

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Place and Corporate

Date: 24 June 2019

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors C Evans (Chair), M Al-Nuaimi, G Berry, J Clarke, D Fouweather, I Hayat and J Richards

In Attendance: Councillor J Mudd (Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing)

Keir Duffin (Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing), Paul Jones (Head of Streetscene and City Services), Liz Blayney (Scrutiny and Governance Manager) and Neil Barnett (Governance Officer)

Apologies: Councillors K Critchley and D Williams

1 Declaration of Interest

None.

2 Service Plan End of Year Reviews

a) Regeneration, Investment and Housing

Attendees:

- Councillor Jane Mudd (Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing)
- Keir Duffin (Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing)

The Cabinet Member presented a brief overview to the Committee and highlighted the key areas for consideration, including the success of the Council in securing Welsh Government TRI-funding. This was regional funding that required working with partner organisations to identify projects across the South-East Wales area. A number of key projects received funding such as the Ringland Neighbourhood Hub and the Market Arcade. Funding was also received for Business Development, enabling the Council to continue to support new small businesses.

Planning remained on target with supply on land for housing. The Cabinet Member commended Officers' understanding and knowledge of the land across the city. There were also plans proposed for Cardiff Capital Region, the Strategic Capital was being discussed at Cabinet level and further discussions at each local authority level it progressed.

Members asked the following:

- Members queried the performance measure on page 22 of the report – '*Percentage of empty properties brought back into use*' and the comment '*the number of successful interventions has fallen due to pressure on services*'. The Committee asked for clarification of how that had happened and what was in

place for the future prevent it happening again. Members were advised that the 2018/2019 target had risen by 0.5%, with the Quarter 2 result being 0.2%, within the cycle of the year there was nothing to suggest that the Department's target would not be met.

- Members asked if the Council had a robust Economic Growth Strategy for the city, and what inward investment the Council had secured since the last review. Members were advised that the updated draft of the Council's Economic Growth Strategy would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in September. The Council had secured a significant amount of inward investment for the Chartist Tower and IEC buildings and the Market Arcade that had also had £12 million invested.
- On page 22 of the report – *Average number of calendar days to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant*, a Member queried the just missed target? Members were advised that 174 days was an exceptionally high target and at quarter 2 the average was 178. The Department was completely independent with Adult Social Services' Occupational Therapy Team carrying out assessments for delivery for each individual DFG. Each Department was working closely to implement further changes, with a number of workers training with Social Services to be fully trained to undertake assessments, which would free up time for Social Services teams to carry out more reviews.
- With Brexit possibly taking place in 16 weeks, what would be the impact of this on funding to the Council? The impact of Brexit was not known, however it was advised Newport was in strong position with the growing economy, as well as other current key factors such as the removal of the Bridge tolls and growth of Semi-Conductor industries.
- Members queried the poor performance of performance measure – *Percentage of empty properties brought back into use*. How many people had taken up the scheme, and how many properties have been brought back into use? Members would be advised of the figures.
- Members discussed housing associations working in partnership with the Authority. Members were advised improvements since the creation of the Strategic Housing Forum, and that previously there had been no opportunities to meet collectively.
- Comment was made about the accuracy of some figures in the report, with examples being given of figures on page 13 of the report. Members were advised that this would be looked into.
- How would the needs of service users potentially change in in the future? The Cabinet Member commented that it was important to recognise that the Local Authority works in a partnership and not in isolation, and chose to work on a regional basis as it is a preferential way of working. Examples were given of Social Services working with the Regional Board and Housing having the Homeless Strategy Board and that continual partnership work was important and met the expectations of Welsh Government.

The Cabinet Member also highlighted the relationship the Local Authority had developed with other local authorities in both England and Wales, looking at inward investment across the Great Western cities corridor. Talks with Welsh Office were positive, with examples given that Department of Transport had invested in Newport Transport to purchase electric vehicles. This would

contribute to the Council's Sustainable Travel Strategy and the Council's aims to improve air quality.

- In response to questions on the City Deal, the Committee were advised that the Leader represents the Council on the Regional Board, all work was in the public domain and Cllr Majid Rahman was the Council's representative on the City Deal Regional Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair thanked the Invitees for attending.

b) City Services

Attendee:

- Paul Jones (Head of City Services)

The Committee received the Cabinet Member for City Services apologies for this meeting.

The Head of City Services provided an overview of the service area and outlined the key areas for consideration. Members were informed that Street cleaning had been a challenge, with increasing demand on a static resource along with an ageing fleet. The fleet was due to be replaced this year. There had been a significant improvement in the HWRC recycling rate and had been achieved in Quarter 4 and it is anticipated a large increase in overall recycling rate for 2019-20 as a result of the new residual restriction policy and is the best quarter the service area has had in 6 years.

Finance was £70,000 under budget however the nature of the work that the service area undertook meant that this could vary greatly from month to month. Last year as a year of preparation for a lot of work that will be seen this year such as the Civil Parking Enforcement and the Waste Strategy.

