

Date: 19 March 2019



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Councillor Chris Weaver,
Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation & Performance,
Cardiff Council,
County Hall,
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Councillor Weaver,

Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 13 March 2019

As Chair of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee, thank you for attending Committee to update Members on the progress being made in respect of the Delivery of the Capital Ambition Programme. Members were delighted to welcome Chris Lee, the new Corporate Director Resources who will be taking on the responsibilities as the Senior Responsible Owner for the Modernisation Portfolio of the programme from Christine Salter when she retires at the end of the week.

Please pass on our appreciation for the following officers who supported you in providing a clear presentation of progress: Isabelle Bignall - Chief Digital Officer, Dean Thomas - Portfolio Manager and Simon Reynolds - Corporate Landlord Implementation Manager. We offer the following comments and observations from the meeting for your consideration as you progress the delivery of the Capital Ambition Programme:

Programme Management

The Committee was pleased to hear that appropriate structures, clear milestones and governance arrangements were in place to effectively progress the delivery of the Capital Ambition Programme.

Service Reviews

Members welcomed the review of the resource intensive services that had been undertaken as outlined in the original Cabinet report but they expressed concerns regarding how future service reviews would be identified.

- It was acknowledged that there were potential benefits for service areas to voluntarily undertake service reviews but there did not appear to be a process

or set of criteria for identifying those services areas which would benefit by having their services reviewed. This can leave the impression of random rather than systematic selection of reviews.

- Members indicated that councillors could contribute to such selection, using appropriate criteria, and would welcome the opportunity to assist the identification and selection of those services areas which should be prioritised.
- The Committee was uncertain of how reviews were then allocated to the Modernisation or Resilience portfolios. Again there would need to be clear criteria for making this choice but this process was not clear.
- The Committee proposed that wide scale use of available benchmarking data should be utilised to determine what good practice looks like in reviewing performance and be clearly set out in the review terms of reference. It was stated that benchmarking did have a role and the committee would be interested to see evidence of where and how such benchmark data is researched and used and from what sources.
- How the challenge of productivity measurement and improvement features in the service reviews is unclear. The committee would be interested in learning where the issue of productivity features in each review.

Digital First

The Committee welcomed the presentation and the plans for continuing the delivery of the Digital First programme.

- The Committee appreciated of the success of C2C in switching the low value, simple queries, which customers raised using the telephone, to a less resource intensive digital platform. They noted that this is likely to lead to fewer staff being employed on telephone answering work. Members were assured that there would always be a need for employees to handle the more complex and digitally difficulty queries from customers and that some reskilling would take place.
- The step change increase in the use of the app was mapped to the inclusion of additional services to this digital platform. It was proposed that other services and functionality should be added to continue to grow the number of customers using the App. Opportunities to promote the App and its use could be provided at community hubs. Hubs could also provide tuition for potential or new users to encourage its use.

- The increased use of the Cardiff App was noted, but the development of functionality also needed to include the provision of a digital response to customers who initiated the queries on the app. The digital response could be a response via the app and email or link to the council's website where further information could be provided.
- The Committee was eager for Elected Members to actively participate in the Connected Elected Members project. Concerns were raised regarding the provision of appropriate casework software and suitable hardware to Elected Members. It was proposed that appropriate hardware and software solutions should be identified, together with the provision relevant training to meet the individual needs of each Elected Member in fulfilling the intentions of this project.
- Although the Authority had recently won an award for the accessibility of its website, committee members explained the difficulties they had experienced when undertaking searches. The Committee welcomed the offer of additional training being provided to support Elected Members in the effective use of the website.

Corporate Landlord

The Committee acknowledged the progress being made to implement the Corporate Landlord model which sought to achieve "best practice" status in respect of asset management. The Committee were encouraged to hear that the increase in commercial expertise had led to changes in structures, rationalised processes and procedures and improved framework management. A national schedule of rates has become part of the implementation of the model which is intended to lead to a better but smaller estate portfolio.

- Elected members explained that there was still some work to do to address the historic reputational damage in relation to the council's maintenance service to schools. Overturning this problem, particularly in relation to schools would be challenging as they were able to utilise contractors other than the Council. The Committee noted that with 90 of 127 schools signing up to the "One front door project" and the access that it provided to any planned works was an opportunity to bring more schools back to using the Council for providing work services.

- There was also the issue of the poor reputation of the council's management of property maintenance, including council house repairs. It was stated that upskilling of staff in project and contractor management would lead to improved supervision and better quality work and the avoidance of contractor 'on costs' which affect budgeting and cost control. The committee will be interested in learning further about progress in this area.
- When the Committee queried how the rationalisation of depots would be undertaken they were assured that the review would be led by the suitability of the property and the health and safety requirements. Members were informed that an options report on site rationalisation was being developed and they requested that this report be circulated to the Committee for their consideration and potential further scrutiny, including the options for the Wedal Rd site replacement.

Finally, as Councillors, Members have considerable experience of accessing and assessing the Council's frontline services, we urge you to engage with all Members to assist in the ongoing review, delivery and improvement of such services.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, my sincere thanks for attending the PRAP Scrutiny Committee to provide an update of the delivery of the Capital Ambition Programme and I eagerly await your response to these comments and observations.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR DAVID WALKER
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc:

Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Russell Goodway, Cabinet Member for Investment and Development
Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources
Isabelle Bignall, Chief Digital Officer
Neil Hanratty, Director of Economic Development

Dean Thomas, Portfolio Manager, Capital Ambition Delivery Programme
Simon Reynolds, Corporate Landlord Implementation Manager
Cabinet Support