

# Minutes



## Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

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Date: 10 September 2021

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors L Lacey (Chair), G Berry, P Hourahine, M Al-Nuaimi, Y Forsey, C Ferris, M Evans and Hussain

Rhys Cornwall (Head of People and Business Change), Chris Humphrey (Interim Strategic Director - People), Beverly Owen (Strategic Director (Place)), Connor Hall (Scrutiny Adviser), Samantha Schanzer and Felicity Collins

In Attendance:

Apologies: Councillors C Evans

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### 1 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Ferris declared an interest as a Patron of the Friends of Newport Ship and stated the intention to raise a related issue during the meeting.

### 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

A committee member asked that in the first paragraph of page 10 it be clarified that the attending Police Officer, Sergeant Butt agreed that a blanket ban on begging would assist in tackling the issue.

A committee member asked to amend page 11 of the minutes to add “frequently” when discussing the advertisement of the PSPO consultation being done on social media to express the expectation that it being an ongoing campaign to include the public.

A committee member asked for a note to be made regarding the agenda being changed to ensure consistency.

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2021 were then accepted as a true and accurate record.

### 3 Corporate Annual Report and Director of Social Services Report

The Leader welcomed the committee to the presentation and proposed to begin this item by presenting an overview of the report. The Leader began by expressing her pleasure to present the 4<sup>th</sup> Corporate Annual Progress Report 2020-21 on Newport City Council’s progress against the Corporate Plan 2017-22. The Leader reminded committee that the purpose of the report is to reflect on previous year, and assess the achievements made, the improvements to be made and to look forward to the remainder of the term. The Leader informed committee that a more detailed analysis of the Council’s performance across the 8 service areas was reported to the Performance Scrutiny Committee in June and the report

presented to committee today summarises the Council's overall delivery against service plans and reflects on other statutory requirements that the Council delivers.

The Leader welcomed the opportunity to for the committee to provide feedback, recommendations on improving the important and any considerations that the Cabinet and Senior Officers had not taken into account. The Leader advised committee that the final report would be taken to Cabinet in October and published on the Council's website in both Welsh and English.

The Leader stressed that it was important to be mindful that this reflection was undertaken during the pandemic, and not all data was available due to the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association suspending some benchmarking across authorities during 2020-21. The Leader acknowledged the limited benchmarking data available for the 2020-21 period as the focus for all 22 authorities was on maintaining essential service provision during this period.

The Leader reminded committee that in 2017, 4 wellbeing objectives were set to improve constituent's lives; these being to improve skills, educational outcomes and employment opportunities; to promote economic growth and regeneration while protecting the environment; to enable people to be healthy, independent and resilient; and to build cohesive and sustainable communities. The Leader noted that these objectives were at the core of the Council's Corporate Plan and delivery over this term.

The Leader acknowledged that the last 18 months had been challenging for the Council, the communities, and the Council's partners, and that the pandemic had and would continue to have an impact on communities and the economy in Newport. The Leader further acknowledged that over this period, the Council have had to make difficult decisions to ensure that services were maintained for the city's most vulnerable people, that staff and Members were protected and ensuring that services, businesses and people adhered to restrictions and guidance. The Leader stated that they have taken this opportunity to reflect on what has been learned and to recognise the Council's partners and Newport's communities for their efforts.

The Leader highlighted the inequality that the crisis has emphasised and that they were fully aware of the challenges and further work needed to be overcome this gap but also wanted to ensure services would be sustainably delivered in the long term for these communities.

The Leader stated that Cabinet endorsed 4 strategic recovery aims in order to support the Council's response and recovery, which closely aligned to the Corporate Plan wellbeing objectives. The main aims were to ensure the Council were able to respond to the crisis, recover its services and learn and develop with new opportunities. These strategic recovery objectives were to understand and respond to the additional challenges presented by Covid-19, to understand and respond to the impact of Covid-19 on the city's economic and environmental goals, to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of people, and to provide people with the resources needed when coming out of the pandemic. The Leader informed committee that the delivery of these aims was monitored by the service plans and were reviewed by the Performance Scrutiny Committee in June. The Leader added that the Council's Cabinet receive monthly updates on the Covid-19 response and the progress made against the recovery aims.

The Leader wanted to emphasise the capital programme where in 2020-21, the capital spend was £26.2m on assets and projects to maintain and improve service delivery which included £7m investment schools under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme, asset maintenance of school buildings, £10m towards active travel schemes and conversion to electric fleet vehicles, £1.6m investment in social care and £7m investment regeneration projects. The Leader recognised that this was done during the challenge of the pandemic.

The Leader introduced the first wellbeing objective and strategic recovery aim for an overview, which focused on education, reducing inequalities in education, providing people with skills and training to support the economy, and providing employment opportunities:

- The Leader noted that this objective aligned with the strategic recovery aim which focused on providing a safe environment for children and ensuring students had access to technology and devices to undertake learning. The Leader also noted that it was focused on ensuring the gap between disadvantaged and BAME children didn't

widen due to the pandemic, as well as supporting those made unemployed due to the crisis with retraining and returning to work which has seen progress over the Summer.

