

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Place and Corporate

Date: 11 July 2022

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors J Cleverly (Chair), J Harris, M Howells, M Linton, C Reeks, J Reynolds and K Thomas

In Attendance: Councillors Jane Mudd (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Development), Laura Lacey (Cabinet Member for Infrastructure), James Clarke (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Regulation and Housing), Deb Harvey (Cabinet Member for Community Well-being), Rhys Cornwall (Strategic Director -), Paul Jones (Strategic Director – Environment and Sustainability), Tracey Brooks (Head of Regeneration and Economic Development), Stephen Jarrett (Head of City Services), Silvia Gonzalez-Lopez (Head of Environment and Public Protection), Caroline Ryan-Phillips (Head of Prevention and Inclusion), Katherine Howells (Housing and Assets Manager), Matt Tribbeck (Team Manager – Regeneration), Ross Cudlipp (Service Manager – Climate Change), Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser), Louise Thomas (Governance Officer) and Emily Mayger (Governance Officer)

1 Apologies

Councillors Bev Perkins and Gavin Horton.

2 Declaration of Interest

None.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 February 2022

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on the 28th February 2022 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

4 2021/22 Service Plan End of Year Reviews

Regeneration Investment and Housing

Invitees:

- Councillor Jane Mudd – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Strategic Investment
- Councillor James Clarke – Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Regulation and Housing
- Councillor Laura Lacey – Cabinet Member for Infrastructure
- Councillor Deb Harvey – Cabinet Member for Community Well-being
- Tracey Brooks – Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
- Caroline Ryan-Phillips - Head of Prevention and Inclusion

The Leader of the Council gave a brief overview of the report, and asked that in relation to the reports for it to be taken in to account that whilst all this work was ongoing our officers were still part of the response to Covid-19 and stressed the importance of viewing these reports and Performance Outcomes within this context. The Leader would like to recognise and acknowledge the significant efforts of the team. It was emphasised that the service plans relate to the previous service areas and going forward they have been reconfigured and so there will be a difference in responsibilities. There are new Cabinet Members as well as new Heads of Service that may not have been within these roles when some of this work was undertaken.

The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development gave a brief overview of the report and noted that through April 2021 to March 2022 the effects of Covid-19 were still felt as well as the affects from leaving the EU such as increases in the cost of materials and labour shortages. The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development commented on the Key Performance Indicators stating that there was a mixed bag but that they did not reflect the unique challenges that the staff were presented with. The report also highlights the pressure on the services such as housing to accommodate rough sleepers which placed an extra strain on the housing supply. However, over £16 Million of Social Housing Grants were received and distributed as well as additional phase two funding for new accommodation units in the city centre was secured. The housing supply still remains a challenge, but the team remain committed to seize all opportunities to increase housing numbers.

The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development commented on the issues they have had with staff recruitment and how vacancies have impacted their abilities to deliver some services and that innovative ways to address those pressures were looked at. There has been an impact on the speed at which planning applications can be determined however whilst Newport City Council may be slower it's been shown through the appeal process that the right decisions have been made rather than merely quick decisions.

The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development mentioned some positives, despite the challenges. The Carbon Management Team that supports the delivery of the Climate Change plan and the Local Area Energy plan and the community focused teams that have continued to provide support and access to Libraries and community centres throughout lockdowns and restrictions. The business support team have been able to deliver several million in support grants to businesses and we are now moving from a place of business survival to business growth. The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development stressed that the report was a mixed bag and does not reflect the tremendous amount of resilience displayed by staff.

The Head of Prevention and Inclusion then introduced herself to the Committee and confirmed that she would be continuing to work with the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development to continue the work that is ongoing.

Members asked the following:

- Members commented that a lot of the projects are being undertaken alongside partners in the city centre, such as the new leisure centre. What are the timescales of these works, and also the timeframe for closing and reopening the new leisure centre?

Members were advised that a lot of work is ongoing and so it is difficult to give an answer. In regards to the new and old leisure centre, some of the work has been started on the new site but the exact end date is not known yet. There are some complications with the old leisure centre being closed to create the Covid-19 Vaccination centre.

- Members asked about the ongoing issue with Homelessness in Newport and asked what indicators are used when looking at homelessness in Newport as a whole.

The Leader advised that there were multiple categories of homelessness that are used by Newport City Council, there is an annual rough sleeper count and anyone who falls into any of these categories is counted. The Leader advised that there are KPIs within the report which relate to these counts.

- Members asked if there was an updated plan for the Transporter Bridge?

Members were advised that in the reports there is an update showing that Cabinet approved the additional funding as well as receiving an additional £2 million funding from the National Heritage Lottery Fund and so work should be starting soon.

- Members asked about the Newport Arcade. What programme is being used to reach out to businesses to attract them to the marketplace, and is there a programme in place for incentives rather than just a timescale to fill the available spaces?

