

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Place and Corporate

Date: 9 April 2018

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors C Evans (Chair), G Berry, M Cornelious, K Critchley, J Richards and J Watkins

In Attendance: Councillors R Jeavons (Cabinet Member - Streetscene) and J Mudd (Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Housing)

K Duffin (Community Development Manager), S Gonzalez-Lopez (Waste Recycling Strategy Manager), R Cornwall (Head of People and Business Change) and M Lawrence (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

Apologies: Councillors M Al-Nuaimi and J Clarke

1 Declarations of Interest

None.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 March 2018

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2018 were **approved** as an accurate record.

3 Improvement Plan 2016-18 Update - Quarter 3

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

Attendees:

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

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing provided a brief overview of performance and advised Members of the positive of **PAM/014 – Number of new homes created as a result of bringing empty properties back in to use**, improving from Amber to Green since Quarter 2.

The Head of Regeneration, Housing and Investment advised the Committee that:

- **PAM014 - Number of new homes created as a result of bringing empty properties back in to use**, was previously raised as a concern but now Green, although it was showing Amber in the MI report due to a system administration error;
- **PSR/006 - Average Days non-DFG minor adaptations** - was no longer being reviewed by Welsh Government;
- **PAM/015 - Adaptions DFG days delivery average** – was Green and in the top quartile in Wales;

- **PAM/012 - The percentage of households for whom homelessness was prevented** - despite Universal Credit having had a higher impact on delivery this has been managed to remain Green.
- **RIH/043 - Number of people approaching authority for housing advice and assistance** - had remained green.

Members asked the following:

- Given rapid changes expected due to the removal of the Severn Crossing Tolls and resultant movements in the housing market, what contingencies are in place to cope with private rented properties being sold and private tenants given notice, thereby creating an increase for rented properties? It was explained that NCC holds a 5 year supply of housing with expansions and sites in place, while other LA's can't meet that target for the supply of new build housing and developments through planning. In addition NCC has been able to bring forward Affordable Housing Schemes from Welsh Government funding and also has reserve schemes in place, so when the funding becomes available the schemes can commence. It is quite right to highlight the advice issue and a review of the service was underway.
- Is there confidence that the need for social rented housing can be met with the changes coming? It was clarified that while not everyone on the list will be able to access social rented housing, they can be assisted to access other options. It was clarified that the 7830 applications were for households not individuals, the total number of live applications.
- Is there confidence that plans are in place for the impact of Private Landlords looking to sell their rental properties and make a significant profit in certain Wards of the City? Arrangements were in place to meet all social landlords to develop a protocol as the community housing protocol needed reviewing. As part of that meeting, there would be consideration of some schemes Welsh Government are offering and discussion of every element of the Authority's relationship with Social Landlords starting with the Common Housing Register.
- Given that private landlords are selling their rental properties while giving 2 months' notice to sitting tenants, 415 people were seeking advice or assistance from Housing currently and 105 people waiting for special accommodation, could Members be provided with an explanation of the different types of Landlord and Housing? It was advised that 2 tenancy agreements were being introduced to provide greater security to tenants, lessons could also be learned from the housing market cycle and the Welsh government Housing Minister had reported a 95% take up of the Rent Smart Scheme. ***The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing offered that a Briefing Session for Elected Members to provide assistance, which was welcomed by Members of the Committee.***
- Is there assurance that securing residual affordable housing can be provided, funded and inroads made to what is needed? It was advised that Newport is very good at taking up slippage that other Local Authorities were unable to, as we have the schemes in place ready and excellent Housing professionals.

Improvement Plan Objective 4 – City Regeneration and Development

Attendees:

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

The Head of Regeneration, Housing and Investment advised the Committee that:

- **RIH/L/053 – Value of business support grants awarded** - from an operational view, the number and variety of operators approaching the Authority with schemes was the highest and alongside this the Business Support team had provided more grants and was being asked for more advice and input each year.
- **RIH/L/054 – Number of businesses supported** – had grown to 360 and was Green.
- **RIH/L/055 – Number of new business start-ups** – the narrative for this measure was from Quarter 2 and displayed in error, as the measure had now become Green from Red in Quarter 2.
- **IP 4.1 Secure funding for VVP2** – Cardiff Capital Region had been formed and a Draft Regional Regeneration Plan produced and a first draft project list for the whole region generated.

Members asked the following:

- What were the 24 responses to the City Master Plan saying? The consultation responses were not fully collated and would be soon.
- What plans were there to address the number of empty commercial premises? – It was explained that most are in private ownership but lots of them have planning applications for residential accommodation in these beautiful buildings and as the properties are developed and people move in, so the footfall in the city would increase and the confidence to come to the city centre.
- What is in the City Region Plan approved by Council in terms of the employment offer? – It was explained that Newport has the lowest unemployment for a number of years and clearly jobs are available here, and the processes and people in place to connect unemployed people with those jobs. Learning from the 2008 downturn in employment, the key challenges were connectivity, enabling those unemployed and furthest from the labour market to move into jobs and become employed people move up overall using the Work Based Learning Academy. Other Local Authorities have learned from what Newport has done, to implement similar.
- With regard to the empty shops and need to increase footfall at the bottom of Commercial Street, can confirmation be given that there would be a monthly street market in this area? The street market would commence on 29 April and the indoor market traders had been offered space to engage and promote what is in the indoor market to encourage people to visit and increase footfall there.

