

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Date: 3 April 2019

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors M Rahman (Chair), D Davies, J Hughes, S Marshall, T Suller and K Whitehead

Lisa Davies (Governance Officer), Rhys Cornwall (Head of People and Business Change), Mark Bleazard (Information Development Manager), James Harris (Strategic Director - People) and Daniel Cooke (Scrutiny Adviser)

In Attendance:

Apologies: Councillors Y Forsey, R Hayat and R Mogford

1 Declarations of Interest

None.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 March 2019

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2019 were approved as a true and accurate record.

3 Shared Resource Service Update

Attendees:

- Matt Lewis – Chief Officer (Shared Resource Service)
- Kath Beavan-Seymour – Assistant Director (Shared Resource Service)
- Mike Doverman – User Support Manager (Shared Resource Service)
- Rhys Cornwall – Head of People and Business Change (Newport City Council)
- Mark Bleazard – Digital Services Manager (Newport City Council)
- Dominic Gibbons – Digital Projects Manager (Newport City Council)

The Head of People and Business Change presented a brief overview of the report to the Committee and highlighted the key areas for consideration. The Committee were advised that the deadlines associated with the Investment Objectives (IO) were out of date and had been updated since the report had been published. An updated report with the new deadline would be circulated for information.

Members asked the following:

- Members commented that they would like more detailed information included in the IO updates, and that the two line updates did not provide sufficient information. Members were advised that most of the IO were linked to others, for instance, IO 8 had strong links to IO 2 and to avoid repetition the information was not included twice.

The SRS Officers accepted that this was not clear in the report and in the future they would look to group IOs together that shared similar information for clarity.

- Members noted that the IO update information included was similar to the information included in last year's report. The User Support Manager used the IO 2 update as an example in their response. The Disaster Recovery solutions, was completed in two phases, the first of the phases had been completed. The second of the phases had been given a two-year plan to be completed in 2021. SRS included information on both phases in the update to show that progress had been made in completing the first phase, and when SRS expected Phase Two to be completed.
- The Committee queried why the IO deadlines had been extended. The Chief Officer advised that Phase Two had a number of priorities, which required assessment prior to work continuing. For example, iTrent was hosted by the Council and would be migrated to SRS shortly. Prior to the migration, preparations had to take place to scope this was timely and went smoothly. Newport had 21 systems, this meant that there was a lot of work that needed to be completed to prepare for each migration and in some cases, a transition to another system which could provide the same or better service at less cost. The initial deadline in 2017 had been indicative only, and the purpose of Phase Twos was to migrate all services to Blaenavon. The Head of People and Business Change outlined the significant capital investment that was required for completion of IO 2.
- Members queried how SRS kept focus on core targets. The SRS concept was to focusing on the needs of the organisation, while maintaining low costs and looking to invest for the future. The change to Microsoft Office 360 was a very expensive project; SRS used the money from that to invest elsewhere to improve services for Newport. SRS was a non-profit organisation and any money that it received or saved an organisation would have been invested back into services improvement and development.
- Members enquired about any potential issues within the partnership, and advised that improvements that could always be made to partnership working, however both parties were committed to this and the partnership was working well. It was advised that both partners meet on a regular basis to discuss any issues and work on the partnership, the dates of which were outlined in the report appendices.

The User Support Manager added that in order to support Newport, all teams and individuals needed to be cross-skilled, allowing them to deal with numerous different issues. There were training plans in place to provide the staff with additional skills, but acknowledged that there would always be new technologies emerging and skills to be learned, this was a process that would be ongoing to provide the best service to the Council.

- Members commended the service on the savings achieved. The Head of Service explained that there had been additional money saved this year as the overall spend was lower than average.

The User Support Manager then advised the Members that Newport's first batch of new laptops had been procured, and SRS were close to having the same devices across all partners. This would further eliminate the need for people and resources to be focused on multiple makes, models and programmes, which allowed a streamlining effect to save money.