- The Leader emphasised that despite challenges faced by students and schools, good GCSE and A-Level results were achieved. The Leader reminded committee that the Council and schools supported pupils with free school meals using supermarket vouchers, as well as providing 6700 devices to pupils, 1300 MyFi units for internet access. The Leader mentioned the support that vulnerable children had received, focusing on key initiatives for well-being and mental health. The Leader mentioned the work surrounding the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme that was enabled through collaboration between the Council and programme.
- The Leader stated that it would be “remiss of [her]” to not emphasise the key role of the Community Regeneration Team from Community Hubs where they offer support to families and communities. The Leader expanded on this to acknowledge that despite the challenges experienced, they had worked with Digital Communities Wales and were able to offer I.T. equipment and support for remote learning and offered support through the Reach Restart Programme, which was offered to refugees in the city, with 95 assessments and supporting 74 people to gain skills and qualifications
- The Leader invited questions about said objective to which a committee member noted that the committee had agreed in the pre-meeting to hear the whole report and then submit questions. The Chair questioned whether the Leader was happy to continue the presentation, to which the Leader agreed.

The Leader introduced the second wellbeing objective, which outlined the promotion of economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment:

- The Leader noted that it aligned to the Strategic Recovery aim 2 which dealt with the support of the environment and the economy, and the economic recovery from the impacts of Covid-19 and Brexit, and recognised the work being done to improve the environment with the Council’s and Welsh Government’s commitment to be Net Zero on carbon emissions by 2030.
- The Leader acknowledged the outstanding contribution that teams have made, making specific note of the efforts of the Finance Team who in 2020-21 administered over £19m in rates relief which resulted in huge pressures being taken away from 1000 businesses. The Leader acknowledged the collaboration between the Council and businesses which allowed them to reopen and offered advice and guidance on creating and maintaining Covid secure environments. The Leader emphasised the “tremendous” effort that public protection teams have made in their implementation of support of that; the Leader recognised non-compliance work undertaken and the scale of the work, wherein almost 5000 visits were made to support businesses and undertake compliance assessments, over 2500 businesses received advice from the team, the Business Support Team has provided over 4000 businesses with advice and financial support through the Welsh Government Discretionary Grant Fund, separate to the aforementioned rates relief provided. The team has also supported various grant funding schemes.
- The Leader noted that during this period, key regeneration projects have been impacted by the pandemic but progress has been made, giving examples of the

market arcade project, the indoor market, the sorting office, information station and the Chartist tower. The Leader reminds committee of the significant funding received toward the repairs of the transporter bridge and development of the new visitors centre. The Leader mentioned that the proposals for new leisure project and knowledge quarter have been well received by the public and was pleased to highlight that plans have been submitted for the leisure project.

- The Leader informed committee that the Council and Waste Savers continued to provide waste services to residents and businesses. The Leader acknowledged that despite the suspension of certain benchmarking by Welsh Government, where other authorities suspended or reduced these services, Newport City Council continued to provide them.
- The Leader highlighted the achievements of recycle rates within Newport as among the highest in Wales, that they were the first council in Wales to purchase an electric refuse vehicle; over 20 charge points were installed across Newport sites, and upgraded street and parking lighting has been installed across Newport Live and car parking sites. Continued efforts made to reduce and respond to fly tipping within the city resulted in some successful prosecutions and the “No Mow May” project to improve urban wildlife and bio-diversity.

The Leader introduced the third objective of the report - to enable people to be healthy, independent and resilient.

- The Leader noted that this aligned with the Strategic Recovery aim to support the health and wellbeing of citizens.
- The Leader noted that these objectives are focused on social care and the prevention work that the Council and its partners deliver, but also includes the preventive work done regarding active travel and the work done to reduce the use of cars. The Leader expanded this point to include the focus on supporting social care across city due to the significant demand this sector has faced across Wales during this period, which is also considered protection of Council staff while delivering the services needed.
- The Leader highlighted that the Council maintained essential support services for vulnerable people across the city and during this period, to lessen the impact of isolation and loneliness on people, the Council maintained the connection for residents with families using technology and facilitated virtual contact. The Leader noted the development of a new outreach service, which will become permanent. The Leader drew attention to the increase in mental health references and highlighted that practitioners continued to take face-to-face assessments and emphasised the far reaching impacts of the pandemic.
- The Leader highlighted that the Council were able to support those with learning difficulties with a new housing scheme in March and that the Community Connector Services has provided a service for over 2000 residents. The Leader added that children’s services had continued, and a new model of residential care has been developed for children and young people, and Rosedale opened in March 2021.
- The Leader highlighted that despite the pandemic, they have maintained relationships and worked closely with partners, and it would be “remiss” not to emphasise the partnership working with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and other Gwent local authorities to develop a successful test, trace and protect service. The Leader brought attention to other partnerships, naming Newport Live and the TTP Service for

their support in vaccination programme by establishing mass vaccination centres.

- The Leader noted the huge increase in people wanting to get outside and undertake activity and noted the increase in those wanting to exercise. The Leader highlighted the event hosted in October to support Cleaner Air Day Wales and have delivered new active travel routes. The Leader noted that consultation has opened for residents to be able to feedback on the active travel map.

The Leader introduced the fourth objective, which is to build cohesive and sustainable communities.

