

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Place and Corporate

Date: 11 December 2017

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors C Evans (Chair), M Al-Nuaimi, G Berry, J Clarke, M Cornelious, K Critchley and J Richards

Councillors: G Giles (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills), R Jeavons (Cabinet Member for Streetscene), J Mudd (Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing), D Mayer (Cabinet Member for Communities and Resources) and Councillor R Truman (Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation).

Officers: Rhys Cornwall (Head of People and Business Change), Keir Duffin (Community Development Manager), Meirion Rushworth (Head of Finance), Paul Jones (Head of Streetscene and City Services), Gareth Price (Head of Law & Regulation) and Meryl Lawrence (Overview and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: None.

1 Declaration of Interests

None.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 October 2017

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3 Improvement Plan 2016-18 Update - Quarter 2

Improvement Plan Objective 5 – Supporting Young People into Education, Employment or Training

Invitees;

- Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing
- Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Members requested that the performance report should be printed in colour to assist their analysis.

The Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing provided an overview of the progress made on the objective in Quarter 2, the overall performance for which was Green. He stated that Newport had its lowest level of NEET young people to date, due to the Council's wide ranging support to these young people. While this year there had been a reduction in Communities First funding, due to the experiences and learning gained last year this year had improved and the informal figures demonstrated the positive impact on the lives of NEET young people in Newport, up to the 31 October.

It was explained that the target for percentage of young people who are NEET at the end of Year 11 is 1.9%, an increase of 0.2% from last year. This increase was a reflection of the loss of funding. It was clarified that 1.9% amounts to 26 young people. Those 26 young people were predominantly in prison or unable to engage with education, training and employment due to ill health, but there was ongoing communication with the Prison Service to find out which of their young people were accessing training and education, and how these young people could be incorporated into the data collated for reporting.

The Committee asked whether any mitigation been put in place to future proof against the potential effect of Brexit on future grant funding. The Officer advised that the European funding had been extended until 2021 and the Inspire to Achieve and Inspire to Work Programs were replacing the removal of Communities First funding. However, there was concern about the loss of funding especially for the most deprived areas, but the best practice from working with NEET young people was being applied to those other areas to limit the impact.

The Committee asked whether there is any cross referencing of the young people going through different projects and programmes delivered by the Council or its partners. Members were advised that this was currently difficult to achieve but Officers across the organisation were currently looking to improve and tighten procedures on how young people are tracked. Newport had gone from having the highest percentage of young people not in employment, training or employment (10.4%) to one of the best, even though it is ranked with more rural areas where they do not have the same problems that face a city.

The Chair commended the good work and asked that this be passed on to the team.

Conclusions

The Committee noted the developments made to support NEET young people in Newport and the difficulties facing the Officers to target the remaining group. The Committee Members were conscious of the loss of funding and the impact that this could have on the areas outstanding, current performance and on the young people who are reliant on the services for support.

Improvement Plan Objective 7 – Increasing Recycling

Invitees;

- Head of Streetscene and City Services
- Cabinet Member for Streetscene

The Head of Streetscene and City Services provided an overview to the objective and advised the Committee that overall the objective was Green – Good. The target for percentage of municipal waste recycled at the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) was Amber and there was a planned improvement to the layout of the HWRC to enable more cars to stop on the site to recycle.

Members recognised the good work achieved and asked what the Officers believed to be the challenges facing performance for the future. The Officer advised that future recycling targets set by the Welsh Government were more challenging and that the way forward would be discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. Members were also advised that the Corporate Plan outlined the need to create an additional HWRC in Newport East and that the lack of additional HWRC had been offset by the outstanding performance of the curb side recycling performance until then.

The Members asked what potential obstacles could affect future performance and what the Officers believed could improve recycling rates. Members were advised that Flats were problematic, but were only a small percentage overall of the City's waste. Newport only had

one HWRC site, whereas other Local Authorities had numerous sites across their areas and an additional HWRC site could offer a 12% improvement to recycling rates. New builds were increasing pressure on adding waste and recycling collection. It was explained that waste and recycling collection was done by ward areas to make it as efficient as possible. It was believed that 85% of all Newport residents are currently recycling in some way but there are pockets of people who do not recycle.

Members asked if other Local Authorities used different reporting methods. It was clarified that there were no uniform reporting measures in place across Wales and that Newport strived to report as accurately as possible. However, some Local Authorities were less strict with their monitoring and reporting and the Welsh Government were auditing these processes increasingly.

Conclusions

The Committee noted the performance of the service area. Members also recognised the need for an additional Household Waste Recycling Centre site in Newport.

Improvement Plan Objective 3 – Ensuring People Have Access to Suitable Accommodation

Invitees;

- Head of Regeneration, Housing and Investment
- Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing

The Cabinet Member advised that one of their Improvement Plan Objectives regarding the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) was within the remit of Social Services and therefore is within the portfolio of the Performance Scrutiny Committee - People. She explained that Universal Credit was being rolled out to those in receipt of benefits and it was believed that this would directly increase the number of people accessing advice and services run by the Council. It had been reported that some people had waited up to 11 weeks for their first payment on Universal Credit, which would put increasing pressure on the Discretionary Housing Payment.

