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## **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2020.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor M.R. Wilson (Chairman); Councillor Mrs. P. Drake (Vice-Chairman); Councillors G.D.D. Carroll, G.A. Cox, R. Crowley, V.P. Driscoll, G. John, Dr. I.J. Johnson, Ms. S. Sivagnanam, and J.W. Thomas.

Also present: Councillors N. Moore (Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), L. Burnett (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration), P.G. King (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Legal, Regulatory and Planning Services).

### 205 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Chairman referred to a number of housekeeping issues including advising those present that the meeting would be recorded for uploading via the internet and archived for future viewing.

### 206 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2020 be approved as a correct record.

### 207 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

### 208 DEVELOPING A CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN (REF) –

Cabinet, on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2020, had referred the report to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee for their views on how the Plan was being progressed.

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation advised that the report provided an update on the work being undertaken to develop a Climate Change Action Plan as part of the response to the climate emergency declared by Council in July 2019. The Head of Service referred to activities undertaken to date and work planned to ensure that the Council had a well-informed and considered response involving partners, the public, staff and Members. The report outlined how the Climate Change Action Plan would be developed, including arrangements for engagement and consultation.

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Committee were informed that progress had been made against a range of actions as detailed in the Annual Delivery Plan and the activities built on work already being taken forward by the Council to mitigate the effects of climate change and adapt to its impact.

Paragraph 2.6 in the report referred to examples of activities as follows:

- Improvements to street lighting;
- Work undertaken as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme;
- Promotion of Active Travel;
- The roll out of recycling arrangements;
- Improvements to the housing stock;
- Tree and wildflower planting to improve our green infrastructure;
- Supplementary Planning Policies.

To ensure that the Council had a robust Action Plan for tackling climate change it was important that the community and other stakeholders were involved in shaping the Plan and its implementation. Due to the restrictions in place around social distancing and the significant changes in how the Council worked, there needed to be a rethink to its approach.

It was proposed that despite the uncertainty over the coming months that work continue to engage and consult on the subject of climate change. The main components of this would be as follows, but this would need to be flexible. A key message the Council wanted to give staff and other stakeholders was that no idea was “too small” and no suggestion was “too ambitious” for consideration.

As part of the conversation the Council would also capture information and views gained through more specific projects, for example future consultation on the development of the Green Infrastructure Plan.

The Council's Communications Team would also develop a programme of activity over the next 12 months to enable the public and community groups to continue to inform the work on climate change and shape the Council's response. An outline timetable was contained within the report at paragraph 2.36. A Member commented that resourcing the Plan would be significant and that in their view the existing climate change reserve would not be sufficient if major infrastructure work was required. The Head of Service indicated that this reserve did not reflect the total amount of resources that would be available to progress this agenda.

Another Councillor in referring to future development plans queried the “buy in” on a regional basis and the work of transport committees and what are the plans for businesses in the community. Reference was made to one of the initiatives being the use of the electric bikes scheme, with a suggestion that this be extended similarly to the scheme at Llantwit Major and also be provided throughout the Vale.

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Councillor King, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport, advised that the scheme was on a trial basis with the Head of Service confirming that a further report would be brought to the Committee for consideration in due course.

The Head of Service further advised that the main purpose of the Plan was to bring the various strands of activity together, to assist with the Reshaping Programme and to balance competing agendas. It also provided that the Council ensured how it measured impact, how priorities were considered and alignment with the Public Services Board and the need for strong community leadership.

The Deputy Leader with permission to speak, stated that when the Climate Emergency was declared the Council had talked about working with partners and other Local Authorities within the City Region who had declared climate emergencies and it was important that residents who wished to participate also had the opportunity. It was also important to recognise, she stated, that although some projects may appear small their impact may indeed be great referring to an example in some schools of the growing of fruit trees which could she stated lead to having a greater impact than that that had originally been planned or thought of.

Having regard to the use of electronic bikes the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport drew attention to the limited capacity in Wales for charging points with the Chairman suggesting the importance for the Council to contact and hold discussions with the National Grid.

Aware that the report was also being referred to the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, it was

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the comments of the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee be referred to Cabinet for consideration and that the details of the report be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report, discussions and the meeting and to advise Cabinet of the Scrutiny Committee's comments.

#### 209 Q2 SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT 2020/2021 (REF) –

Cabinet, at its meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2020, had referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration in order to enable the Scrutiny Committee to maintain a continued focus on the management of sickness absence throughout all services of the Council and to make recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.

The Operational Manager for Employee Services drew attention to the report which set out the sickness absence figures for the six month period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2020 as part of the agreed performance management arrangements. It was noted that there had been a significant decrease in absence levels during the first half of 2020/21 compared with the same period for the previous

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financial year. The absence rates were set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report and showed a decrease from 4.47 days lost per FTE (April to September 2019) to 3.40 days lost per FTE (April to September 2020). The target for Quarter 2 (April to September 2020) was set as 4.15 days lost per FTE.

An analysis of the figures in each Directorate was set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report and an analysis for the reasons for absence was set out in paragraphs 4.10 to 4.19.

Although it was noted that the absence figures had decreased, the decrease was largely due to the ongoing global pandemic and it was important to note that the Council and other organisations had not dealt with a situation like this before and therefore there was little comparative data based on previous years' results.

The Operational Manager advised that it was important that managers worked with their staff to address issues and drew attention to the work of the HR team who were working seven days a week, 8am to 8pm, processing work for schools and care homes to ensure testing was arranged as soon as possible. Although it was very resource intensive, he stated that it was working well for the Authority.