- The Leader explained that these objectives are focused on communities, housing and support for vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. The Leader explained that considering the pandemic and wider societal issues, this aim also includes the provision of opportunities to individuals and communities to address such issues and concerns with Council.
- The Leader highlighted that at the start of the pandemic, the focus was on providing accommodation, mental health and physical health support for homeless constituents which would not have been achieved without partner and through working with registered social landlord partners and Police, the Council have been able ensure people have been provided affordable and secure housing. The Leader noted that many homeless individual do have challenging and complex lives and repeat placements are common, and there is “intensive” work being done around that, with projects being undertaken with the hope of increasing the affordable and secure housing to 38 units in the future.
- The Leader highlighted the Neighbourhood Hub teams, who have made wellbeing calls to over 5000 shielding residents, delivered food parcels to isolated and vulnerable families and coordinated Welsh Government food parcel scheme. The Leader highlighted that in the Ringland ward, they worked on a home food growing initiative. The Leader continued to include the Flying Start teams have worked on digital sessions to support parents and that there has been some successful partnership working overall with statutory partners, Police, South Wales Fire and Rescue, Natural Resources Wales and Fly Tipping Action Wales to create an anti-social behaviour data dashboard to collaboratively focus efforts and find solutions. The Leader went on to include the community impact assessments, which resulted in participatory budgeting which is aimed at helping the recovery of communities; many local groups have been successful in this including Parents for Change, Fit and Fed, and a range of others. The Leader noted that the allocations and grant awards were allocated via a peer review project, so citizens were directly able to decide on the projects they wanted to support.
- The Leader noted that the Council have worked closely with communities to address hate speech.
- The Leader highlighted the Green Flag awards for Belle Vue and Beechwood have continued and the implementation of refill stations have continued.

A committee member thanked the Leader for a comprehensive introduction to the report and noted it was easier to gather all strands of a detailed report in this way. The committee member expressed a desire to present a question regarding objective two. The committee member fully agreed with the impressive work carried out by the Council to support businesses during Covid-19. The committee member commented that many had failed to

appreciate the magnitude of problem the start of a lockdown presented, and while most businesses have been able to continue through the pandemic and emerge, unfortunately some have been unable to do so. The committee member commented that it would be unfair not to commend Cabinet, the Leader and Welsh Government, who have made it possible to support businesses with money made available. The committee member commended the serious piece of work that meant businesses have survived and are able to look to the future. The committee member directed the Leader to page 33 of the report and explained that it had taken the committee member a while to realise that the two tables at the bottom of that page are addressing different aims – one addressing growth and regeneration and the other addressing the environment and economy. They noted that the term “steps” didn’t feel clear and asked for clarity on what it meant exactly. The committee member noted that report was very timely and laudable. The committee member felt that there was a good feel about the areas around market – especially when pubs and restaurants able to open which was very impressive, though noted a lack of people as it was during the week and felt there was still work to be done to increase footfall. The committee member expressed the hope that the market arcade and refurbishment would contribute to this and noted the increase in new business on Commercial Street. The committee member added that there were still several empty shops and expressed a desire for the city to be seen as favourably as it was in the past, noting the sentiment seen on social media where pictures have been shared showing a busy city centre. The committee member added that empty shops should be filled to encourage liveliness in the city again. The committee member felt that the key to achieving these aims was jobs to encourage earning and spending within the city. The committee member was interested in the Leader’s thoughts on how to start bringing about this change.

- The Leader noted that ideas within a Local Authority take a long time to become implemented and for outcomes to be realised. The Leader highlighted some schemes featured in the report including indoor market and the market arcade which they have been trying develop and bring forward during the duration of the Corporate Plan. The Leader expressed her delight to hear the difference has been noticed. The Leader moved on to discuss employment opportunities, which saw growth within the city including the rail plant which provided 300 skilled jobs. The Leader highlighted the importance of ensuring a pipeline of talents and skills coming through the city so local people can take up opportunities, stay in the city and build opportunities for the future. The Leader noted that there will be a continuation in the growth and expansion, especially of Digital and I.T. sectors, with USW and Coleg Gwent being important in this. The Leader noted that Coleg Gwent coming into the city, as well as the plans for the new leisure facility reflected commitment to Newport but also was set to increase footfall in the city and for local businesses. The Leader agreed with the committee member that it is an outstanding achievement to continue with schemes during the period, but the plan to help increase economic growth and regeneration has been implemented and we are starting to see positive outcomes from this. The Leader highlighted importance of technology and digital economy when seeing the transformation of retail. The Leader noted that people looking for “more of an experience” rather than just simple retail expectations and business starting to thrive around that model. The Leader finished by noting that it was wonderful to see the resilience of businesses and the thriving city Newport is becoming.
- The Chief Executive Officer noted that the Leader covered the main points regarding the question but added that the committee member was right that the Council is facing a challenging period of contraction though it is not unique to Newport. The Chief Executive Officer noted that being in the city centre is similar to other town and city centres during weekdays. The Chief Executive Officer assured the committee that when working towards the next iteration of the Corporate Plan, it will be updated looking at what has been achieved and new plans will be created. The Chief Executive Officer noted the significant progress made but admitted that there was still more to do; bringing footfall into the city is not just about building projects but agrees

with the committee member that it is also about jobs. The Chief Executive Officer highlighted the New Normal Report which is coming through to Cabinet, and that the focus as an organisation was on retaining “our heart within the core of Newport” and to work with Newport Live, Coleg Gwent, USW and others to hear their intentions to breathe new life in city campus, but the Corporate Plan must look at the city centre and at repurposing and reprofiling for in the upcoming years.

