

My Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Comm Papers/Correspondence

Date: 26 June 2019

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Dear Huw,

### **Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 10 July 2019**

On behalf of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee thank you for attending Committee with the Annual Well-Being Report 2018-19. Please also pass on our thanks to Councillor Chris Weaver, Paul Orders, Dylan Owen and Gareth Newell for the comprehensive presentation. We offer the following comments and observations for your consideration and response.

#### **Variety of terminology**

The report contains a variety of terminology to reflect the improvement or otherwise in progress including colour coding and other means. This makes it difficult for the reader to assess the outcomes consistently and could be potentially confusing to members of the public. My invitation to meet Gareth Newell with other committee members separately to review rating terminology and presentation was accepted. The benefit of feedback from an impartial source was understood with the aim of making the report accessible to all.

#### **The self-assessment**

The Committee was keen to understand the rationale in respect of the self-assessment which identified objectives as satisfactory when there was significant variance in the level of achievement of the key performance indicators (KPIs). The Committee was advised that the KPIs were not the sole source of information and that reports from the Auditors Inspectors and Regulators had also been taken into account to provide a balanced assessment which was then challenged and moderated by the Cabinet to provide a rounded view of council performance and its ranking. However, the variety of information sources and the validity of factors used

to determine the self-assessment rating were not clear in the report and this should be included as one of the potential areas for improvement. Self -assessment, by its very definition, can vary in quality and objectivity.

Where the 2018/19 actual performance greatly exceeds the target for the following year, the target needs to be changed to reflect that or, if there are unusual factors for it remaining lower, that needs to be explained to avoid the target from being regarded as incoherent or unchallenging. The committee would expect all targets to stretch the organisation rather than appear to remain static and for this to be clearly demonstrated.

### **Key Performance Indicators with no data**

It was identified that approximately 25% of KPI's contained within the report had no targets or associated performance data. A key performance indicator has, by definition, some measurement attached to it otherwise it cannot be considered a KPI. 25% also appears to be a very high proportion of the Council's business which is unmeasured and the rationale for that level was not justified or explained in the report.

It was explained that the many of these KPIs related to Social Services and to the Well-Being agenda although committee members recall similar situations in previous years. It was stated that these were new indicators and no targets had been set. The committee considered that this should have been explained in the report and that appropriate measures should be identified at the earliest opportunity to resolve this anomaly and avoid this high level of unmeasured and untargeted activity in future years. It is rare, some would suggest unnecessary, that work performed and its outcomes and productivity levels cannot be quantified in some way.

### **Corporate Landlord**

The Committee considered that the implementation of the Corporate Landlord model had the potential to provide benefits and the report included some significant objectives. Information regarding the backlog of essential maintenance for corporate buildings was estimated to be approximately £100m but this could be as high as £250m. Some clarity was needed regarding the financial implications on the capital programme of this maintenance backlog. The committee was advised that property

condition surveys had been undertaken as part of a comprehensive review of council stock. These surveys had provided a greater depth of knowledge and understanding of the corporate estate which had updated the previously illustrative figures. It was identified that the key strategies related to the corporate estate would be brought to Cabinet in the near future along with maintenance priorities and the Committee stated that it would welcome being involved in a pre-decision scrutiny of these strategies.

The committee acknowledged the work undertaken on the implementation of Universal credit and with the management of 5000 queries when an initial target of 1500 was set. This target would be reviewed this year as the spike in queries was the result of the initial implementation of Universal Credit. Now that it is in place the number of queries is expected to reduce substantially.

### **Fostering and adoption**

The Committee expressed its concerns with the rising number of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) and the need to increase the levels of adoption. The members were informed that increasing adoption was a key part of the Council's policy and that action was being taken in respect of IFAs. The committee welcomed the long awaited parity in the target set for looked after children compared with other children.

### **New Indicators**

Members of the committee recommended that additional performance indicators be considered to include:

- The impact and levels of poverty
- The number of new jobs created through Council Apprenticeships
- Contractors of the Council paying its employees a living wage

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 2018-19

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Walker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "David" and "Walker" being capitalized and prominent.

**COUNCILLOR DAVID WALKER**  
**CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation &  
Performance,  
Paul Orders, Chief Executive  
Gareth Newell, Head of Partnerships and Performance  
Dylan Owen – Head of Cabinet Office  
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager  
Claire Deguara  
Cabinet Support Officers.