

Date: 20 October 2022

Councillor Huw Thomas, Leader
Councillor Chris Weaver,
Cabinet Member, Finance, Performance & Modernisation
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Dear Huw & Chris,

PRAP 18 October 2022: Annual Well-being Report 2021/22

On behalf of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee thank you for facilitating pre-decision scrutiny of the Annual Well-Being Report 2021/22. Please also pass on our thanks to the Chief Executive, Corporate Directors and Head of Performance for the presentation and overview of end-of-year performance. We offer the following comments and observations for your consideration. You will find our requests and recommendations at the end of the letter.

An improved performance framework

The Committee recognises that there have been many successes in 2021/22, however notes the big challenges highlighted in the Annual Well-being Plan; increasing demand in Children and Adult Services; recycling rates; cost-of-living pressures; and the overall financial position. We are therefore reassured that the Council has in place an improved, more effective, performance framework, together with a robust self- assessment procedure based on a broad number of data sources that enables a balanced assessment of performance.

Inherent uncertainty

The Committee notes that the next 6 months will present significant financial challenges and will require a significant savings programme, identifying efficiencies that align with clear guidance from the Cabinet to protect the vulnerable, vital services and support the workforce. We note that at this time of considerable uncertainty the strategy is considered the right one in planning for the worst-case scenario. Major demand issues, work pressures, interest rate and energy price increases mean that in setting a budget this year the Council is facing inherent uncertainty, and this Committee is keen to assist in the budget setting journey as solutions are explored.

Supporting the workforce

Members are concerned that the workforce faces many additional pressures, not least from the uncertainty of the Council's budget position. We note that you will continue to provide well-being services and encourage management visibility. You reassured us that the Council has in place structures to reassure staff, to maintain good communications, drawing on and enhancing existing well-being services. We support working more closely with trade unions and stress the importance of setting out how staff can expect to be treated.

Members unanimously support the importance of constructive industrial relations. We note you will analyse of the outcome of the Council's request to staff for expressions of interest in voluntary redundancy and **request** that you write to the Committee with details, keeping Members advised of the likelihood of compulsory redundancies.

Arts & Culture

Members consider it important that the Well-being Plan supports residents of all ages and avoids working in silos. The Committee considers that an opportunity has been missed within the Well-being Plan to acknowledge the impact that Arts and Culture can have on general well-being. Current references and indicators for Arts and Culture are focussed on economic development rather than well-being and Members **recommend** that you give more thought to this.

Members would also like to see more focus on the quality of footways, given the Active Travel aspirations.

Customer satisfaction

The Committee re-iterated the concern of the Performance Panel that customer satisfaction with Council services in 2021/22 is 47% against a target of 70% for 2021/22 (WBO 7.17). We are concerned that levels of satisfaction have fallen by 20% and are at their lowest level in 5 years. We note this represents a general trend across public service organisations and you would like to see an improvement.

Improving accessibility

This was the Committee's first consideration of the Annual Well-being Plan, and as such Members commented that the volume and complexity of information had been somewhat overwhelming. Given that scrutiny of significant corporate planning documents falls within this Committee's Terms of Reference and many Members are

new to the Committee, we would welcome the opportunity to engage in a more accessible way, that allows more focus on performance detail.

Requests following this scrutiny:

- That you share the outcome of the Council's request for expressions of interest in voluntary redundancy with the Committee, keeping Members advised of the likelihood of compulsory redundancies.

Recommendations to be monitored following this scrutiny:

To summarise, the Committee makes one formal recommendation, set out below. As part of the response to this letter I would be grateful if you could state whether the recommendation is accepted, partially accepted or not accepted and summarise the Cabinet's response. If the recommendation is accepted or partially accepted I would also be grateful if you could identify the responsible officer and provide an action date. This will ensure that progress can be monitored as part of the approach agreed by Cabinet in December 2020.

Recommendation	Accepted, Partially Accepted or Not Accepted	Cabinet Response	Responsible Officer	Action Date
That Cabinet considers the impact that Arts and Culture can have on community well-being as well as on economic development and reflects this in future Well-being Plans.				

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended PRAP Scrutiny Committee to assist us in consideration of the Annual Well-Being Report 2021/22. I would be grateful for a response to the request and recommendation proposed.

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
Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources
Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities
Gareth Newell, Head of Partnerships and Performance
Dylan Owen, Head of Cabinet Office
Chris Pyke, OM Governance & Audit;
Tim Gordon, Head of Communications
Jeremy Rhys, Assistant Head of Communications and External Affairs
Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager
Debi Said, Cabinet Support Officer
Alison Taylor, Cabinet Support Officer
Andrea Redmond, Committee Support Officer