The committee member questioned that with the loss of the previous help and investment from the Welsh Development Agency (which was absorbed by WG), did the Chief Executive Officer feel that Newport could benefit from having such a partnership and advisers again?

- The Chief Executive Officer noted the strong working relationships with Welsh Government, both within the regeneration team and with the investment team and what has facilitated a different relationship with Welsh Government and adds value to the work in Newport is the Cardiff Capital region activity. The Chief Executive Officer continued to say that Newport were the first recipients of this investment. The Chief Executive Officer noted that the WGA was a “bit of a red herring” as the powers were transferred back into Welsh Government and those relationships are maintained. The Chief Executive Officer noted that both she and the Leader were having conversations with officials as and when necessary. The Chief Executive Officer finished by assuring committee that they were doing all they can to lobby, but there was more to do in terms of regeneration and investment and to push for Newport at every juncture.

A committee member expressed that it had been fantastic how local businesses have been supported and thought more about that could've been included in the report. The committee member questioned how could that relationship with local businesses be built on. The committee member went on to highlight that thousands of phone calls made to residents and food parcels were delivered. The committee member had a presentation question relating to page 8 of the report, noting the graph of the budget versus the actual, and thought some improvement could be made to the presentation of information. The committee member questioned the order of items and thought they could be ordered more logically with categories given, suggesting it would be better presented in the eight service areas in report. The committee member felt that the first two items needed more explanation. The committee member moved to objective two, noting that Newport's canal is an important part of the city's heritage and thus should be included in report. The committee member moved on to highlight the EU funded initiatives noted on page 12 (EU Social Fund, Inspire to Work, Journey to Work, Skills at Work etc) – would these be stopping and if so when, and was there anything to replace them?

- The Leader highlighted the recent grant of £1m to improve the canal tow path between Bettws and Cwmbran.
- The Chief Executive Officer asked for clarity on where the graphs referenced are within the reports. The committee member provided direction and expressed that more explanation was required on the first two items first as well as the categories needing more consideration, referring back to the previous suggestion.
- The Leader clarified for the Chief Executive Officer what the committee member had asked.
- The Chief Executive Officer apologised as she was experiencing technological issues but went on to explain that the capital finance cost is the borrowing cost associated with any capital borrowed.

- The Leader explained that the heading for non-service finance in relation to budget was money spent on things not directly related to service delivery, for example the Chief Executive's office and is the cost of borrowing and supporting capital programme. The Leader suggested that officers went away and redeveloped graph with more explanation of graph to help members and public with consultation of members of committee.
- The committee was happy with this suggestion. The committee member noted that there was a lot of great information in the report, and it would be good if it had a wide readership.
- The committee member raises a further concern regarding the financial prosperity of the city and asked if it would be possible to include information such as how many jobs and businesses there were, the unemployment rate etc to provide a fuller picture of the financial position.
- The Chief Executive Officer apologised again for her technological issues and reassured the committee that this could be included, and the annual report could be embellished with the information, but the Chief Executive Officer reminded committee that when reporting on economic growth, the information would already be contained within specific reports presented to scrutiny.

A committee member noted that the 2017 Corporate Plan's aims and objectives were laid out clearly and have evolved but raised a concern when looking at comparisons. The committee member gave the example of achieving Purple Flag status for Nightclubs, which the committee member was happy had been achieved, but noted that there was no recognition for the original aims and no way to scrutinise whether they had been achieved. The committee member appreciated the great work and unique circumstances of the last 18 months and thanked all those involved in this. The committee member was wary that what had been heard during the meeting presented an incomplete picture of Newport wherein the positives had been presented but not the weaknesses. The committee member noted that they needed to be more realistic and recognise that there are weaknesses, giving the examples of empty buildings and issues with footfall. The committee member recognised that the picture presented was different for residents, namely on social media and that weaknesses should be addressed and improved upon to improve this for residents. The committee member commented that while performance indicators understandably had stopped during the pandemic, some of them have no data going back to 2017-18. The committee member expressed that they found it difficult to believe that there was no data recorded for this period. The committee member highlighted data from page 45, namely the number of packages of reablement completed throughout the year which the Council should have data on though wasn't presented, as well as highlighting the data presented on disabled facility grants, noting the increase from 171 days to 239 days, which had increased significantly. The committee member commented that in previous years comparisons had been made against other Local Authorities and felt that it would be important moving forward to recognise and note whether this has impacted more on Newport than other Local Authorities. The committee member stressed how important the job of scrutiny is and expressed that if the Council wasn't comparing with Authorities across the UK, it would become very difficult to scrutinise weaknesses and strengths to address and improve. The committee member finished by saying that the point of the question was not to be negative as the committee member recognises the positive achievements of the Council but wished that there was a more balanced argument presented and asked for an explanation regarding the missing data.

- The Leader noted that she couldn't comment regarding data as it was an operational question but in regard to the missing data, as well as benchmarking being suspended, there had also been changes in its measure. The Leader commented



that there was a great deal of data relating to performance scrutiny and reminded committee that an annual report is a summary of this information. The Leader suggested that digital links be made available to other data that has been presented to other scrutiny committees so that members would have access to that information.