With regard to measure PAM/014 – the Number of new homes created as a result of bringing empty properties back into use, Officers were looking at best practice in other Local Authorities and how this could be implemented in Newport. Members asked what could be done regarding deteriorated properties owned by private landlords. A member was concerned that the deterioration of a large number of properties was having an impact on the local community, with some areas gaining a bad reputation as a result.

The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that properties and people who allow their accommodation to reach such a level are subject to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and all organisations had processes for dealing with anti-social behaviour. If the Council works with an organisation or an individual then they must comply with a number of policies, protocols and standards. It is these policies, protocols and standards that allow the Council to manage the standard of housing it offers. Private landlords were not subject to the same level of scrutiny and there were few tools that the Council could use to make the private landlords conform. The Officer explained that there were 6,500 people on the waiting list for a property in Newport, and that the majority of these people wanted quiet enjoyment of their homes. Some Communities had developed Neighbourhood Watch and distraction activities.

Conclusions

The Committee noted the progress of some of the measures in the objective and the steps taken to improve performance on those underperforming.

Improvement Plan Objective 4 – City Regeneration and Development

Invitees;

- Head of Regeneration, Housing and Investment
- Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing declared an interest in Newport Now as a Board Member.

The Cabinet Member and Head of Service provided an overview of the performance to the Committee and advised that if the report was up until today, then all of the measures would be Green.

With regard to the first Red measure; RIH.L.055 – Number of new business start-ups, the Pop Up Business School had supported a further 27 businesses to start up, which would change the performance of this measure to Green.

In relation to the measure: IP4.4 – Secure Stage 2 funding to deliver market arcade regeneration, which had been reported as Amber at the end of Quarter 2, consultation had just commenced.

The Cabinet Member was also pleased to advise that Newport had seen an increase in new developers coming to visit and discuss the opportunities available in the area. It was believed that this was partly attributed to the Severn Bridge Tolls being removed next year and should be reflected in the house prices rising to the East of the City.

Members enquired about the development of the Newport City Centre Masterplan since the recent consultation with Members. It was clarified that Members had been consulted upon the consultation and engagement stage of the development of the Plan which aimed to identify the widest possible range of stakeholders to engage with and there would be a City Summit in January that Members and stakeholders would be invited to attend. Members were encouraged to attend the Summit and take part on 18 January.

The Council had been successful in attracting the Cyber Security School of University of South Wales, IQE and the National Software Academy to Newport, contributing towards developing Newport as Digital Capital of Wales.

It was requested that the Council take a lead in Small Business Saturday in Newport. It was clarified that Newport Now engaged with larger businesses in Newport. Members were advised that the Council had a positive relationship with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Newport and part of its role was to facilitate engagement between groups within the city which would be built upon in the future. It was clarified that Small Business Saturday was sponsored by American Express and no funding was required.

Conclusions

The Committee noted the progress made towards this objective. Members noted the invitation to attend the City Centre Summit on 18 January and how the City Centre Master plan will be developed following engagement with all stakeholders. Members suggested the Council supports Small Business Saturday next year.

4 Mid Year Performance Update

Head of People and Business Change Overview

The Head of People and Business Change advised the Committee that the information presented in the report related to the second quarter of this year and was being reported to

this Scrutiny Committee before being reported to the Cabinet, to enable the Committee's comments to be provided to Cabinet to consider together with the Performance Update, in accordance with the revised process.

Finance (Corporate)

Invitees;

- Head of Finance

The Head of Finance clarified that the measure; CFH/006 - Payment of Invoices within timescales %, was Amber not due to performance, but to ongoing problems with the electronic payments process. However, raining on the electronic system and on-going dialogue with service areas was continuing, to ensure all invoices were paid promptly

Conclusion

The Committee noted the Finance performance measures within Appendix 2 and acknowledged the explanation of the Amber performance measure and would continue monitoring progress via Performance Updates.

People and Business Change (Corporate)

Invitees;

- Head of People and Business Change
- Cabinet Member for Communities and Resources

The Head of People and Business Change advised that a new measure for the service area; PBC/062 %ICT Helpdesk calls resolved at first point of contact; was Red and that the performance of 54.20% against the target of 85% was due to new software implementation requiring staff training upon the new operating system and the direction of travel for the measure is upwards, performance is improving.

Members questioned the low level of ICT Customer Satisfaction % reported at 68%, with a target of 85% for measure PBC/061. - It was explained that 68% of customers surveyed were completely satisfied, with a further 25% partially satisfied. This leaves a remaining 7%, 3% of which stated they were completely dissatisfied with the service they received. The Head of Service clarified that the Amber measure: SLT/010 - Performance above target % Green, related to the number of Green measures across the organisation, which was 2% from achieving the target and work was ongoing with other services areas to improve this measure.

