

No.

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid meeting held on 17th July 2024.

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

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor J. Protheroe (Chair); Councillor E. Goodjohn (Vice-Chair); Councillors G.D.D. Carroll, P. Drake, C.P. Franks, S.M. Hanks, Dr. I.J. Johnson, B. Loveluck-Edwards and N.J. Wood.

Also present: Councillors I.R. Buckley, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

233 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”.

234 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors R. Fisher and H.C. Hamilton.

235 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 19th June, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

236 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

237 Q4 SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT 2023/2024 (REF) –

Cabinet had on 20th June, 2024 referred the Sickness Absence report for 2023/2024 to the Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.

The report set out the sickness absence figures for the period 1st April, 2023 to 31st March, 2024 as part of the agreed performance management arrangements.

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The Operational Manager for Employee Services advised that the absence figures had improved based on the same period as the previous year. The previous year (2022/2023) had seen increased levels of absence, this was due to coming out of the pandemic and absence had been seen to have been increasing across all organisational groups including the public sector.

In presenting the report the Operational Manager for Employee Services drew attention to the initiatives that had been introduced by the Council to support staff which included support and resources from Occupational Health colleagues to assist staff in returning to work as soon as possible. Having regard to paragraph 4.5 of the report the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development Service advised that the Vale of Glamorgan Council had now ended its association with the Care First Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in relation to providing a 24-hour advice line for staff and a new provider had been sourced. The new provider Westfield Health had commenced with the Authority on 1st November, 2023 and whilst the transition to the service was being carried out staff could contact the Council's Occupational Health Unit with any queries or concerns. In referring to positive health promotion, it was noted that flu vaccinations had been delivered both corporately and in schools and residential settings during October and November 2023 with approximately 2,000 vaccines having been given across the organisation.

A new Occupational Health booking system was currently being implemented with a view to it being rolled out by 1st November, 2024. The new booking system would enable administration time of the nurses and doctors to be reduced and would thereby provide a more efficient and streamlined process within the Occupational Health Unit.

The Operational Manager also drew attention to paragraph 5.7 of the report which advised that the Council now had nearly 40 trained mental health champions whose primary roles were:

- To promote health campaigns
- Encourage colleagues to participate in the Council's wellbeing initiatives and challenges.
- Involvement in events and collaborative working
- Role modelling
- Providing a healthy culture within the workplace
- Organising activities
- Signposting colleagues to relevant services.

Appendix A to the report detailed the breakdown of absences by service area including Wales-wide comparative data and Appendix to the report provided details of overall sickness rates. Appendix C to the report detailed sickness breakdown by Directorate and Appendix D to the report detailed the sickness breakdown by age.

No.

The Chair was pleased to note that sickness absence was trending in a downwards projection and requested that a report be presented to the Committee in due course on how Westfield Health were progressing.

Councillor Carroll in commenting on the sickness figures referred to the age range noting that the 16-25 age group appeared to have a higher number of days lost than the 65+ age group which is not what he would have expected. The officer stated that this was also in his view an error and that he would double check the figures and advise Members of the Committee accordingly by email. It being noted that the figures should actually be the other way around.

Having regard to the reasons for sickness absence Councillor Wood commented that the 'Other' category appeared to have a large percentage of responses as opposed to any other categories and he wondered why this category had been introduced especially with there being no further detail on what 'Other' meant. The Head of Service advised that the "Other" category had always been in the system but it appeared more staff were now ticking that category. Further work would be undertaken to ascertain why and also to consider broadening the categories should the investigation into "Other" result in a need for new categories to be created.

Councillor Dr. Johnson, in commenting on the work of the 30 Mental Health Champions, enquired as to the Committee also receiving an update report in respect of the service, maintaining momentum and consistency of approach and any plans for training any new champions. In referring to paragraph 5.7 of the report and the number of people who received training as mental health champions, The Head of Service advised they had recently lost a particular champion who like other champions had been enthusiastic and committed and that further work was being progressed to engage future champions.

Councillor Dr. Johnson also asked for some examples of the service provision to be forwarded to Members for their information outside of the Committee reporting mechanism.

Councillor Loveluck-Edwards enquired about stress-risk assessments and what assurances the Council had been given that the new provider had someone who had the ability to guide the employee in terms of the support they required for their individual needs. The Head of Service advised that risk assessments were completed in partnership with the individual, the Safety and Wellbeing Team and the Occupational Health Team. Both the Care First and Westfield Health were managed by the Occupational Health team and Health and Safety Wellbeing Team. Early indications were showing that feedback in respect of the service provided by Westfield Health was positive.