- The Leader highlighted the considerable investment made in terms of economic growth and expressed the need to be mindful that the economy is changing and there is a growing demand for different sectors with other sectors contracting, which the Council are seeking to respond to and be one step ahead of. The Leader expressed her pride in the attraction of digital and technological businesses to Newport. The Leader highlighted that she had taken the Minister for Economy to Brand Lab in the former Queens Hotel, which is a multi-million-pound investment in it, which will benefit the people of the city, as well as visiting a digital media business which has contracts with Channel 4 and the BBC. The Leader acknowledged that the committee member was correct, that more support for traditional sectors must be available. The Leader finished by noting that the report was a reflection of the past year, and that now we were moving into the end of the term, was confident that all objectives would be complete.
- The Head of People and Business Change thanked the committee member for the points presented and acknowledged the significant issues encountered with benchmarking data for the 2020-21 year and hoped to manage expectations. The Head of People and Business Change noted that a lot of performance data was incorporated into data that goes to other committees. The Head of People and Business Change suggested that if committee felt an annex was needed, it could be included so that data was available, and committee could view trend data. The Head of People and Business Change noted that there was a caveat and noted that Welsh Government produced limited benchmarking data across Local Authorities which was not entirely accurate as a result. The Head of People and Business Change noted if it made it easier to see progression said data could be provided in a table.
- The committee member noted that the report lacked data, and though there has been an understandable change due to circumstance, that there was some data not present which should have been. The committee member understood that amendments and changes had been made but couldn't believe that whole sections had experienced such dramatic change that no data is longer relevant to be presented.
- The Head of People and Business Change expressed that he would check for data but noted that changes in social services were significant.
- The Acting Director of Social Services noted that a lot of this data and information was available but wanted to give an example to committee of the changes of measures. The Acting Director of Social Services explained that the performance framework was based on what they had to legally report into Welsh Government and expressed that what the Acting Director of Social Services would consider "management information" is available but wanted to give committee an example of it has changed and how careful they must be in its reporting. The Acting Director of Social Services noted that in 2018-19 there were 3147 adult social care assessments; in 2019-20, there were 4038 done but in 2020-21 they can only count 2500 due to a change in how they are counted, only being able to acknowledge new contacts rather than those they have previously contacted, so the total number was significantly more than they had been able to report this year as a result. The Acting Director of Social

Services stated that they do have that information, but due to the delays in implementing the new performance framework, it would not be reported officially.

The committee member acknowledged that having that information was helpful and noted that from a committee point of view, that changes had been going on for decades. The committee member expressed frustration and that perhaps there was a need for a recommendation to go to Cabinet to ask Welsh Government for stability.

A committee member noted that valuable points on data had been raised but noted the mention of social media and residents' perceptions of the city, which the committee member expressed wasn't appropriate to be considered objective data and did not believe that social media could be used as a statistically representative measure of Newport's successes or failings to be included in reports.

Another committee member responded to clarify that it was a general comment, not just relating to social media, but also comments from residents and constituents and was an image problem.

The committee member directed attention to page 32, specifically to the table regarding the transition of young people into education and the wider world. The committee member noted that these targets were comfortably met and that there should be some hardening of the targets as a result. The committee member then drew attention to the red performances, acknowledging the difficult and exceptional year before and asked whether these people had been missed and forgotten about or would a follow up be attempted? The committee member was generally welcoming of Corporate Reports, and noted it was fantastic to get so much information for comparative purposes. The committee member accepted the points made by the Chief Executive Officer and the Director. The committee member expressed a need for comparison to be done fairly between Newport and other Local Authorities if it were to be done and finished by thanking the Leader and Officers.

- The Head of People and Business Change assured the committee that targets would be challenged in performance scrutiny committees. The Head of People and Business Change took on board the committee member's point about the challenge associated with the figures, he encouraged the committee to contextualise that it wasn't long ago 1/10 young people leaving schools would become NEETs, which was the highest rate in Wales at the time. The Head of People and Business Change reminded committee of the huge effort that had gone into making sure that young people leaving education had maintained contact with learning opportunities, and that a partnership effort had been required. The Head of People and Business Change advised committee that as they had been through performance scrutiny, the targets are appropriate, and the young people recorded as unknown following compulsory education will be tracked and work will be attempted to be done with them.
- The Leader reassured committee that the Youth Academy and Work-based Academy had over 60 young people engaged in programmes who were at risk of becoming NEETs for those to be able to be engaged sustainably.
- The Chief Executive Officer reassured committee that teams regularly work through red areas and deep dive any issues and that even though they had been through a pandemic and as a result the first few months of attention was focused on recovery and response, that performance was still a priority to monitor and improve. The Chief Executive Officer noted that this enabled open discussions with committees as sometimes investment would be required and highlighted the strong focus on performance trends.
  - The Chief Executive Officer wanted to take the opportunity to explain an answer to a previous question as she now had access to the data. The Chief Executive Officer reminded the committee that the 'Capital Cost' was

regarding financing a capital programme or project and 'Central Finance' was non-service areas. The Chief Executive Officer assured committee that finance colleagues would give a more detailed update and review how this data was presented.

- The committee member acknowledged the hard work put in by the team and the Head of People and Business Change's passion for the project. The committee member wanted to highlight the Leaders' mention of the issues of vulnerable young people and felt that closing down on these issues would help ensure Newport becoming a safer place.