Members asked the following:

- Members queried the performance of the smaller bin scheme. It was advised that there had been significantly fewer issues than planned for. It was anticipated that 10% of residents would require assistance; however, the figure was below 2%.
- Members were advised that street lighting bulbs were in process of being changed to LED, which would bring in savings on cost for electricity.
- It was asked what was the Council doing to help residents recycle, and was it possible to set up a programme in schools to educate pupils to recycle. Members were advised that this was a part of the Waste Strategy, Due to the smaller bin roll out, figures were currently in green, and likely to reach 70%. It was also advised that has been an ongoing programme taking place in schools for many years. Schools have visits to recycling services, and most schools had recycling facilities.
- Had the part time street lighting scheme had an impact on antisocial behaviour in the areas. Members were advised that there was a significant saving however; there was no evidence that reduced lighting caused further antisocial behaviour. When the lights were replaced by LED, the part time lights stayed on until 12am.
- Members queried how sustainable the income was from Civil Parking Enforcement, given that the numbers of tickets issued would inevitably decrease

once the public became more aware. Members were advised that this had been considered and was being monitored. The service was set up to be cost neutral in the long run, with a small surplus for road repairs.

- Members discussed the ongoing rising targets for recycling and the Council plans on sustaining targets, as eventually Welsh Government could raise targets to 80%. Bins couldn't possibly be made any smaller. Members were advised that the smaller bins are only a small part of the scheme. The Council plan to improve recycling for trade waste and provide greater education and enforcement.

Members commented that problem areas should be targeted for education and enforcement. Members were advised that education and enforcement staff travel with the recycling crew to record and gather information, to address this. There had been over 7000 requests for additional recycling boxes. With further education, it was hopeful that figures would go beyond 70%.

- Members asked to send thanks to the crews for providing great service. However in some areas there was a problem when road sweepers cleaned roads before rubbish was collected. Members were advised that this was an issue the service area is trying to improve.
- Members queried the role of the police in enforcing parking now that the Council had taken over Civic Parking Enforcement. It was confirmed that the Police would continue to deal with obstructions, and enforcement through parking tickets was within the Council's role. It was clarified that Parking Enforcement on private land would be enforced by the land owners.
- Members discussed the various recycling bins being used across the city. It was explained that recycling split was being looked into, paper waste could not be recycled, however the Council was looking to split plastic and can recycling. It was advised that the segregated bins in the city centre were going to be replaced as they were heavily contaminated.
- Members commented on the many community volunteers that undertook litter picks, and queried if would be possible for them to be also given recycling bags also. Members were advised that this is part of the same project and bags are being ordered.
- Members queried how CO2 emissions were reported. It was advised that the reporting was split across service areas, the service area would aim to help reduce emissions by reducing amounts of waste being taken to landfill.

The Chair thanked the Invitee for attending.

Conclusions

The Committee noted and commended the performance within the Regeneration, Investment and Housing and the City Services Service Plans.

The Committee made the following comments:

Regeneration, Investment and Housing

- The Committee raised a number of issues relating to regeneration during the discussion, and suggested that further information was needed with the plan to give a fuller picture of the performance in this area. The Committee note the assurances that the issues raised by the Committee would be considered in the Economic Growth Strategy. This was being considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting on 26 September 2019. The Committee agreed to forward a summary of its concerns to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to consider as part of the draft plan. These issues including the work programme undertaken by the regional city deal. The Committee were advised that the detail of this would be considered by the Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships, who received regular updates from the Council's nomination on the Joint Committee. The Committee noted this, but asked that where there were cross overs with the work of the regeneration area that projects be referenced in the Economic Growth Strategy. Members also asked that the Draft strategy addresses the empty retail space in the city centre.
- In relation to the Market Arcade, the Committee suggested that the overall cost of this should be more clearly outlined within one action in the Service Plan, to ensure that it could be monitored effectively by the Committee in the future.
- Members discussed the remit of the service plans, and whether including Housing within the same portfolio as Regeneration and Investment did not allow the Committee to have equal information and time to dedicate to these large areas. The Committee were advised that the portfolios of the service plan followed the Directorate Structure as these areas were under the same Head of Service. In relation to Cabinet Portfolios, the Committee were advised that this was a political decision for the Leader to determine portfolios.
- Members felt that Housing area required further information, and that this information be brought back to the Committee for further discussion and exploration including information on areas of underperformance:
 - More, specifically information on the effectiveness of scheme for borrowing and improving existing homes and bringing properties back into use and addressing numbers of unoccupied properties.
- The Committee noted the contribution of the Cabinet Member to the meeting, and asked that it be noted that the Committee appreciate the frank and open discussion with the Cabinet Member on her portfolio.

City Services

- The Committee commended City Services on reaching the targets set by Welsh Government for Recycling. During the questioning, the Committee asked for information on how this will be sustained and improved in line with the increasing targets. The Committee noted that the Waste Strategy Action Plan was on its work programme and agreed ask that the update include further information on how progress will be sustained in this area.
- In relation to the Waste Targets, the Committee suggested that the Council demonstrate how it is leading by example on recycling. For example through ensuring

recycling stations throughout all council buildings, and the separation of bags for litter pickers to recycle cans and plastic, which the Committee had been advised was in progress to be implemented.

An overall comment was made to Cabinet that the environmental impact of the Council be monitored, as it does not currently fall into one of the Cabinet Members portfolios. The Committees requested that the mechanism for monitoring and reporting the environmental impact be devised and presented to the Place and Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting closed at 5.37 pm