- Would the figures for first point of contact decrease, especially with Digital Champions within the Council being able to help with basic queries? The User Support Officer advised that the majority of calls from Newport were for password resets. Once the new platform was rolled out, users would be able to reset their own password, which would decrease the number of calls received.
- Members requested a breakdown for the number of calls on page 45 of the report. Members were advised of the figures that were broken down across the partners by months and whether they were resolved at first contact. In Newport the figures for September and October had remained static, but were expected to increase.
- Members praised the customer service they had received, and wished for this to be feedback to the team in the Council. Members then discussed customer satisfaction surveys, which showed positive responses and feedback in the report. For the small amount of dissatisfied, what were the queries or comments? Members were advised that there was a mix, where all comments were reviewed through the Monthly Delivery Board, but majority are where users were frustrated when systems go down. SRS Officers highlighted the poor response rate to questionnaires, and this was something that they had been looking at ways of improving.

The User Support Manager then advised the Committee that any completely dissatisfied responses to the surveys were contacted directly. It was highlighted that the poor response to surveys coming in had been due to users not wishing to fill out surveys, so the 'smiley face' scale had been brought in, in the hope of increasing the number of respondees.

- Members highlighted of the importance of strong broadband strengths in schools with the focus within the new curriculum on IT use¹. The current broadband in schools was too weak and prone to issues, which the Committee felt, was a clear issue. Members were advised that SRS offered provisions to schools, however schools were their own entities and some schools were starting to step away from Local Authority provision to try to procure services themselves. SRS had planned on what they would do for schools and were keen to get schools that are out of provision into SRS EDU provision. Members were informed that SRS had hoped that the schools would stay on until SRS could migrate them to the EDU provision. SRS had a timeline for migration, and were open and transparent with schools about the steps needed to get there and the costs once migrated.
- The Committee enquired as to whether SRS had considered inviting Education Representatives onto the SRS board to act as a lead for work with schools. Members also commented that there were some teachers that were digital experts that could help support SRS' efforts to be the preferred education service provider. Members were informed that there were separate infrastructures for corporate services and education services, although there were strategy groups in each authority working towards bringing schools into partnership with SRS.

The Chief Officer explained that the Head of Education had been involved in conversations and was keen for more schools to join SRS. The SRS Officers explained that the Welsh Government had negotiated a deal with Microsoft, and part of this deal included SRS provided Microsoft related services would be free to schools. Only schools in partnership with SRS could take advantage of this.

Members suggested that links were actively strengthened with Schools.

- School cluster work was discussed and Members asked were there any individual schools moving away? The Chief Officer advised Members the cluster work did work well, and gave an example that when Newport High School stepped away, the primary schools in the cluster followed. This seemed to be the case elsewhere; the primary schools followed the lead of the secondary school in the cluster. SRS were taking advantage of the cluster set up by basing staff in secondary schools in a cluster whose responsibility it was to cover that school and any primary schools in the cluster.
- Members asked for an overview of what the attendees view was on the advantages and disadvantages of working in partnership. The Chief Officer advised that the foundation of the partnership was trust, which was needed in order to collaborate effectively. However, decision making was more complex. The Head of People and Business Change explained there was a willingness of the other partners to work together. The Council had been clear about sharing infrastructure, systems and applications from the outset. The User Support Manager then advised that a good partnership was reliant on effective compromise.
- Members were advised effort by staff to bring in the new Microsoft 360 system online, as well as the Member and staff mobile phones.
- Members asked if there was an update on Caerphilly Council joining SRS. Members were informed that a meeting had taken place but that discussion were ongoing.
- Members discussed high priority calls on page 63 of the report, with Newport having seven over the year but Torfaen over 20. Members were told that Torfaen log finance calls at Priority 1 in order for the query to be raised, which was the historical way to log these type of calls. The new system will address this and the number of high priority calls would come down.
- Members spoke of the importance of getting a Business Continuity Manager in place. Recruitment had taken place and a successful candidate with a background in this area had been recruited. This would have allowed the partners to share learning across the all continuity meetings.

The Chair thanked the Officers and representatives of SRS for attending.

Conclusion - Comments to the Cabinet

The Committee noted the Shared Resource Service Update and agreed to forward the minutes to the Shared Resource Service as a summary of the issues raised.