A committee member apologised for missing part of meeting as lost connection. The committee member noted that the £1m spend on the canal was good news, especially considering Cwmbran's work on their canal and Caerphilly's major structural work. The committee member however felt that they could do more as a council. The committee member expressed their disappointment that the Medieval Ship was not listed as it had been around for 19 years, with final completion of the reconstruction of all timbers next year. The committee member expressed that the Medieval ship was an important cultural asset, with £8m being spent on the ship to date and encouraging an estimated 150,000 visitors. The committee member felt it was important to be included as cultural asset as it was an investment, and they should get a return on it.

- The Chief Executive Officer acknowledged that this was a point to be picked up and further discussed.
- The Leader expressed that it was an important asset and supported officers adding it to the report.

A committee member commented on the well-readable report and felt that there was a balance of methods of communication, highlighting the calendar included. The committee member thanked the invitees their time.

- The Leader thanked committee for their comments and echoed comments made by colleagues to thank officer teams, highlighting that this was all achieved in the context of the pandemic.

#### 4 **Strategic Equality Plan**

Councillor Mayer presented the report. Councillor Mayer reminded committee that under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to report annually on its progress made under the strategic equality objectives and are also required as a Local Authority to publish staff equalities data. Councillor Mayer highlighted new partnerships were developed with external and internal stakeholders and were subject to community engagement. Councillor Mayer noted that the involvement of grassroots communities ensured that the plan provides tangible outcomes for communities. Councillor Mayer acknowledged that there were significant challenges against delivery in some areas of work, but others had gained traction. Councillor Mayer noted that equality work had to be flexible while addressing emerging challenges. Councillor Mayer explained to committee that leaving the EU has been deeply felt by migrant community and the focus of supporting people to be able to remain in Newport and protect their rights continues. Councillor Mayer noted that they were also taking stock of monitoring arrangements and any improvements that could be made to them. Councillor Mayer finished by assuring committee that equality issues are taken very seriously as a cabinet and reminded committee that he chaired for the Strategic Equality group.

The Head of People and Business Change reminded committee that this was the first annual plan based off the new Strategic Equalities plan and that committee could see that there were 6 key focuses. The Head of People and Business Change directed committee to pages 119-121 which was a summary that covered outcomes and key achievements.

The Head of People and Business Change highlighted that the Council had signed up to Race Council Cymru Zero Tolerance policy and the Victims Support Hate Crime Charter. The Head of People and Business Change noted that there has been legislative change regarding the socio-economic duty which has come into effect and has been embedded in decision making. The Head of People and Business Change highlighted the creation of staff groups related to diversity, LGBTQ+ and disabilities to ensure staff voices are heard and also highlighted the accessibility stakeholder group. The Head of People and Business Change noted the close work with the Test, Trace and Protect group to ensure equality and cultural diversity are taken into account, acknowledging the disproportional impact to some minority communities. The Head of People and Business Change noted that Welsh Government Anti-Bullying guidance has been embedded into processes and policies. The Head of People and Business Change highlighted the new scheme for those with learning difficulties to increase independent living and that Community Connectors have worked with 302 residents from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The Head of People and Business Change highlighted that Newport was one of a few Local Authorities that publishes its gender pay gap each year which was reported at Council and noted that this continued to improve. The Head of People and Business Change noted the need to focus on the pay gap associated with other characteristics, and a lot of work has been done to improve that. The Head of People and Business Change highlighted that there was work being done regarding the recruit processes are improved and not exclusive of any qualities. The Head of People and Business Change noted the significant influence of Covid on communities, and the Council's response to EU settled status which the Head of People and Business Change assured committee that they were working with Home Office regarding these issues.

- A committee member echoed Councillor Mayer's comment that sitting on the Strategic Equalities Committee was enjoyable and the work done by officers was bringing Newport into being a more inclusive city. The committee member noted that the report was well put together.

A committee member noted that on page 123 it stated that the Leader of the Council established a community roundtable meeting to bring people of ethnic backgrounds together to discuss race equality and asked for an explanation as to how membership is decided for that group. The committee member noted that the committee member hadn't heard of the group before.

- The Head of People and Business Change informed the committee that it was an informal group wherein the Leader meets with some BAME community representatives and was in part a response to Covid but also to the Black Lives Matter issues and other issues seen within Newport. The Head of People and Business Change informed committee that this group met every 3 months.
- The Connected Communities Manager noted the well-established cultural hub made up of around 23 grassroots community organisations. This hub exists virtually, and members are nominated through these organisations. The Connected Communities Manager also noted that members also come from their main race equality organisations including East Race Council Cymru etc and reiterated that it was established off of the back of Black Lives Matter campaign and a lack of confidence in

public services at the time.

A committee member raised concern regarding self-appointed representatives who don't necessarily represent the views of other people within community. The committee member mentioned the fortnightly meetings with Gwent Police and the Partnership meeting with the Council and asked whether these were similar and asked how people were appointed to the roundtable committee.

- The Connected Communities Manager assured the committee that the issue was something they were acutely aware of and that the Leader was passionate about hearing grassroots voices rather than self-appointed ones. The Connected Communities Manager reassured committee that there was a good mix of people who haven't previously been heard and those who are experienced cultural representatives. The Connected Communities Manager addressed that partnership meetings and the fortnightly dial in were police lead and established in early lockdown; The Connected Communities Manager reminded committee that this was an open invitation to anyone across Gwent.