Members enquired about the performance of measure: C&I/L/005 – FOI Responses in time, which was reported as Amber and was 0.96% under target. - It was explained that the number of Freedom of Information (FOI) enquires had increased dramatically over the last year with the Council receiving 1500 FOI enquires last year. The Cabinet Member advised that consideration was being given to increasing information published online, so in the future the Public can just be signposted to the information.

Conclusion

The Committee noted the People and Business Change performance measures within Appendix 3 and acknowledged the explanation of the Red and Amber performance measures and would continue monitoring progress via Performance Updates.

Streetscene and City Services (Place)

Invitees;

- Head for Streetscene and City Services
- Cabinet Member for Streetscene
- Cabinet Member for Communities and Resources

The Head of Service and Cabinet Member for Streetscene advised that the Amber performance measure: STR/L/018 - % of municipal waste recycled at the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) was the only measure for the Service Area which was not Green. It was explained that the City needed an additional HWRC site and this would increase recycling rates and contribute towards meeting this target and that the direction of travel demonstrated that this had improved. With regard to the other measures, in summary, it was clarified that the street cleaning and fly tipping measures were performing well as was the Number of Visits to City Parks measure, however, this might change colour as the Officers review the way the visitor numbers were collected.

Members acknowledged that most of their questions had already been answered during Improvement Plan Update for Objective 7 during the previous agenda item.

Conclusion

The Committee noted the Street Scene & City Services performance measures within Appendix 6 and acknowledged the explanation of the Amber performance measure and would continue monitoring progress via Performance Updates.

Regeneration, Investment and Housing (Place)

Invitees;

- Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing
- Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing
- Cabinet Member for Communities and Resources

The Head of Service provided an overview of the service area's performance focusing on the Red measures. He explained that for the Red measure RIH/L/060 - Number of renewable energy projects granted planning permission, this is the first year this has been a measure and does not fairly represent the how the council is doing with regards to renewable projects in Newport. The measure would be changed for next year to something more representative and appropriate. Members discussed whether the WG could do more to support renewable projects across Wales.

Members were advised that the second Red measure: RIH/L/055 - Number of new business start-ups, had been explained in the previous Agenda Item on Improvement Plan Objective 4.

It was explained that the third Red measure: RIH/L/049 - Number of 16-17 year olds progressing from WBLA to further opportunity, started in September in line with the academic year, so as the year progresses, will demonstrate improvement and should be Green by the end of the year.

Members were advised that the next Red measure: PSR/006 - Average days non-DFG minor adaptations, is a subset of PAM 015 which was Green and this measure will be removed from reporting because it is irrelevant.

It was advised that the Red measure: PAM/019 - % of planning appeals dismissed was outside Council control and could vary, ways this could be challenged to improve the measure for the future were being examined.

It was explained that the Red measure: PAM/013 - % of Empty private properties brought back into use, was due to it being the responsibility of just one member of staff in the Council, and the role being very labour intensive for one person. Officers were looking at best practice across Wales to look for suitable ways to improve performance. It was also explained that dependent upon which data set the Officers used, resulted in a different percentage. There had also been changes to the WG funding.

Following on from discussions about the range of the performance measures considered in this meeting including for renewables, empty properties and NEETs, a Member suggested an idea of a project using NEET young people together with Housing Charities to bring the empty properties back into use, thereby providing a domino effect of training, education and employment opportunities for the young people while also increasing the number of housing options available.

Conclusion

The Committee noted the Regeneration Investment and Housing performance measures within Appendix 7 and acknowledged the explanation of the Red performance measures and would continue monitoring progress via Performance Updates.

Law and Regeneration (Place)

Invitees;

- Head of Law and Regulation
- Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation

The Cabinet Member explained that the single Red measure in the service area: LR/L/002 - Number of littering and dog fouling offences dealt with through enforcement action, was a new target this year so there was no comparative data from previous years. The number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued was significantly below target, while the number of resolved complaints was high, which means that overall the Council was performing in this area. The target needed to be reviewed as it was not reflective of the work done by the Council. Members asked why the service area included this measure if it was difficult to control and enforce. The Officer advised that it was included as a measure, as the issue was important to the Public.

Members were advised that the Amber measure PAM/023 - % Food establishments broadly compliant with food hygiene standards, had improved from 84% in the past and the Council was in the second quartile in Wales. However, to achieve this target would be difficult due to the high number of food establishments in the city and turnover of operators. The other Amber measure: LS/L/008 – Legal Searches in 5 days, cumulative over the year and due to a problem with the IT system in May the performance dropped to 70%. Since October the service area had achieved 100%.

Conclusion

The Committee noted the Law and Regulation performance measures within Appendix 5 and acknowledged the explanation of the Red and Amber performance measures and would continue monitoring progress via Performance Updates.

5 **Forward Work Programme Update**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented the report to Members and outlined the purpose of the report in seeking the Committees approval for items on its work programme for the next two meetings.

The Committee **approved** the work programme for the next two meetings.

The meeting terminated at 6.30 pm