

Minutes



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Date:	12 July 2019
Time:	10.00 am
Present:	Councillors L Lacey (Chair), M Al-Nuaimi, G Berry, C Evans, M Evans, Y Forsey, M Linton and K Thomas
In Attendance:	D Cooke (Scrutiny Adviser), L Davies (Governance Officer), E Blayney (Scrutiny and Governance Manager), M Bleazard (Information Development Manager), R Cornwall (Head of People and Business Change) and M Rushworth (Head of Finance)
Apologies:	None

1 **Declarations of Interest**

None

2 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 18/04/2019**

Minutes held as a true and accurate record.

The members raised the following matters with the minutes and subsequent action sheet;

- The recommendations and actions from the previous meeting were not included in the current Action Sheet.
- The Members wished to know why recommended changes they put forward and Officers verbally agreed during the meeting were not implemented prior to the Annual Corporate Safeguarding report being submitted to Cabinet.
- The Committee had not yet received the additional information that was requested at the previous meeting.

The Scrutiny Adviser informed the Committee that the additional information would be requested from Officers and the outstanding actions would be added to the Action Sheet

3 **Finance Team Update**

Attendees;

- Merion Rushworth – Head of Finance

The Head of Finance introduced the two information reports provided in response to the outstanding actions from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee meeting on the 31 January 2019. The first of the two information reports updated the Committee on the Corporate Plan Commitments and their financial impact on the budget. The Head of Finance then explained the Budget Process the Council would be using for the year 2019/2020. The Committee asked the following questions;

- The Committee reminded the Officer that in the past they had recommended that the Council looked to plan financially across the medium term, and to consult with the public about the medium term savings instead of doing it year by year and consulting at the end of December and start of January. The Officer agreed with the Committee and stated that it was his professional opinion that the Council should look to set up a longer term saving plans in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan, instead of waiting for the annual Welsh Government settlement and then consulting. The Officer continued to say that there was a gap where a Strategic Change Framework could be put in place. This Strategic Change Framework would coordinate any high level plans and projects that the Council were designing or implementing.
- The Newport Knowledge Quarter had been discussed a number of times by the Committee. If the Knowledge Quarter was to be developed would the Council provide capital investment to support it? The Officer informed the Committee that this was one area they were currently looking at and its capital implications. Coleg Gwent, sixth forms and schools were all involved in the discussions. The Officer quoted 18 million pounds would be made available for developing the Knowledge Quarter from the capital investment and that Cabinet wanted the deal and were close to a resolution.
- A Member pointed out that in the Corporate Plan Commitments table 'waste' had been misspelled as 'water'. The Officer agreed to change this and went onto say that with Welsh Government support the second household waste recycling facility was close to completion.
- The Officer reassured the Committee that they were working hard to ensure that the out of county provision that had cost Education and Children and Young Peoples Services £3.9 million in 2019/2020 would be refocused through increasing residential home places in Newport going forward.
- The Committee requested more information on the apprenticeships included in the report. The Officer explained that these apprentices were all within the Council, they were able to access free training through Welsh Government funding and the Council were partnered with ACT training to provide the training. The Council were the only Welsh Council to take part in the Local Government Association Graduate Scheme. The Council were also proud to be offering 22 Looked After Children the opportunity to get valuable work experience, the young people were all paid above the minimum apprentice wage as well.
- The Committee Members raised serious concerns that the Corporate Plan commitments contained no reference to the Councils carbon footprint and following other councils lead to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Officer explained that a number of the points raised were indeed in motion but as they were not included in the Corporate Plan commitments there was no mechanism for him to include the additional information. The Council were looking at fleet vehicles being electrified, solar panels being used in the recycling tips, car charging point network through the City and we had recently hired two new renewable energy related posts into the Regeneration, Investment and Housing service area.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their time.

Conclusions

The Committee made the following comments and recommendations on the finance update;

- The Committee recommended that the Senior Leadership Team look at implementing a Strategic Change Framework line in with what the Head of Finance introduced to the Committee.

- The Committee recommended that the Council commit to become carbon neutral, self-impose a deadline and create an action plan to achieve this.
- The Committee requested feedback on whether the Council had created a ten year plan and whether this document was still viable.

4 Annual Information Risk Report

Attendees;

- Rhys Cornwall – Head of People and Business Change
- Mark Bleazard – Information Development Manager
- Tariq Slaoui – Information Manager

The Head of People and Business Change introduced the report and explained that this was not a statutory report but something the Council did as best practice. Each year the Council produce this report as act of transparency and openness. There will always be a risk associated with information but we are trying to mitigate those risks by creating and implementing processes, procedures and training staff. The report covered a number of areas including the introduction of GDPR, Freedom of Information requests and covered up until 31st March 2019.