A committee member wanted to applaud the Leader for her enthusiasm regarding engaging with ethnic minority communities but wanted to emphasise that caution was required, highlighting the importance of the previous committee member's point. The committee member noted the importance of proper constitution for committees and groups and stated that it was important for Members to know about such groups, who was on them, how they met, how often and why they were meeting/access to meeting minutes. The committee member expressed that we must be mindful of tokenism and move away from it. The committee member highlighted the importance of engaging with various communities in Newport and supporting community cohesion, which must be taken seriously. The committee member questioned the purpose of the One Newport Public Service Board and why had certain issues not been raised there if certain agencies were meeting there. The committee member wished to make the recommendation to look at implementing proper constitution for that committee and for the white community to be included. The committee member raised concern for young people who may feel disconnected could be further alienated when seeing how other communities are engaged and supported. The committee member reiterated concern felt due to the informality of the committee and felt it should be a formal and more advertised. The committee member raised another issue regarding his concern of police stop and search requests on people from mainly ethnic communities and questioned why something hadn't been done relating to that. The committee member had met with a Senior Police Officer regarding this but noted it had not been followed up. The committee member noted that there had been two reports in The South Wales Argus that showed Newport had a high rate of stop and search and was an issue for the black, Muslim and Asian communities. The committee member expressed that the committee member wanted this issue picked up and wanted to understand more about it. The committee member noted that he was assured by the Police Officer that most cases were justified but only 25% stop and search made resulted in an offense being committed. The committee member highlighted the 75% of people who had been stopped for no reason. The committee member reiterated that the roundtable group should be formed properly as the committee member didn't want issues pushed aside because another committee exists.

- The Head of People and Business Change reminded the committee that the Strategic Equalities group is not a committee but is a group of champions, which has no constitution and is a part of the Cabinet Member's reaching out to test views. The Head of People and Business Change highlighted that it was not a part of the Council's decision-making process. The Head of People and Business Change advised that if committee wanted to make recommendation regarding that, it was their decision. The Head of People and Business Change acknowledged the other points

such as engaging with communities and commented that it was sometimes difficult to hear other voices and reassured the committee that the Connected Communities Manager and her team do work outside of items discussed to ensure people are heard and discussions are had. The Head of People and Business Change noted the comments made which need to take into consideration and reminded committee that should a recommendation need to be made, that was their prerogative.

A committee member acknowledged working towards having a representative workforce of Newport's population and noted that this would be difficult to achieve. The committee member was concerned about the display of data regarding representation being contextually relevant to the workforce. The committee member gave the example of disability, with 2.1% of workforce having a disability and questioned how this compared to the population as a whole and whether this would have to be restricted to those under 65 year olds as that's the retirement age. The committee member noted a similar issue relating to sexual orientation, where 1.3% of the workforce identified as LGBTQ+ and questioned whether in this case the whole population would be compared against as it wasn't age related. The committee member questioned whether a comparison could be made to illustrate how representative the workforce was. The committee member also highlighted that 76% of the workforce was female and guessed that this was likely due to the nature of the roles, and that these specific figures were a long way off recognising a balance. The committee questioned whether marital status mattered and wasn't sure of its relevance. The committee member questioned how committee would know how close a representative workforce was, how well is the Council doing currently and what progress was being made.

- The Head of People and Business Change noted that various weightings may or may be put against data, but it is the protected characteristics in the Equalities Act. The Head of People and Business Change assured committee that where data was available it can be included to compare with latest census data. The Head of People and Business Change informed the committee that the information was an indicator not an absolute as was what had been declared by employees. The Head of People and Business Change noted that in regard to genders employed, when contextualised with the work done by Council and workforce – for example, 3500 employees work in schools which is a notably female-dominated field. The Head of People and Business Change finished by stating that they can include in that how they compare against population.

The committee member followed by noting that ethnicity was an area of focus to achieve a representative workforce. The committee member noted questioned how recognition would be made of the difference between the general public and workforce as on average the former would be older. The committee member reiterated that it would be good to know how well the council is doing in terms of representation and felt the report didn't wholly reflect that.

- The Head of People and Business Change assured committee that additional information would be included. The Head of People and Business Change noted with regards to disabilities, they could look at to compare with age and noted that the Council do have employees over the age of 67 as there is no legal requirement to retire and encouraged skilled and able workers who want to work to do so. The Head of People and Business Change highlighted that in the previous committee discussed the New Normal which has the possibility to increase employees retained that otherwise would have to leave their posts due to ill health. The Head of People and Business Change reiterates that the committee member's comments have been taken on board and that a table will be included with the caveats around ages.
- A committee member echoed the Head of People and Business Change's point regarding Covid's impact on working conditions meaning more people could be retained.

A committee asked for clarification the second sentence on p123; did “mandated” in this context mean approved and will begin April 2022?

- The Head of People and Business Change noted that equalities and diversity training up until this point had been non-mandatory and has now been made mandatory training for staff. The Head of People and Business Change assured committee that sessions for members would be put on.
- The committee member expanded to say that the sentence needed to be reformulated and the Head of People and Business Change made note of this.

## **6 Conclusion of Committee Reports**

### **Corporate Annual Report and Director of Social Services Report Conclusion**

The Scrutiny Adviser noted there were a few comments to clarify.

The Scrutiny Adviser asked how the committee member would like to word comments regarding the “rosy” presentation of Newport.

- The committee member clarified that the committee member wanted a realistic picture that recognised issues that need resolving with a balance of optimism.

