

Date: 14 July 2022

Councillor Huw Thomas,
Leader,
Cardiff Council,
County Hall,
Cardiff
CF10 4UW



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Dear Huw,

PRAP Scrutiny Committee 13 July 2022: Stronger Fairer Greener

On behalf of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee my sincere thanks for attending Committee on 13 July 2022 to present the administration's statement of policy for the forthcoming term. Please also pass on my appreciation to the Chief Executive, Paul Orders, and the Head of Performance and Partnerships, Gareth Newell, for supporting the scrutiny. The Committee and I particularly welcome your commitment to attend in person in the future and wish you a speedy recovery. I have been asked to pass on Members' comments and observations following discussion at the Way Forward.

A bold and ambitious agenda

The Committee considers the Stronger Fairer Greener policy statement represents a bold and ambitious agenda for the City. As you pointed out there are many commitments contained within it that sit under this Committee's Terms of Reference and, as such, we will take those forward to inform our work programming discussions. Topics such as hybrid working, digital development, asset management and partnership working.

Socially responsible procurement

Referencing a priority within the Finance, Modernisation & Performance Portfolio to '*Strengthen our Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy to keep Council spending local and more accessible to SME'S,*' the Committee expressed an interest in how the Council can strengthen its procurement strategy to enable local supply chains. We note that there has been strong progress to date with a Key Performance Indicator revealing 70% of Council spend is within the Cardiff region. We will be adding a report on procurement achievements to date to our list of work

programming topics, noting that Cardiff's procurement function is an exemplar and delivers the service on behalf of a number of other Welsh Local Authorities.

Delivering priorities in economic uncertainty

Members were keen to explore the impact of the cost-of-living increases and how they will challenge the Council in delivering its priorities. We note your view that inflation is going to be the major issue for forthcoming years, both in the demand pressure it creates on Council services and on the costs of service delivery. We note you will hold on to the ambition of the statement and Members urge that in developing and delivering your policy agenda the more difficult messages are delivered with kindness.

Partnership working

The Committee is firmly of the view that partnership working is more important than ever. We were therefore pleased to hear that the policy statement will be integrated with the partnership and budgetary frameworks of the Council. We heard that our partners on the Public Services Board have a unity of purpose and in fact had sought policy alignment on Well-being Objectives 5 years ago. We note officers have been tasked with reviewing how well that policy alignment is working to inform the revised 5-year Well-being Plan, forthcoming in the autumn. We will factor scrutiny of the revised Plan into to our work programme during the consultation period.

Resourcing priorities

Members highlighted that there will clearly be difficult resourcing decisions to be made to deliver on this policy statement. We were therefore pleased to hear that the policy statement had been fully discussed with Cabinet members and senior managers before publication. We note that budget discussions will need to take place in due course to ensure a deliverable programme that fits with the budgetary framework.

Capital Programme

Members are keen to establish what measures the Council has taken to mitigate against inflation in terms of the ambitious capital programme. We note that many capital projects are grant or match funded by Welsh Government, or indeed invest-to-save projects. We were pleased to hear that enhanced monitoring of the capital

programme is now in place to avoid accruing capital underspends, and that management of the capital programme is tighter and spend more closely profiled. We note the Chief Executive's view that within the 2023/24 budget planning process there is a much greater emphasis on the capital programme.

Performance assessment

The Committee was interested in how you approach the performance assessment of Cabinet members in delivering the portfolio promises set out in the policy statement. We note you would expect an informal, performance focussed, monthly meeting, assessing the Member's progress against the policy statement. We also note that timelines against the priorities and targets within portfolios are clearly set out in the Corporate Plan each year and enable a full holding to account.

External uncontrollable factors

Members raised concerns about the uncertainty of our economic future, from external uncontrollable unknowns. Inflation, BREXIT, the Ukrainian war, and the instability of national leadership combine to present an uncontrollable challenge and the Council will need to take prudent steps in responding to the current crisis. We are assured by your view that the Council can continue to achieve with strong policies and capable officers.

Finally, on behalf of the Committee, thank you once again for briefing us on the administration's policy statement. With your support, I look forward to continuing the valuable internal challenge established between this Committee and the Cabinet. As this was a briefing there are no requests or recommendations following the scrutiny, and therefore I will not expect a response.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR JOEL WILLIAMS
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee
Leaders of Opposition Parties – Adrian Robson, Rhys Taylor & Andrea Gibson
Paul Orders, Chief Executive
Gareth Newell, Head of Performance & Partnerships
Mr David Hugh Thomas, Chair, Governance & Audit Committee
Chris Pyke, OM Governance & Audit
Tim Gordon, Head of Communications & External Relations
Jeremy Rhys, Assistant Head of Communications and External Affairs
Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services
Debi Said, Cabinet Support Officer
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Business Manager
Andrea Redmond, Committees Support Officer.