The Committee wished to make the following comments to the Shared Resource Service:

1. The Head of People and Business Change will provide an updated report to the Committee for information.
2. The Committee recommended that the Investment Objectives were made clearer and their relevance to other Investment Objectives is highlighted.
3. The Committee recommended that the SRS included Education Digital Leaders either on their different boards or as an agenda item, the aim of this is to improve the service for schools and education providers.

4. The Committee requested a timeline to be provided for SRS developing the Education Infrastructure.
5. The Committee requested that SRS provide an action plan for how they aim to achieve each of the Investment Objective and present back to the Committee in 6 months' time.
6. The Committee were concerned that the finances of SRS were not reported adequately back to Members. Scrutiny Advisers were requested to establish how the finances of SRS were monitored and report to the Committee.
7. The Committee felt that overall the performance of SRS was positive, with nearly all of the measures in GREEN, and hoped that with future streamlining all the measures would be GREEN.

4 Regional Area Plan 2018-19 Summary Update

Attendee:

- Phil Diamond – Regional Partnership Board Regional Team
- Roxanne Green – Regional Partnership Board Regional Team
- James Harris – Strategic Director - People

The Strategic Director – People advised the Committee that the Head of Children & Young People Services and the Head of Adult and Community Services had sent their apologies for the meeting. The Director continued to present a brief overview to the Committee and highlighted their key areas for consideration. The Director explained that the Regional Partnership Board was very significant for Newport and the region, and was a partnership that not only delivered services, but also drove change and improvement for the all parties involved.

Members asked the following:

- Members were pleased to see the budget on page 79 of the report. It was asked how the budget was shared out, and if there was a summary for Newport. The Officer advised that Newport had been given a £1,300,000 investment. The funds for the emerging financial year had not yet been fully committed, so the report was not a full picture of what each area had. It was also noted there were various funding streams, such as Dementia Friends funding.

The Strategic Director explained that the challenge for Newport was making sure that Newport was appropriate proportion of services, which he believed it was. The Regional Area Team took a holistic view and approach to how care was delivered across Gwent. Newport in some instances got less than a proportional share and others get more, but this was determined on the needs of the area. There was a give and take by all of the regions in Gwent, although Newport did get a fair share.

- The Committee discussed the number of people who had received the Attachment Training, and Members asked if they could be given details on the number of people in Newport who have received the training. The Officer advised that a quarter of staff had reported for training. The details were available to be seen by the public across Gwent, as such include all of Gwent, but the Officer instructed the Members that a report just for Newport could be provided.

Member enquired about the procurement of the training provided by the Regional Area Team. The Officer explained that the Attachment training, in particular, had been funded through the ICF. This might not have been brought into Newport had it not been for partnership working. The training had been in high demand, as there were only 20 places per training session. The Regional Area Team would have liked to have been able to deliver the training to every Social Work Team and health partner, but due to funding restraints, this was difficult. After the training, what normally followed was a 'Train the Trainer' session. The Regional Area Team hoped that the 'Train the Trainer' would allow every team to have some access to the training through Team Members who were able to pass on their knowledge.

The Strategic Director informed the Committee of the different types of procurement, and gave the example of a regional wide procurement process would be led by a single organisation, then run through the procurement channels. The Regional Area funding was funnelled through the Health Board.

- The Members enquired if the Regional Partnership included the voluntary sector, and could the attendees describe where the voluntary sector had been effectively included. The Officer advised that the voluntary sector were included in decision-making forums, and gave the example of the creation of the Dementia party based workshops. Those workshops based in Newport were some of the best attended. The Officers explained that the voluntary sector's voice was heard around the table at an operational level and a strategic one, and had board representatives at a strategic level. Voluntary sector organisations were included to be an advocate for the Gwent residents, ensuring their needs were met.
- Members enquired whether there were many volunteers available to support projects. Officers were unsure of the actual number of volunteers, but there were large numbers of volunteers available to support initiatives. The Regional Area Team have met with schools who had had young people who volunteered, this volunteering had in some cases counted towards their grades.
- Members wished to know how we assured good partnership working and how challenges were met together, and what challenges were there moving forward. The Officer explained that there was a real will and positive enthusiasm around the board to move forward together; this was from all partners including the Health Board, voluntary organisations and Local Authorities. The Attendees stated that it was fair to say that Gwent was recognised to have one of the strongest regional partnerships in Wales.