It was queried whether street market stallholders could be offered indoor market stalls if interested? Members were advised that this was not in the remit of this Cabinet Member, but asked that it be passed to the relevant Cabinet Member.

- A Member queried whether busses were dropping off in Commercial Street? Members were advised that this was not in the remit of the Cabinet Member's portfolio.
- While the number of new small businesses created was good, could the number of new jobs be reported in future to add to the positive news? It was clarified that one of the grants NCC offers is about business expansion.
- While Newport had previously been very successful with VVP bids of £50M, concern was expressed about whether collectively bidding as City Regional Deal may potentially mean Newport is less successful with bids for this area? It was explained that Newport had been the most successful in bidding for VVP and had schemes ready when further money became available. Under the new arrangements, the City Region will decide upon the bids and recommend to the WG Minister. WG will be looking for regional significance and we have a skilled and experienced team in Newport with success in the

past so confident as possible to be that Newport can make its best case.

- Concern was expressed that the restoration and reopening of the Market Arcade would not result in more empty shops in Newport and would there be incentives offered to occupy shops in the Arcade? It was clarified that there was a wider discussion with a set of stakeholders all invited to engage for a successful outcome and that further investment would be encouraged from other avenues.
- With regard to **IP4.5 - Develop and Invest in Newport Website**, it was clarified that this was the existing NCC website but to make it clearer and more accessible to those wishing to develop and invest what opportunities are on offer in the area.
- What is the updated position of the BID at the moment? It was clarified that it had stability and was forward planning well, ambassadors were still continuing and working more collaboratively with the City Council, Friars Walk and the Market Traders. Forthcoming events and collaborations included: Record Store Day; South Wales Argus Business Awards and some support for the Food Festival as well as looking to work with the Wallich on a donation system. The BID would be coming up for re-ballot soon and the Members would decide.

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

Attendees:

- Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing
- The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills sent their apologies as she was unable to attend.

The Head of Regeneration, Housing and Investment advised the Committee that all of the measures were Green except for **NEET/01 - Number of Young People** accessing children and YP skills project which was Amber but would turn Green in Quarter 4 and should have further improvement by the year end.

Members asked the following:

- Whether training placements are offered? It was clarified that placements are already offered via the Work Based Learning Academy.
- What can be done to improve the perception that work based learning and apprenticeships are not as good an option as pursuing a University education? – This is being examined through the Public Services Board to make the option more attractive.

Improvement Plan Objective 7 – Increasing Recycling

Attendees:

- Waste Recycling Strategy Manager
- Cabinet Member for Streetscene

The Cabinet Member gave an overview of the current performance towards this objective, outlining that the recycling rate within the HWRC remains an area of concern, but that performance had been consistently increasing throughout the year.

In relation to PAM 30 – Municipal waste reused, recycled and composted, the Committee were advised that the Council was awaiting final figures on this matter to report back. It was noted that there would be a need to target collections within flats, and how the bags were collected.

Members asked the following:

- There had been an issue within the year for landfill, where there had been a dip in performance. This had been as a result of an issue in collections in the Christmas period and increased recycling in the following quarter.
- Collection of food waste was discussed, and an emphasis on ensuring that the Council was maximising that food waste collection. The current bins used were discussed, and it was asked if more robust bins with handles could be introduced. It was advised that there would be a cost implication for this, but it could be considered in the future as a pilot scheme if it was agreed that this would have a positive increase in food waste collection.
- Members were advised that the Council had switched providers for provision of the bins.

Conclusions:

The Committee noted the progress towards the improvement Objectives to date and made the following comments to the Cabinet:

- Following on from the discussion on IP5 relating to Vibrant and Viable Places, the Committee raised concerns regarding Scrutiny of the Regional City Deal. The City Deal had been discussed at a recent Council meeting, and effective scrutiny of the City Deal was considered essential to ensuring its success. Members asked for clarification on the process and arrangements for scrutiny of the City Deal.
- Members noted that the font size used in the Improvement Plan update was too small, making it difficult to read, and not accessible to the public. Members requested that for all performance reports that go to Cabinet, that the size of the font be increased to the standard used for other reports.
- During the course of the meeting, there were instances where the information within the MI Hub (the performance management system) was not accurate. For example, there was an amber measure that should have been marked as green and a comment on a measure that related to quarter 2, not quarter 3 that had been included in error:
 - **RIH/L055 – Number of new business start-ups** – the narrative for this measure was from Quarter 2 and displayed in error, as the measure had now become Green from Red in Quarter 2.
 - **PAM014 - Number of new homes created as a result of bringing empty properties back in to use**, was previously raised as a concern but now Green, although it was showing Amber in the MI report due to a system administration error;

Members asked that it is ensured that the system is updated with the most up to date information to ensure accuracy within the reports.

4 Forward Work Programme Update

The Overview & Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that consideration of the Committee's Draft Forward Work Programme was scheduled for consideration at the next meeting on 4 June 2018, when topics for inclusion would be discussed.

The Officer also drew Members' attention to the pilot of the action sheet which detailed any information requested by Members at the previous Committee meeting held on 5 March 2018 and explained that this had been developed to track that all actions were completed. Members would be emailed the information shortly and the action sheet would be updated for each meeting.

Actions:

The Committee **approved** the work programme for the next meeting on 6 June 2018 and the action sheet for tracking actions until completed.

The meeting terminated at 5.35 pm