

ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on, 15th March, 2022.

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

The Meeting recording is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor B.E. Brooks (Chair), S. Sivagnanam (Vice-Chair), Councillors P. Drake, V.P. Driscoll, G. John, M.J.G. Morgan, A. Robertson and S.T. William.

Also present: Councillors L. Burnett (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Legal, Regulatory and Planning Services).

963 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

964 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor V.J. Bailey.

965 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meetings held on 15th February, 2022 be approved as a correct record.

966 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

967 PROJECT ZERO – UPDATE, RESOURCES, EVIDENCE AND REPORTING (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 28th February, 2022 was presented by the Head of Policy and Business Transformation.

The report detailed the issues emerging from the exercise undertaken in the Autumn of 2021 to report the Council’s carbon emissions as part of a national exercise by public sector organisations. This information was submitted to Welsh Government in

October 2021 and the report detailed the levels of emissions across different Council activities and aspects of the data that had proved more challenging to collect and where systems needed to be put in place to ensure more robust data.

The carbon emissions report was a major step forward in bringing together data from across the organisation and would be used by the Project Zero Board to inform the delivery of the Climate Change Challenge Plan.

The report also detailed proposals around the approach for the use of relevant capital and revenue budgets to support the delivery of Project Zero. Proposals for reporting arrangements for Project Zero were also included within the report. The report also included a recommendation to amend the Council's committee report template to ensure that every report reflected implications relating to climate change and also, the nature emergency to support decision making and scrutiny.

Councillor A.R. Robertson queried whether there had been any discussions within the Council or Cabinet around dealing with the rising cost of energy and particularly in relation to energy security. In reply, the Head of Policy and Business Transformation stated that from an officer perspective and in relation to energy security, the Council was keeping a close eye on the impact of the situation in the Ukraine. Regarding the increase in energy costs, the Council had begun some work to look at the cost of living holistically, from a citizen's perspective and as a Corporate Risk. Therefore, the Council was looking at what information it could provide to residents in terms of accessing renewable and affordable energy. In addition, work had begun to cascade that information to the Council's 5000 strong work force, which would also relate to the cost-of-living pressures such as how to access affordable food.

Councillor Robertson, also wanted to place on record his view that there was a "hysterical race" for carbon zero, which was going to cause a huge amount of damage to the economy and to our society.

Councillor S. Sivagnanam referred to the funding for green infrastructure projects and asked whether this funding could be used for the Council's tree strategy, particularly in relation to replacing trees which caused damage to pavements and also as way to capture carbon emissions. In reply, the Head of Policy and Business Transformation advised in terms of the Council's high-level strategy, Welsh Government and provided a clear message that the Council could not just plant more trees in order to offset the carbon footprint. Therefore, this had an impact in relation to capturing carbon as well as the impact on the Council's plans around biodiversity. With regard to the Council's tree strategy and funding for green infrastructure projects, the Head of Planning and Regeneration advised that the strategy was currently in development. It had been delayed to an extent as Natural Resources Wales had to undertake a survey of tree coverage across the whole of the Vale of Glamorgan, to identify where there was a deficiency and where there was an effect from Ash dieback. This survey work was required to run a whole year to take into account seasonal changes. The results of this work were expected shortly, and which would then be fed into the Council's strategy and where more tree planting was required.

For the green infrastructure strategy, this was also currently under development, with some consultation work being carried out with various Council departments and partners. Work had been undertaken around where the Council was deficient in terms of areas of green infrastructure, such as open spaces.

Councillor M. Morgan requested further information about the number of electric vehicles the Council had and how often they were used. It was agreed for this information to be shared via email.

The Cabinet Member, Councillor L. Burnett, with permission to speak, stated that in relation to energy security and discussions at Cabinet, there were conversations that happened frequently. This also included discussions in terms of the costs of living where Cabinet was not only looking at the now, but was looking ahead, for example the impact on residents and the Council following a rise in National Insurance contributions. The importance to support people had been recognised, which was why the Council was in support of new sustainable and renewable energy projects.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the contents of the update report be endorsed.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

968 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING 1ST APRIL TO 31ST JANUARY, 2022 (DEH) –

The purpose of the report was to advise Committee of the progress relating to revenue and capital expenditure for the period 1st April to 31st January 2022 and the revised budget for 2021/22.

It was reported that the revenue position for 2021/22 would be challenging with the continuing pressure for services both operationally and financially as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. This would impact both as a result of incurring additional expenditure but also from a loss of income. Funding had been provided by Welsh Government to cover some of the issues. It was reported that the Neighbourhood Services and Transport department was currently projected to have an adverse variance of £1.5m against the 2021/22 budget and that this overspend was funded via the Revenue Support Grant received from Welsh Government. An efficiency target for the year had been set at £162k., the capital budget had been set at £17.822m this financial year and the 2021/22 budget had been amended for internal transfers and technical adjustments.

It was agreed for further detail to be shared via email regarding works associated with the Dinas Powys Sustainable Transport programme and the Caerleon Road footpath, of which both were Section 106 schemes.

Having considered the report, it was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the position with regard to the 2021/22 revenue and capital budgets be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

969 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE 2021/22 (CX) –

The performance report presented progress at quarter 3 (1st April to 31st December 2021) towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan (2021/22) commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

It was reported that positive progress had been made in delivering the in-year commitments in relation to the Annual Delivery Plan (2021/22), and this performance had contributed to an overall GREEN status for the Plan at Quarter 3 (Q3).

