

# **CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 25 May 2022 at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

## **PRESENT:**

Cllr Phil Awford (Chair)  
Cllr Matt Babbage  
Cllr John Bloxsom  
Cllr Andrew Gravells MBE  
Cllr Colin Hay

Cllr Jeremy Hilton  
Cllr Dr Andrew Miller  
Cllr Chloe Turner  
Cllr Stephan Fifield  
Cllr Lisa Spivey

In attendance via Video Conference

Cllr Ben Evans

## **Substitutes:**

Cllr Stephen Hirst for Cllr Terry Hale

Officers in attendance: Steve Mawson, Rob Ayliffe, Simon Harper, Stephen Bace, Mandy Quayle

## **Apologies:**

Cllr Vernon Smith

### **1 APOLOGIES**

See above.

### **2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting on 7 April 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

In relation to the action on 6.6 officers confirmed that insurance cover was in place.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations were made the meeting.

#### **4. WORK PLAN**

- 4.1 Referring to the forthcoming decision list, one member noted that there was a decision about to be made on the Ofsted report and associated plan. Given that scrutiny and CFPS advocate pre decision scrutiny, he asked if scrutiny had been involved in this report. The member acknowledged that there was the ability to ask questions at Cabinet but didn't feel this was sufficient. The Chair of Children and Families Scrutiny had been involved in discussions and the committee had been given early sight of the Ofsted report. The Committee was continuing to monitor actions relating to this as well as noting the work of the Improvement Board. The Committee were informed there was an item on the agenda at the next Children and Families Scrutiny Committee. Officers advised that scrutiny could identify areas to look at in more detail and make a case to the Executive on an area where they felt scrutiny input would be beneficial. There were a lot of pre policy discussions already taking place at scrutiny committees.
- 4.2 Members provided examples of the way in which work planning worked in their committees and the scrutiny work that was being undertaken.
- 4.3 One member discussed the importance of seeing the list of forthcoming decisions to help inform items for scrutiny. Members commented that it would helpful to have a briefing session explaining the forthcoming decision list.

#### **ACTION Democratic Services**

- 4.4 It was suggested that the Committee receive the Financial Outturn report at its meeting on July 2022.
- 4.5 One member suggested that consultation processes be considered as an item by the Committee. He provided details of current consultation processes and outlined concerns around the techniques being used, the nature of the questions asked and the way in which information was shared. He suggested that consultations should include a range of options rather than steered around a preferred option.

Lead Members would take forward the suggestions.

#### **5. STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE REPORT - 4TH QUARTER 2021/22**

- 5.1 Rob Ayliffe, presented the report which provided an overview of performance at the end of Quarter 4 2021-22. 64% of indicators were on or ahead of target. He outlined achievements, areas of focus and areas of positive travel and long term issues. He highlighted particular performance indicators relating to Adult Services, Children's Services, staff appraisals and staff turnover. Members welcomed the overview of risk, including high risks and changes to risk scores. He noted that some areas of performance were still being affected by COVID.

- 5.2 The Committee were informed that in Children Services there was a reduction in performance relating to repeat referrals into children's social care and child protection plans. In addition there were challenges around the timeliness of initial decisions and initial visits for children. There was improvement in the percentage of children placed in in-house foster care, which resulted in better outcomes for children as well as helping to control the budget. Over the last few quarters it had been challenging to maintain high performance due to demand in children's services.
- 5.3 One member stated that he acknowledged the positive direction of travel in Children's services following the inspection, but would not feel comfortable with this being labelled as an achievement or success as they had been in the presentation. It was clarified that the slide showing this was the performance team's attempt to highlight the key messages arising from the data for members.
- 5.4 Members were informed of the continuing challenges in increasing the number of adult social care reviews completed within 12 months. One member questioned the poor performance in this area noting that the targets did not seem challenging. This was a national challenge and the Council was looking to invest in this area and put in place measures to drive improvement and respond to the reforms arising from the Care Act. This was an indicator the Committee should expect to see improvement on over the coming year.
- 5.5 One member felt that the 50% target for re-assessments for adults was not high enough and suggested that this should be considered by the Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee. The Chair of the Committee agreed with the importance of incremental targets and this was something to look at. Officers explained that this was a difficult target to benchmark but that it would be looked at in more detail. The Committee were informed of the work underway to mitigate the risk including more regular visits in order to flag if there was a need for re-assessment. The size of the backlog, and the length of time individuals were waiting for an assessment was reducing.
- 5.6 It was suggested that assessments were even more important during the cost of living crisis to ensure individuals were safe given the additional pressure.
- 5.7 The Committee were informed that the Council were below the target around the percentage of staff having had an appraisal within 12 months. In response to a question it was clarified that interim appraisals were held and that the PDR documents should be live and objectives reviewed at each one to one. Officers detailed challenges with recording that data and the need to understand what under reporting there was. Fire and Children's Services were highlighted as areas with low performance in this area, but for Fire this was likely due to them not using the same system leading to recording issues. One member suggested a 13-month reporting timeframe. In response to a question, it was explained that December 2023 was the target for putting the new SAP online to help improve the way this was reported.