Members were advised that a lot of the units are privately owned and so nothing could be enforced with them. There is increased interest in taking up those spaces and there is currently reduced rates to encourage small businesses.

The Chair thanked the officers for their attendance.

City Services

Invitees –

- **Paul Jones – Strategic Director – Environment and Sustainability**
- **Councillor Yvonne Forsey – Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity**
- **Councillor Debbie Harvey – Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Assets**
- **Stephen Jarrett – Head of City Services**
- **Silvia Gonzalez-Lopez – Head of Environment and Public Protection**

The Strategic Director gave a brief overview of the City Services end of year report and advised how the service areas in the report effectively don't exist anymore as it is for the old configuration of City Services. He then stated the issues that were faced with Covid-19 particularly with the frontline operational services. There have been a few really big positives such as the expansion of active travel with the completion of the Devon Place Footbridge as well as work starting on the new leisure centre. The Strategic Director commented on the rollout of the electrification of the fleet and advised that Newport was the first in Wales to get a fully electric refuse collection vehicle, which has now risen to six with ongoing work to get the whole fleet electric over the future years. Newport has also held the title of the best recycling city in the UK for a second year in a row.

The Strategic Director advised that most of the progress listed in the service plan would go to the new service areas and highlighted two of the reds both of which were affected by Covid-19 where people couldn't be face to face as well as staff shortages as staff had been reassigned to TTP. Although there were grants available, they were short notice which meant a short period of time to upskill staff to fill those roles. Although the Digitalisation team worked hard each new grant had to be sorted such as the self-isolation pay and fuel payments online which caused some issues. The Strategic Director listed the big risks such as Ash die back as well as highways maintenance backlog. Overall the standard budget was

broadly underspent. There was some relocation of funding for free buses for a month but there has been some financial assistance from Burns Commission for another month later in the financial year.

The Head of City Services introduced himself to the Committee and explained his service area after the restructure which is broadly Highways and Transport arena covering Public Transport, the Highway Asset, the Winter Service fleet as well as Civil Contingency's function. The Head of City Services advised that he would be working with the Strategic Director to continue the work that is currently in place.

The Head of Environment and Public Protection introduced herself and explained that after the restructure she now cover Waste and Cleansing and all the Environment and Bio-diversity elements from the old structure. Head of Environment and Public Protection confirmed that they would be continuing on with the work listed in the reports.

Members asked the following:

- Members asked whether the upgrading of the fleet to electric is being done as and when or are vehicles being replaced at the end of their lifespan?

Members were advised that most of the vehicles that have been replaced by electric were ones that were at the end of their lifespan. Electric vehicles do cost more than standard ones but there have been grants from the Welsh Government. An effort has been made to upgrade only the ones due for replacement, but the Climate Change Strategy has also been taken into account when making these decisions.

- Members asked about the expansion of waste collection from small businesses and what plans were put in place to promote this service?

Members were advised that there had been some delays in a change of legislation that was due that would bring waste requirements from businesses more in line with Household collections. There is currently a general mandate for recycling but no specific requirements. The programme cannot be pushed until the legislation comes through.

The Chair thanked for the officers for their attendance.

Comments and Recommendations

Regeneration Investment and Housing

- The Committee thanked the officers for attending and for their detailed reports, and were happy with the content and presentation. The committee noted the reports and Performance Outcomes within the context that officers were still part of the response to Covid-19, and also the responsibilities changing with the reconfiguring of the service areas.
- Members asked about those in temporary or emergency accommodation, specifically those who are in extremely vulnerable categories such as young mothers or young women who are pregnant and approaching the due date who are still in emergency accommodation. Members asked if there was sufficient data about them to be able to provide for their specific needs.

- Member asked what other options the Council is exploring besides emergency accommodation and commented that it is not suitable for many such as families and people are going back on to the streets. There are also shortages and so people facing eviction by their landlords are being told to stay as there is no temporary accommodation. Members have asked for an Action plan for the year on how to approach this.

City Services

- The Committee again thanked the officers for attending and for their detailed reports, and were happy with the content and presentation.
- Members were pleased to hear the current progress on having an all-electric fleet and noted that there were more charging points around the city. Members asked for an Action Plan on how to get residents aware that these charging points are available and how to get them to use these points in car parks, as well as then expanding the number of charging points in the car parks themselves.

5 **Scrutiny Adviser Reports**

Invitee:

- Neil Barnett – Scrutiny Adviser

a. Action Plans

The Scrutiny Adviser informed the Committee the all current actions are up to date, and then informed the Committee of the topics due to be discussed at the next committee meeting:

Monday 25th July 2022 at 4pm, the agenda items;

2021/22 Service Plan End of Year Reviews for:

- People and Business Change
- Law and Regulation
- Finance

The meeting terminated at 5.46 pm