as well as employee's terms and conditions which will require the updating of employee contracts. Officers stressed the importance of employee engagement during culture change.

Members asked when it was likely that they could return to the Council Chamber and what the timescales were for introducing hybrid working. The Leader advised that the Head of Democratic Services had been asked to undertake work on the hybrid model and he was best placed to provide this information.

Discussing partnership working, Members asked how committed other members of the Public Services Board were to partnership/locality working. The Leader explained there was an appetite to work differently; partnership working in Cardiff has

always been strong and has been strengthened further during the pandemic. The Chief Executive added that there has been a positive shift; UHB are planning for the future, building up community infrastructure, taking joint/hub opportunities, location sharing etc. There was a good level of multi-agency working.

With regards to multi-agency working, Members asked how this would work in practice. The Leader explained it would be a combination of agencies sharing physical spaces and also teams made up of people from different agencies.

Members asked if there were any areas of partnership working that had not gone well and needed improvement and also what the Council and private sector experiences had been. The Leader stated that he has had very positive feedback; business groups and stakeholders have acknowledged the role of the Council in delivering financial support and as a conduit to Welsh Government when they felt they were not represented, e.g. the hospitality sector. The Leader was not aware of areas where partnership working had not worked well operationally, strategically he considered it had worked well and the Council had been supported by the private sector. The Chief Executive added that there has been a huge increase in the level of integration between Health professionals and Council services and this would influence the shaping of future services over and above regional partnerships; the Leader considered there was a role for local government in public health going forward.

Members asked for more information on locality working. The Chief Executive explained that this would be co-ordinated working such as, discharge teams in hospitals, and the very integrated relationship between the NHS and care homes. Also between schools and Into Work Services, with advice and benefits services going into schools, recognising the centrality of secondary schools to the local community. Services would be looked at holistically, there would also be opportunities for staff touch down points throughout the City. When asked how many localities there would be, the Chief Executive stated that there would be no rigidity, they would be based on the broader community and how they are supported; there was still work to be done on this. The Leader explained he would lead on this work as Chair of the PSB.

Discussing the digital aspect of the proposals, Members asked about budgeting and back office support. Officers explained that there would be a significant amount of technical spend in-year. Welsh Government has supported some of this through the Covid hardship fund. Also there was a lot of technical infrastructure already in place such as Office 365 and this same hardware enabled the Council to switch quickly to remote working. The digital transformation; end to end process for customers etc. is contained in the existing budget, this includes back office support however some roles will shift and ICT will be at the forefront of the transformation agenda.

With regard to the Digital First approach, Members asked how it could be ensured that people are not left behind and digitally excluded and that important information is not lost in the myriad of digital information that people get on a daily basis. Officers agreed this was a challenge when carrying out consultations, going forward it would be digital for most then looking at where responses are not coming in and targeting with a different approach and using the community to help; this hybrid approach would be part of the new Citizen Engagement Strategy.

Discussing the Overall Programme – management and monitoring, Members noted it was a huge project and would like to see a 12 month action plan with a timeline so that there is accountability and Committee can review it. The Chief Executive explained that Chris Lee was the Senior Responsible Officer, with himself, and the programme plan was being developed; this would be broken down into component parts with timescales which Committee can then monitor. It was noted that accountability and management of outcomes would be built into it.

Members considered there could be action plans and timescales in place for partnerships going forward too and the Leader thought this was a fair point and hopefully could be picked up. It was important that where there was multidisciplinary working, some staff may work together but report to different managers, so there has to be accountability; there was also accountability to elected Members.

Discussing Performance Management, Members asked what the performance management framework would look like. Officers explained there was new national legislation with regard to this with a big emphasis on self-assessment. The Council has put several systems in place, such as involving scrutiny, examining how performance talks to the Corporate Plan; an emphasis on whether services are being delivered effectively and peer assessment once per electoral cycle.

Discussing general points, Members considered there was a lack of detail/content on business relationships in the document. The Leader explained there were other reports as part of this report suite with more information, such as the City Recovery Report; the Leader explained that there was in depth engagement with businesses and the private sector were letting the Council know what they need going forward, and the Council has the convening powers to bring things together. The Leader gave the example of Central Square with the BBC and now Legal and General where the Council sets the context and takes leadership and the private sector take up the opportunities.

Members considered that Education, Universities and Higher Education could feature more strongly in the document. Members discussed the strengthening of partnerships with Higher Education and Universities and them potentially becoming part of the PSB.

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

21 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Members were asked to note the briefing on '*Capturing and Reporting the Impact of Scrutiny*'; Members were aware of the work the committee has done in this area previously and this is simply confirmation that a system is now in place to capture and record the data. Members were reminded that they can now make recommendations following scrutiny of issues at committee, not just through task and finish work. The Chair has to make any recommendations clear at the end of letters then they will be responded to formally, monitored for progress, and reported back on 6 monthly.

An update on correspondence arising from recent scrutiny meetings was provided to Members.

Members were asked to note the Committee's Forward Work Programme for June and July 2021, and that since publishing the Programme there have been some adjustments to the Cabinet Forward Plan and therefore Committee's plan will be adjusted accordingly. Corporate Property Strategy has moved to July and Homeworking policy has moved to September.

22 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

23 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 9 JUNE 2021

The meeting terminated at 6.55 pm

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