

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 JANUARY 2022

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

55 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Lister advised that he would be joining the meeting at 5pm due to work commitments.

56 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Joel Williams declared a personal interest in Item 4 as Chairman of the Board of Trustees and Directors of Cartref Care Homes in Cardiff.

57 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

58 : PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT & DATA STRATEGY - TO FOLLOW

The Chairperson advised Members that the context for this scrutiny was that the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 placed a requirement on the Council to take ownership of its own improvement and develop a performance and governance system that allows for the annual assessment of performance, that can be reviewed by an appointed external panel.

The new performance framework the Council proposes to put in place includes engagement with scrutiny as a significant part of the governance of performance in Cardiff, alongside the formal role given to the Governance & Audit Committee in the Act. So, this was an opportunity for Members to consider how the Council is responding to meet the new legislative requirements and to make observations on the Performance and Planning Framework and the Data Strategy in advance of a report to Cabinet in either February or March 2022.

Members were advised that this is one report with two distinct but closely linked strategies and, as such, the presentation was split in two. There would be an opportunity at the end of the Performance Management presentation for questions before moving on to the Data Strategy presentation.

For this item, the Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation & Performance, with portfolio responsibility for Human Resources; Paul Orders, Chief Executive; Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources; Kane Woodking, Senior Business Analyst in Resources, Digital Services; Gareth Newell, Head of Performance and Partnerships; Dylan Owen, OM Policy & Improvement and Chris Lloyd, Enterprise Systems & Data Manger.

For the first section of this item, the Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member and Chief Executive to make brief opening statements. Members were provided with a presentation after which they were invited to make comments, observations and ask questions.

Members sought clarity on the difference between the Internal Performance Panel and the External Peer Performance Panel. Members were advised that the next Administration would set up the External Peer Performance Panel and its Terms of Reference, but it would essentially be a Task and Finish whereas the Internal Performance Panel are involved in the process at three points throughout each year.

Members referred to Robust Performance Dialogue and asked if the current system of two PPDR's per year was enough and whether there should be more regular discussions between staff and managers. It was noted that this would be considered in the new guidance which would need to provide guidance on skills for managers to deliver this consistently across the organisation. There was certainly a need for quality conversations between staff and managers on a regular basis.

Members welcomed the quarterly snapshots that had been proposed and asked if these would look at trends and how directorates could correct issues of concern internally quickly. Members were advised that Senior Management are alerted if performance data is identified as an issue, and this is discussed at top level.

Members discussed training for Scrutiny Committee Members on performance data and were advised that there would be a lot of induction training available after the elections in May, it was noted that performance training was important.

Whilst Members welcomed the new framework and progress made to date, they asked about potential outcomes if there was a decline in performance in certain areas or the Council as a whole. It was explained that the external peer panel would issue a report to Ministers and there was a potential for sanctions and/or interventions into the Council.

Discussing where the budget would sit in the new Performance Framework, Members were advised that there would still be separate reports, but Directors recognised the linkage between Finance and Performance Information. Where there is an overspend, a plan of action to address it is expected from the Director as they are made fully aware of their agreed spend limits.

Members considered it was important that the two performance panels do not duplicate work or overlap.

For the second part of this item, the Chairperson invited Gareth Newell to make an opening introduction. Members were provided with a presentation after which they were invited to make comments, observations and ask questions.

Councillor Joel Williams declared a personal interest in Item 4 as Chairman of the Board of Trustees and Directors of Cartref Care Homes in Cardiff.

Members welcomed the new system, especially the potential ability to see a holistic overview of services and how they tie together. Members asked about a timescale

for this. Members were advised that the Council are leading on this and will complete its element of the work in the next financial year, with other bodies expected to be completed in 18/24 months.

Members discussed the disparity in Council services they have experienced throughout the pandemic with staff working from home. Members considered there could be some work undertaken on this, comparing performance before the pandemic with home working during the pandemic.

Members asked how the data priorities are selected and were advised that they are determined by improvement objectives currently but this will move to performance leads going forward when upskilling has taken place.

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

59 : BUDGET CONSULTATION 2022/23

Members were advised that this was an opportunity for an update on the Provisional Settlement and the Council's budget modelling, along with news of the budget consultation. Members were reminded that the Council's Budget Consultation for 2022/23 was now live having been agreed at a special Cabinet last week. Therefore, Committee's task was to contribute to the consultation and feed any concerns and observations to the Cabinet to inform Cabinet discussion and debate in preparing their final 2021/22 budget proposals, which would come to committee in February.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation & Performance, Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources and Gareth Newell, Head of Performance and Partnerships for this item.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a brief opening statement. Members were provided with a presentation after which they were invited to make comments, observations and ask questions.

Members asked if there was a possibility of Council Tax increasing and were advised that this was not considered as a first option, there would be discussions in the coming weeks.

Members asked about Covid expenses, asking what planning was underway for post April when the hardship fund stops and for the possibility of another wave. Members were advised that the settlement was generous, but if there was another wave then there would discussion across the UK and with Welsh Government.

Members asked how much money had been received from the Hardship fund in the past 2 years, and how this figure helps with planning for any future waves. Officers advised that they would share the published information on this, which is contained in the monitoring reports and also in the budget report to Committee's February meeting, they would see the planning for this.

Members asked about savings and were advised that the level of settlement had allowed a focus on efficiency rather than savings from front line services. Asking if

schools were being asked for efficiency savings, Members were advised that yes they were.

Discussing Council Tax Benefit, Members were pleased that Welsh Government was funding the increase in this but noted that a loss of Grants in general to the Council could be a risk and would be monitored.

Members noted the results of the Ask Cardiff Survey had prioritised Children and Vulnerable Adults and asked if this had impacted on the proposals. Members were advised that there would always be some projects that were not identified as a priority but would benefit the public as a whole.

Members asked about the level of efficiency savings and were advised that £9million in efficiency savings was being sought. Comparable data with other local authorities was not available at this time.

Members discussed the engagement of young people with the survey and noted that due to the pandemic this had had to be online. Engagement of young people was recognised as being important and would remain a focus going forward.

Members asked that Committee have sight of the Ask Cardiff Survey prior to it going out next time, noting that they have asked for this on a number of occasions previously but have not had it.

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

60 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Members had been provided with the correspondence generated by the Committee over the last three months of 2021, and where required the Cabinet responses received to date.

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Performance Panel meets with Cabinet and officers informally on Monday 14th February at 11.30am to discuss the Corporate Plan targets and Members were encouraged to attend.

61 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

62 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

23rd February 2022, 10.00am

The meeting terminated at 6.55 pm