All 4 Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives were attributed a Green performance status at Q3 which reflected the progress made to date. This was positive given the ongoing challenges arising from the pandemic. 91% (288 out of 317) of planned activities outlined in the Annual Delivery Plan had been attributed a Green performance, 2% (8) an amber status and 7% (21) of planned activities were attributed a Red status.

Of the 21 actions attributed a Red performance status during the quarter, 38% (8) were directly as a result of service reprioritisation measures undertaken in response to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In relation to these areas, where appropriate, work was recommencing as part of the Council's recovery plans and strategy.

Progress in relation to Coronavirus recovery was being reported to members in the presentation accompanying this performance report at Scrutiny Committee and focuses on highlighting issues pertinent to the Committee's remit. This Coronavirus recovery update formed part of quarterly performance reporting to ensure members maintained an oversight of the recovery issues impacting on the work of their respective Committees. From this perspective, members were requested to note the progress to date in relation to Coronavirus recovery.

Of the 43 quarterly performance measures aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, data was reported for 41 measures where a performance status was applicable. 56% (23) measures were attributed a Green performance Status, 5% (2), Amber status and 39% (16), Red status. Data was unavailable for 2 quarterly measures due to reprioritisation measures undertaken in response to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. A performance status was not applicable for 107 measures including a number of annual indicators (89) and those establishing baseline performance for the year (18).

In relation to the 16 measures attributed a Red performance status during the quarter, the impact of COVID-19 has contributed to 25% (4) missing target.

In relation to the planned activities within the remit of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, 92% (94 out of 102) were attributed a Green performance status, 2% (2) Amber status and 6% (6) Red status. Of the 5 attributed a Red performance status, the impact of COVID-19 was identified as a contributory factor in the reported slippage for 1 action. Of the 7 quarterly measures reported, 71% (5) were attributed a Green performance status, and 29% (2) Red status. In relation to the 2 measures attributed a Red status, the impact of COVID-19 has contributed to missing the target for none of the measures.

Councillor M. Morgan raised two points. The first related to the need to improve public transport and active travel between towns and villages. The second point related to families affected by dementia, and how would the Council assist people to live at home for longer. In response, the Head of Regeneration and Planning stated that around improving public transport there a number of plans had been commissioned relating to active travel and sustainable transport in rural areas. A number of routes had been drawn up, but the biggest issue for the Council, was funding. With plans now drawn up, that meant that the Council now had a transport strategy would make it easier to seek Welsh Government funding or to identify schemes that could be eligible for Section 106 contributions. That work would also be aligned to the review of the Council's Local Development Plan, with transport being one of the key Council objectives. With regard to families and dementia, this area of work was mainly outside the remit of the Scrutiny Committee, but disabled facilities was something that was his (Head of Regeneration and Planning) area of responsibility. He added that a review of the assistance provided to people was being undertaken with an aim of making it easier for people to access support, and to enable people to remain living in their homes for longer.

Subsequently, it was

(1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22 commitments, as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Wellbeing Objectives within the remit of the Committee, be noted.

(2) T H A T the remedial actions to be taken to address areas of under-performance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee be noted.

(3) T H A T the progress being made through the Council's Recovery Strategy and Directorate Recovery Plans in response to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

(1 – 3) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

970 SERVICE PLANS AND TARGET SETTING TO DELIVER THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2022/23 (CX) –

The Head of Regeneration and Planning and the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport presented the service plans and target setting for their respective service areas.

These set out the specific areas of focus associated with the delivery of the Council's Annual Delivery Plan for 2022/2023 as aligned to our four Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

Progressing the Annual Delivery Plan will help meet our statutory obligations under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFG). Both pieces of legislation place specific duties on the Council in relation to reviewing and setting objectives, keeping performance under review and reporting on performance, with a focus on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Vale citizens.

Councillor A.R. Robertson queried additional grant money for improving roads and repairing potholes, adding that a number of issues had been brought to his attention by members of the public. In reply, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport advised that for 2022/23, the Council had allocated £2.3m for road resurfacing. This was more than had been allocated in previous years, and around £1m more than was allocated for this current financial year. It was important to recognise that there had been issues due to Covid which did cause a delay in repairs, but the Council was now up to standard. There was also a large resurfacing program ongoing.

Further to the issue of potholes, Councillor G. John stated that there was a lot of confusion among the general public and Town or Community Councils regarding the Council's policy and the depths that pot holes had to be before they required Council intervention. It was agreed that the intervention levels and details would be forwarded.

The Cabinet Member referred to issues on roads caused by severe bad weather, particularly it was very wet. The Council was active in repairing potholes, but part of the problem was finding them, which was why it was important for people to report issues.

Councillor V.P. Driscoll referred to issues on Murch Road in Dinas Powys, and the Head of Regeneration and Planning stated that this was a road that was regularly checked, but she would be happy for officers to undertake another inspection. Councillor Robertson added that there were also issues on Murch Crescent too. It was agreed for this to be checked.

Subsequently it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Service Plans (attached at Appendix A to the report) and all planned activities as they relate to the remit of the Committee (as illustrated in Appendix C to the report) be endorsed.
- (2) T H A T the proposed service improvement targets for 2022/2023 (attached at Appendix B to the report) relating to the remit of the Committee be endorsed.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To ensure that the Service Plans aligned to the Committee's remit are accurate, up to date and relevant and become the main document through which performance against the Corporate Plan's Annual Delivery Plan is monitored and measured during 2022/2023.
- (2) To ensure the Council's Corporate Plan Performance Measurement Framework identifies a relevant set of performance measures and targets against which the Annual Delivery Plan can be monitored and measured during 2022/2023.