In referring to stress non-work related and stress work related, it was noted that stress was now in the top three reasons for absence, with other musculoskeletal reasons being second on the list. It was noted that recording stress as two separate reasons provided the Council with more specific data and would assist with understanding the reasons for the absence as well as looking at ways to assist the health and welfare of employees.

The Operational Manager referred to initiatives for support for staff i.e. the number of classes, for example yoga, which were being provided to support staff as well as the financial wellbeing avenue with it being developed to assist staff during the Covid pandemic. Frontline workers had also seen an increase of a 10% uplift in their wages for those working specifically within Environment and Social Services frontline work.

The Head of Service although advising that the Council welcomed the figures, there was also the need to ensure that caveats were recognised. Due to the fact that a number of surgical operations had been put on hold by the NHS, it was recognised that these would be increased over the coming months and would have an impact on the figures.

With regard to employees working flexibly, it was noted that the Council was aware of many employees who may have "a common cold" who were now working through those whilst working from home. However, the Council was extremely clear with its message regarding wellbeing and was continuing to advise employees of the activities that were available for them to ensure that their wellbeing was of paramount importance.

Following a question from a Member as to whether there was any evidence that the "normal" diseases circulating had reduced, the Head of Service stated that there had been less reports of the normal common cold virus due to the fact that people were

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not mixing, although again it was acknowledged that as they would start to mix more this could change rapidly. However, again although it was noted that some research was currently being undertaken, it was as a direct result of the fact that people were working from home and were isolating at home, as long as they felt reasonably well enough to do so they continued to work and this was having an impact on the figures.

The Deputy Leader commented that she was aware of levels of anxiety for staff and members of the public who may be anxious about the Coronavirus because they may not know they had it and therefore could possibly pass it on to someone unknowingly. However, she also took the opportunity to request that her thanks to the staff for their work and dedication throughout the pandemic be recorded.

Another Member of the Committee also took the opportunity to acknowledge the work that had been put in place which in their view was excellent and that they had been really encouraged by all that had been done.

The Head of Service further commented that the Council had also repurposed staff to assist where necessary and was doing its utmost to ensure staff wellbeing was at the forefront and upskilling staff where necessary. The Chairman suggested that other activities could also be undertaken, for example Pilates, and that staff equipment i.e. chairs and tables could be more ergonomically designed in the future.

The Head of Service advised that the Council was encouraging everyone to undertake an ergonomic assessment and that the Council would provide the appropriate equipment, if required.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently

**RECOMMENDED –**

- (1) T H A T the information provided at the meeting and the details within the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T a further report be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in the next quarter in order that comparisons could be considered quarter by quarter.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents contained therein.
- (2) To ensure that more detailed comparison studies could be made when the data was available.

210 AUDIT WALES: RESHAPING SERVICES PROGRAMME REVIEW – VALE OF GLAMORGAN (MD) –

Mr. I. Phillips, (Audit Wales), presented the report advising that the Audit Wales Review had focused on the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements to deliver its

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Reshaping Services Programme which had commenced in 2019 and had been completed in 2020.

Overall he advised that the report findings were generally positive with the conclusion reached that the Council's Reshaping Services Programme was effectively managed and had helped deliver savings. However, there was now an opportunity to refocus the Programme and strengthen workforce planning to support its delivery. The Council had indeed made progress in meeting the objectives of its Reshaping Services Programme, however, there was more work to do to progress the third objective of the programme around partnership working.

The report advised that Council had effective arrangements in place to govern and manage the Programme but there was scope to now refine these to support the changing direction of the Programme.

The five Proposals for Improvement were noted as follows:

- P1: The Council should consider what more it could do to work with partner organisations in order to help deliver the partnership objective of the Reshaping Services Programme;
- P2: As the Council intended for the Reshaping Services Programme to move away from being primarily associated with savings, it should review the criteria used to determine which projects were included, and the measures used to monitor the progress of projects;
- P3: The Council should identify further training and support to help staff develop the skills necessary to respond to transformational change;
- P4: The Council should ensure that its forthcoming workforce plan supported the delivery of the Reshaping Services Programme and there was robust identification and consideration of workforce needs in project documentation;
- P5: If there was to be a focus on more genuinely transformational projects, the Council should ensure lessons were learned from earlier projects and put in place mechanisms to strengthen any identified areas of weakness.

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation in response advised that the Action Plan attached at Appendix B to the report set out officers suggestions in response to the proposals for improvements and that he was grateful for the work that Audit Wales had undertaken around the Third Sector as it would help scope some other future directional work for the Council. It was also noted that more details regarding the Third Sector would be shared with the Committee and Cabinet during the coming months.

A Councillor in referring to the report, stated that although there were some examples highlighted throughout the report, e.g. community libraries and the Catering Company, they did not consider that these evidenced as much success as he was expecting. In his view, the Neighbourhood Services' work was more substantial.

In response Mr. Phillips, stated that in terms of Third Sector work the audit had looked more at the arrangements that were in place, lessons that could be learnt

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from the pandemic, how the Council could strengthen its relationships, and the impact of the Third Sector on its services. The examples referred to within the report highlighted alternatives to service delivery that the Council had made.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the recommendations outlined within the report be accepted and the report be referred to the Audit Committee and thereon to Cabinet for endorsement of the proposed actions to address the proposals for improvement.

Reason for recommendation

To ensure that the Council responded appropriately and implemented areas of improvement as identified by Audit Wales.