The Strategic Director advised that at a strategic level there was the usual challenges and disagreements, of which you would normally expect, but nothing more than that. They channelled the mutual respect into working practices, jointly constructed work and programmes supported good partnership working.

There were difficulties associated with funding responsibility, and again relating to individual or specific cases, in particular when funded by Local Authority or Health Board. Different approaches were driving change, which was further strengthening the partnerships. An example of how the partnership working had influenced other areas of practice included a new type of panel where the Local Authority and Health Board engaged independently. At this panel, the Health Board agreed to fund the care of a child with complex needs, whereas a year ago they might have refused because they believed it was the remit of a Local Authority Social Services department.

- Members asked whether there were theme leads in the organisations, for example, a Mental Health theme lead. The Officer advised that in the Regional Group there were six PSB Managers across the Local Authority and partners. The Regional Area Team explained that they engaged with the Newport Citizen Panel when planning in order to avoid duplication, and ensuring resources were used effectively. Members were informed that in some areas, including improving mental health and increasing employment levels, the work done by the PSB was vital and had a significant impact on the work the Regional Area Team had undertaken.

Members then asked if this was the same with voluntary organisations. Members were told that six voluntary partners came together as a consortium when a single provider for a service could not be found. The service was a flexible respite care provider and when no suitable provider could be found, the Regional Area Team offered local care providers the opportunity to work in partnership, of which six did.

- How was working with communities and community groups fed into the performance outcomes, and how was it monitored? The Officer advised that this had been recognised by the Regional Partnership Board as an area needing to be strengthened. When funding a service or provision, feedback by service users is important, but there was a deficit. This deficit had been acknowledged as something to be developed. Members were informed that recruitment was currently taking place for a team member with the responsibility for this area.
- Members commented that it might be useful for Councillors to be involved as they are working closely with communities. The Officer advised that this was a good partnership structure to be built on and they would look at ways of including Councillors in future.
- The Committee were concerned about how long the 60 million pound funding was sustainable for? Members were advised that the 60 million was for a 2-year period, and was not designed to be sustainable year on year. The primary reason for the funding was to drive and instigate changes to working practices across the region, with the ultimate goal being effective partnership working.
- Members advised that sometimes carers were left out and needed support. Officers responded that there had been revised ICF guidance, which required regions to have carer initiatives.

The Chair thanked the Officers and Representatives from the Regional Area Team for attending.

Conclusions

The Committee noted the Regional Area Plan 2018 / 19 Summary Update and agreed to forward the minutes to the Regional Partnership Board as a summary of the issues raised.

The Committee wished to make the following comments to the Regional Partnership Board:

1. The Committee commended the Regional Area Team for their work, especially those areas of best practice and the work done to avoid duplication.

2. Work needed to be done on the methods of evaluating and evidencing the work completed with the use of the funding. The Strategic Director - People would provide the Committee with this information.
3. The Committee requested an all member seminar on the ICF and the services it funds in Newport.
4. The Committee requested that the Regional Area Team change the format of their Regional Area Plan on their website from MS Publisher to make the document more user friendly and accessible.
5. The Committee requested more Newport specific examples and references were provided to the Committee.
6. The Committee requested the Regional Area Team provide the Committee with a quarterly report on the performance against the plans objectives.

5 Scrutiny Adviser Reports

Attendees:

- Daniel Cooke (Scrutiny Adviser)

a) Forward Work Programme Update

The Scrutiny Adviser presented the Forward Work Programme, and informed the Committee of the topics due to be discussed at the next committee meeting:

Wednesday 5 June 2019, the agenda items;

- EAS Contribution – Financial Year 2018-19
- Value for Money Model for Commissioning Arrangements
- Draft Annual Forward Programme

b) Action Arising

The Scrutiny Adviser advised the Committee of the actions that have been completed and that he would chase up information on the school categorisation matrix from the EAS Business Plan 2019-20.

c) Information Reports

None

d) Scrutiny Letters

None

The meeting terminated at 7.50 pm