

## Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee

Friday, 14 January 2022

**PRESENT:** Councillor A.G. Morgan (Chair)

**Councillors:**

S.M. Allen, K.V. Broom, D.M. Cundy, T.A.J. Davies, H.L. Davies, J.S. Edmunds, G.H. John, J.K. Howell, C. Jones, K. Madge, J.G. Prosser and D.E. Williams;

**Also in attendance:**

Councillor C.A. Davies, Cabinet Member for Communities and Rural Affairs;  
Councillor D.M. Jenkins, Cabinet Member for Resources;

**The following Officers were in attendance:**

N. Daniel, Head of ICT and Corporate Policy / Interim Director of Environment;  
J. Jones, Head of Regeneration;  
H. Pugh, Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance;  
L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law;  
P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance);  
G. Ayers, Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager;  
D. Hockenhull, Marketing and Media Manager;  
A. Eynon, Principal Translator;  
M. Evans Thomas, Principal Democratic Services Officer;  
E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer;  
J. Owens, Democratic Services Officer;  
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer.

**Virtual Meeting: 10.00 am - 11.30 am**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE /PERSONAL MATTERS**

There were no apologies for absence.

The Chair paid tribute to Councillor Mair Stephens, Deputy Leader of Carmarthenshire County Council, who died recently.  
The Committee observed a minute silence in memory of Councillor Stephens.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM**

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
A. Davies	5 - 2021/22 Quarter 2 Departmental Performance Report (1st April to 30th September 2021)	Sister-in-Law is Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance.

**3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions had been received.

**4. 2021/22 QUARTER 2 - CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT (1ST APRIL TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021) THAT SPANS ACROSS ALL DEPARTMENTS**

The Committee considered the 2021/22 Quarter 2 Corporate Performance Report (1st April to 30th September 2021) that spanned across all Departments.

The report showed progress as at the end of Quarter 2 - 2021/22 of deliverables (Actions and Measures) linked to the Corporate Strategy and the 13 Well-being Objectives.

It was noted that the Authority was under a general duty to make arrangements to monitor performance and to demonstrate to citizens, members and regulators how performance was managed, and appropriate interventions implemented.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to receive the report.**

**5. 2021/22 QUARTER 2 - DEPARTMENTAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (1ST APRIL TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021) RELEVANT TO THIS SCRUTINY**

The Committee considered the 2021/22 Departmental Quarter 2 Performance Report (1<sup>st</sup> April to 30th September 2021) relevant to this Scrutiny.

The report showed progress as at the end of Quarter 2 - 2021/22 of deliverables (Actions and Measures) linked to the Corporate Strategy and the 13 Well-being Objectives.

It was noted that the Authority was under a general duty to make arrangements to monitor performance and to demonstrate to citizens, members and regulators how performance was managed, and appropriate interventions implemented

Amongst the issues raised on the report were the following:

**Off Target Measures**

- In terms of responses to Freedom of Information Act requests it was noted that action was being taken to improve response rates from Departments to requests for information though it was recognised that pressures on Departments to deal with covid-related issues had impacted on the Quarter 2 results. Improvements were also being made to the FOIA administrative systems. It was suggested, in light of the aforementioned, that under the 'Remedial Action' section of the report for this measure that the wording 'none possible' be changed to 'in progress';
- The Committee was informed that current data indicated a marginal decline, but downward trend, in sickness absence. In response to a question the Assistant Chief Executive (People Management) advised that whilst the Authority was precluded from asking employees if they had received a flu jab it did promote the benefits of such vaccinations in line with the Authority's vaccination policy. It was suggested that it would be helpful to include reference to the percentage of staff off sick for each quarter;
- Reference was made to the predicted rise in the cost of living and energy prices from April 2022 and concern was expressed as to whether the Authority had sufficient staff to assist people who might seek or require assistance. The Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance advised that staff workload was closely monitored and additional posts were currently being advertised;
- The question was asked as to whether there was a map indicating the prevalence of poverty in Carmarthenshire. The Cabinet Member for Rural and Community Affairs commented that the Authority's Tackling Poverty

Group considered issues relating to both rural and urban poverty and helped identify people who needed extra help to identify the services and benefits they were entitled to;

- The Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance agreed to follow up concerns over delays by the Valuation Office in applications to reassess council tax;
- The Committee was advised that workforce planning data highlighted the fact that the Authority had an aging workforce and apprenticeships, alongside work with schools, were considered to be an important means of attracting young people into the employ of the council as was the graduate trainee scheme. In terms of workforce planning reference was made to the imminent launch of the Care Academy which would hopefully attract people who wished to work in the Authority's care sector;

### **On Target Measures / other issues**

- In response to a concern regarding the length of time members of the public and members had to wait before getting through to call-centre staff during the current pandemic and periods of bad weather the Marketing & Media Manager acknowledged that the number of calls being received was considerably higher than pre-pandemic levels and many of the calls were also longer and more complex. She added that the Authority continued to seek to recruit additional staff to the call centre and review its operation. It was noted that the public could also contact the Council via its website and social media. The Marketing & Media Manager agreed to look into the appropriateness of introducing a measure relating to response times to public queries including those received out of hours;
- The Assistant Chief Executive (People Management) agreed to ascertain from the TIC Programme Manager whether feedback would be given to residents and service users who responded to consultation and engaged in the identification of future TIC priorities and projects;
- The Head of Administration & Law agreed to take on board a suggestion that the views of Councillors newly-elected in 2017 be sought in regard to the preparation of the member induction programme following the forthcoming elections.

The Chair asked offices to convey to their teams the Committee's appreciation of their work during this difficult time.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to receive the report.**

#### **6. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT**

The Committee received the Non-Submission report.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

#### **7. FORTHCOMING ITEMS**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting to be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2022 be received.**

**8. MINUTES - 10TH DECEMBER 2021**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021 be signed as a correct record.

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**CHAIR**

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**DATE**