- 5.8 Members noted that days lost to sickness was starting to rise as staff were returning to Shire Hall. Stress was also a factor due to the pressure teams were facing. The Council had a number of initiatives underway including mental health training for managers and focus on completion of PDRs to ensure staff are supported. In addition, the employee assistance programme and occupational health were also in place to support staff. It was noted that sickness during the pandemic had been low and it was to be expected that these levels normalise now. Members outlined that the priority was ensuring there was support for those suffering with stress or overworked.
- 5.9 Human Resources were looking at a number of measures and initiatives to help improve staff turnover and to help encourage individuals to work in the public sector.
- 5.10 The Committee were informed that the Council had reviewed its management of risk and was clear around the role of Audit and Governance Committee and the role of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Scrutiny Committee had responsibility to oversee the Executive's response to risk and the actions it was taking. Members noted the risk overview slide and the more detailed breakdown of high risks and changes to the risk scores. Two risks had changed where the level of risk had been reduced. One member highlighted the high risk around demand for care homes and expressed his concerns around capacity and stability in that sector.
- 5.11 One member noted indicators where there were no targets with the example given in highways (percentage of unclassified roads) and renewable energy generation. It was explained that targets would be in place for 2022/23 and would be in the next report. There would be some circumstances where it was inappropriate to put in place a target, but the majority would have them.
- 5.12 In relation to Environmental planning a member explained that the carbon emissions data was out of date and should be more clearly labelled. She suggested that this should be acknowledged in the comments against the risk. Officers confirmed that this was the latest data available, but that the description would be changed in future.  
**ACTION**                      **Rob Ayliffe**
- 5.13 In relation to the climate change strategy having reduced to moderate, it was suggested that the transport strategy was not working and this would impact the achievability of the targets. One member suggested there was a big question mark relating to that risk. This would be looked at with directors at the end of Q1 and it would be raised with greater clarification sought on what specific risk was being considered.  
**ACTION**                      **Rob Ayliffe**
- 5.14 One member noted the recruitment and retention of staff and that it was a large risk and she emphasised the importance of staff appraisals in helping staff feel valued.

A report would be received at a future meeting on the work underway around staff recruitment.

**ACTION Steve Mawson**

- 5.15 There was a discussion around the increase in risk around council finance from moderate to high. One member noted the cost of living crisis and the risk around not being able to resource meeting our responsibilities for those that were most vulnerable in the community. Officers explained the uncertainty around one year settlements and acknowledged the challenges.
- 5.16 One member asked why the 'emergence of CIL' was down as a risk. The member suggested that it was not an emergence as it Community Infrastructure Levy had been around for a while. Officers confirmed that the risk register had recently been reviewed and this risk would be updated for Q1.
- 5.17 The Committee asked why the risk around the implementation of the Care Act 2014 wasn't being represented within the register. In response, it was explained that this gap had already been identified as part of the risk review, and that the risk would be included in future reports.
- 5.18 It was clarified that the performance data went to Cabinet Members prior to being received by Scrutiny and that more detailed performance data went to the individual scrutiny committees.
- 5.19 One member raised the lack of benchmarking targets within the presentation. In response it was explained that the committee had received a benchmarking presentation which then informed the targets set. The member requested that future presentations the Committee be provided with greater context around how the targets and performances compared with other authorities.

**6. CORPORATE RESOURCES PERFORMANCE REPORT**

- 6.1 Steve Mawson introduced the performance report noting the discussions that had been had at the previous item on sickness and appraisals.
- 6.2 With regards to ICT the Council was entering a phase over the next few months when the work to improve the WIFI and complete infrastructure projects would begin to improve system stability. The rollout of Microsoft Office 365 had just begun for the wider Council. Members had been at the forefront of that project. The next step was moving that onto the Cloud. There would then be a cultural shift which would adapt the way in which officers worked on their documents with input from other teams. In response to a question it was explained that the target for moving Office 365 to the Cloud was September 2022.
- 6.3 The committee was provided with details of the progress being made on this cultural shift including the use of Service Now which which was the best way of reporting ICT issues. There was a challenge around ensuring feedback was sought

from users to ensure that calls had been resolved to their satisfaction. There was some discussion around the service level agreement. It was confirmed that the initial decision regarding the implementation of the new ICT structure was taken by Cabinet some time ago, but that authority to enter into specific contracts had been delegated to officers. One member urged Cabinet and Officers to consider whether the current service level agreement was appropriate. Members requested that further updates would be provided at the September meeting as part of the Corporate Resources report.

**ACTION Steve Mawson**

- 6.4 One member highlighted the importance of communicating widespread ICT issues as early as possible and he also asked that the language on emails relating to ICT be better tailored to the audience. Members were informed that Service Now was the place to access details on any service issues. Members were directed to the cyber ninja training that was available for them. The links for cyber ninja would be recirculated.

**ACTION Democratic Services**

- 6.5 One member noted the number of complaints going to the ombudsman and stated that it was a disappointing position to have had so many decisions upheld. It was accepted that issues needed to be identified at an earlier stage with legal input in complaints before they reached the ombudsman stage. A member asked that if a complaint went to the ombudsman and an issue was highlighted where improvements were already being made would that complaint still progress? In response it was explained that the individual complaint would still need to be resolved.
- 6.6 A member requested that an ICT working group meeting be arranged, he gave details of issues he had with his iPad that needed wider discussion. He noted that the Cabinet Member had refused that request. Officers provided suggestions on how to resolve the member's specific issues with the iPad and would raise the request with the Cabinet Member.

**CHAIR**

*Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting*

Meeting concluded at 13:00