The Committee asked the following questions;

- If there was a data breach where one of the other SRS partners were affected, would our information be at risk? The Head of Service informed the Committee that all of Newport's data is segregated from other organisations, without exception. The data belongs to the organisation and SRS just host it on their servers. With Office 365 you might see Monmouth email addresses in the address book but this does mean they can access our information.
- One of the members explained to the Committee that they are using their work issued mobile for emails, but the new app does not require a password to access and queried whether this was a risk? The Officers explained that some of the new facilities were not as secure as they could have been and they were working on some issues and bugs with the new hardware and software. They thanked the Member for bringing to their attention and asked to speak with him later to see what they could do to increase the security on his phone. The Head of Service explained that financially moving to Office 365 was the cheaper option for the Council at the time, which meant that they made the transition sooner than they would have liked.
- The Committee drew the Officers attention to the significant increase in Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, and the reasons for this. The Officers stated that they did not know why there had been an increase in FOI requests, but it might be due to people becoming more aware of the process. There are ten or twelve data sets available online to the public and the Council were looking at ways of introducing more. There was a self-interest in decreasing the number of FOIs due to the ever increasing impact it had on staff resources. The FOI requests covered everything from Brexit and Grenfell. The Committee asked if themes were identified and added to the FOI transparency page and Officers stated that this was something that could be looked at in the future. The Officer explained that one problem they faced with FOI was a citizen could ask as many questions as they wished, sometimes which required multiple officers from across the organisation to answer, which impacted on our ability to respond within the time limit of twenty working days.
- The Officers explained that the personal notebook that contained Newport City Council data was taken when an employee left. This was a data breach because regardless of who owned the notebook, Newport City Council owned the data contained in it. The

Officers reassured the Councillors that the exit process for employees had been changed to reflect this newly identified risk.

- The Committee requested more information on the process of staff claiming expenses. The Head of Service informed the Committee that all HR claims were made through the online HR system, they had seen a decrease of sixty thousand pounds since switching from paper based.
- The Officer informed the Committee that they were planning to apply for the Cyber Essential Plus accreditation in July 2019, in line with Cyber Essential Plus funding from Welsh Government.

Conclusions

The Committee made the following comments and recommendations to the Cabinet Member;

- The Committee recommended that the Freedom of Information requests and responses are documented on the internet, the Committee also felt that they should be categorised and organised by theme.
- The Committee recommended that the transparency webpage should be expanded to allow the citizens of Newport access to more information.

5 Draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19

Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19

The Scrutiny and Governance Officer introduced the Scrutiny annual Report to the Committee, while highlighting the key sections and their contents. The Officer invited questions from the Committee;

- The Committee asked what had been done to align the Scrutiny Work Programme with Cabinets. The Officer explained that a complete alignment was difficult to achieve for a number of reasons. Scrutiny was very reactive, when more could be done to be proactive in forecasting and identifying possible scrutiny agenda items this would involve further engagement from Heads of Service and Directors.
- The Committee were concerned that the impact of the Scrutiny Committee was not being highlighted in the report and the value for money was not represented for the citizens of Newport. The Officer explained that Scrutiny received feedback on some agenda items, but if the Committee wished for more feedback from Cabinet or Cabinet Members then they would need to request this. The Officer continued to say that the Scrutiny team were working on a new method of collating, tracking and presenting recommendations and related responses to the Committee.
- The Officer informed the Committee that the reference to engagement in the report was related to the Scrutiny function of the Council and not public engagement on a whole across the Council. The Officer will change the report to clarify the engagement section.
- The Officer clarified that it was difficult to measure what impact the Committee had made when scrutinising certain items, like the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order and Civil Parking Enforcement, due to the decisions being taken at Council but the report could contain the recommendations and comments the Committee made towards all past agenda items but this would be very resources intensive and make the final report very large.

- The Committee asked if there could be more information included about the scrutiny of the regional city deal. The Officer informed the Committee that this was not appropriate as the Scrutiny was done independent of the scrutiny function of the Council. The Chair of the PSC Partnership committee is the Council representative on the scrutiny committee for the regional city deal. The Chair of the Committee reports back to the Partnership Committee after city deal scrutiny. If any members are interested in the regional city deal scrutiny then they could look at the minutes from the Partnership Committee.

Conclusions

The Committee made the following comments and recommendations relating to the Scrutiny Annual Report;

- The Committee recommended that more was done to track the impact the Committees conclusions had and for a mechanism to be created to feed this back at later meetings.
- The Committee recommended that Scrutiny link the work programmes of its four Committees to the Cabinets work programme.

6 **Scrutiny Adviser Reports**

A) Forward Work Programme

The Scrutiny Adviser presented the Forward Work Programme, and informed the Committee of the agenda items scheduled;

26 September 2019, the agenda items;

- Corporate Annual Plan
- Toilet Strategy
- Draft Economic Regeneration Strategy

The Committee requested that this meetings start time be moved from 5pm to 4pm to accommodate Members with prior commitments and schedule conflicts.

1 November 2019, the agenda items;

- Performance Management Strategy – Recommendations Monitoring