The Scrutiny Adviser noted the comments regarding the lack of comparison between Local Authorities and the recommendation to add the Medieval Ship and canals into the cultural section of the report. The Scrutiny Adviser noted a committee member’s comment regarding being happy with the presentation of the report.

- A committee member added that the graph on page 8 needs to be reviewed with items needing more explanation and clarity, as well as service areas needing explanation and items to be organised logically. The committee member agreed that the canal needs to be added into the cultural heritage section. The committee member also noted that more information about jobs in Newport, how many businesses are in Newport and their employees, and unemployment rates should be included as these are important measures of the city’s prosperity.
- The committee noted that DFG facilities on p53 has been put under fourth wellbeing objective but believed they’re in the wrong place.
- The committee noted that there was an ongoing issue with not being able to make comparisons with previous years’ performance indicators and their consistent change and acknowledged that in some cases this needed to be done but not to the extent that the goalposts seem to have been changed if the committee was happy to make that recommendation.
- A committee member noted that the issue is exacerbated from the goalposts being moved by Welsh Government but recommended that as an aside from report some measures be added as appendices. The committee member gave the example that if a KPI has to be shown, it would be nice to see how performance has changed outside of the report and suggested that rather than it being added to the report, it came to committee as a separate item.
- A committee member noted that the committee member’s point regarding the “rosy” picture of Newport was political and questioned how it would be minuted. The committee member felt that it should be taken to a vote before it was included in the report.
  - A committee member felt that this went back to the question of how minutes are formulated; whether comments are recorded as “the

committee” or individual members. The committee member noted that there were no specific points raised regarding the Welsh Labour Government, and that it was a general comment and felt it was reasonable. The committee member expressed that the committee member would be unhappy to take that to a vote and name it a political comment.

- The Scrutiny Adviser noted that it would be minuted as a something similar to “a committee member asked that the report was balanced”, rather than to recommend as an action from the entire committee.
- The Scrutiny Adviser stated that comments should be removed from politics, and when individuals are named in minutes it increases the possibility of comments being used politically.
- A committee member agreed that “a committee member” was appropriate to use regarding previous comments discussed. The committee member highlighted that committee only could give recommendations that may not be carried out.
- A committee member was happy to be noted as a committee member.
- The committee commented that out-of-date performance indicators should be updated if necessary and was not content to always use the same performance indicators as that causes issues also.
  - A committee member suggested that backing information should be presented where performance indicators had been changed but were not for this committee to scrutinise.
  - A committee member felt that it would be too much to read, and appendices were not the answer to the issue. The committee member expressed that reports should be clear and accepted that while they were not here to scrutinise the reports. The committee member felt that the committee member was trying to impose some data on the invitees that they didn't want but accepted their explanation with doubts that targets would be adjusted. The committee member felt this was contrary to continuous improvement to not reassess targets.
  - A committee member agreed with the previous point and felt it was valid.

### **Strategic Equality Plan**

The Scrutiny Adviser noted the shared point as to whether community groups should be formalised in order to accurately represent their communities.

- The committee commended the community roundtable group initiative in engaging communities, but wanted the terms of invitation to be clarified and groups to be formalised to ensure communities can trust the person(s) representing them.
- The committee recommended that community roundtable groups be renamed with regards to sensitivity to the Newport Round Table organisation.
- The Committee agreed that the roundtables should be opened up to the wider community.
- A committee member expressed that the reports were acceptable but felt that not enough immediacy was expressed, as well as current issues not being addressed universally. The committee member supported the previous comments but felt that more urgency needs be put on this group.
- The committee requested information on how representative Newport City Council's workforce as contextual



## 5 Scrutiny Adviser Reports

### Forward Work Programme:

A committee member reminded committee that the next meeting is 23<sup>rd</sup> September with the PSPO City Centre consultation to return.

- The Scrutiny Adviser clarified that it would be Thursday evening.

The committee member reminded committee the meeting following that would be Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September regarding the Climate Change report but may be something else.

- A committee member noted they would have to give apologies for this meeting.

The Scrutiny Adviser advised that the meeting regarding the Welsh Strategy report has been requested for December, and he was enquiring as to their availability instead to be heard in October, but noted it was committee's preference whether they'd rather shorter, more regular meetings or larger, longer meetings.

- A committee member felt that there was the right number of meetings and single item agendas were unnecessary but stressed the need to ensure report information is relevant and concise. The committee member was concerned about the length of reports and wanted focus to be brought to presenting relevant information. The committee member supported adding links to additional information but was still concerned about the lengths of reports.
  - A committee member agreed with this.
- A committee member was concerned about the inclusion of links in reports as if future queries arise, it could cause issues as committee would technically have the information but they wouldn't have necessarily seen it if not directly in the report itself.

A committee member questioned how committee would know that the Parks PSPO maps were reviewed and was concerned that in the future, it would be expressed that committee were happy with the maps when the committee member felt they were not.

- A committee member noted that the scrutiny sheet was missing and the Scrutiny Adviser apologised for this, but assured the committee responses had been received and would be forwarded to committee.

A committee member noted that the Leader gave a good presentation by taking the lead on the first report and her summary made it easier to understand the report and narrow down the questions to be asked. The committee member expressed it would be a good model to follow in the future, noting that it would be better than going page by page. The committee member expressed hope that other Executives and Officers would follow that example going forward.

A committee member thanked the committee for attending.

### **This meeting was terminated at: 12:33pm**

The meeting terminated at 12.33 pm