The Chair, referring to the pie chart attached as an Appendix, three quarters of cases stating there was stress at work so it was important to know what exactly was the cause of stress, with managers having the opportunity to get to the root cause at work.

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In response, the Head of Service stated that there could be further opportunities to drill down further with regard to the information as it was currently based on what a medical certificate stated. However, she informed the Committee that under the Council's Management of Attendance Policy there was a robust structure of meetings that needed to take place in a supportive way which were undertaken by team managers. Although she was not sure how further detailed breakdown could provide more accurate information, she would consider broadening the category noting that the actual aim would be to proactively reduce the issues in the first place and to ensure mitigations were undertaken to assist employees.

Following consideration of the report it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that work be undertaken in relation to:

- broadening the reasons for absence in relation to the 'Other' box.
- Further clarity relating to the absence figures for the 16-25 age group and 65+ plus categories to be emailed to Members.
- That a further report be presented to the Committee in respect of progress following the commissioning of Westfield Health in six months' time.
- That further information be presented to the Committee in relation to the service provided by the 30 Mental Health Champions, the good work being undertaken and to include details of training opportunities.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the discussions at the meeting, the contents of the report and to advise Cabinet following requests of the Scrutiny Committee.

238 VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL AUDIT SUMMARY 2023
(REF) –

The report contained the details of the Auditor General Wales' Annual Audit Summary for the Vale of Glamorgan Council and outlined the work that had been completed since the last Audit Summary, issued in March 2023.

In presenting the report the Director of Corporate Resources drew attention to the Annual Audit Summary 2023 at Appendix A to the report advising that it was generally positive with the key conclusions being noted as follows:

- Audit of Accounts - the Auditor General Wales had given an unqualified true and fair opinion on the Council's financial statements for the 2022-23 period and issued the certificate confirming that the audit of accounts for 2022-23 had been completed.
- The Annual Governance Statement and Narrative Report had been prepared in line with the CIPFA Code and relevant guidance and were consistent with the financial statements prepared by the Council and with Audit Wales' knowledge of the Council.

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Eleven recommendations had been made in relation to specific local reviews on the Council's Use of Performance Information (2), Digital Strategy (5), Application of the Sustainable Development Principle in Service Areas (2) and the Planning Service's Governance Arrangements (2). The Director advised that these would be and tracked and monitored throughout the year by the Council's Insight Board and Strategic Leadership Team, Scrutiny Committees, Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet as work to address them progressed. It was further noted that progress against regulatory actions was also monitored by Audit Wales colleagues throughout the year as part of the Annual Regulatory Plan. This report was also being considered by the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting the following evening on 18th July, 2024.

The Chair, in recognising that this was a housekeeping report, noted the Director's comments that departments were now providing the Senior Leadership Team with a comprehensive understanding from a user perspective and that the last 'Talk About Life in the Vale' consultation had been shared widely both internally and with the Scrutiny Committees. It was noted that Cabinet would also consider an update report in relation to the Public Participation Strategy in response to this survey and that the first phase of the Annual Self-Assessment had also been completed with Directors advising how they used the insight received from the survey in making policy decisions. The ADP had also been amended to reflect where engagement had been noted as a critical challenge with actions set out in the ADP and additional measures within the corporate framework.

Councillor Goodjohn enquired as to whether the Director was satisfied following the Audit of the Planning Service that the necessary planning governance arrangements were in place and that the recommendations had been sufficiently implemented. The Director, in response, advised that the recommendations had been appropriately responded to and that he could email the latest position to Members of the Committee.

There being no comments to refer back to Cabinet it was subsequently.

RECOMMENDED – T H A T an email be forwarded to the Cabinet advising that the report was accepted and that further reports would be presented in due course.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to discussions at the meeting and responses received from the Director.

239 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE 2023/24 (DCR) –

The performance report detailed the progress at Quarter 4 (Q4) (1st April 2023 to 31st March, 2024) towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan (2023/24) commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

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A presentation at Appendix A to the report outlined the performance for the period 1st April, 2023 to 31st March, 2024 against the Council's Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2023/24 as aligned to the remit of the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

The presentation appended to the report was also intended to provide Members with an overview of end of year performance earlier in the calendar year. This was ahead of the more detailed Annual Self-Assessment 2023/24 that would be reported to Cabinet and Full Council prior to publication in December 2024.

The Director of Corporate Resources took the opportunity to advise Committee that the Department was looking to bring reports earlier in the cycle than had previously been the case to ensure that all five Scrutiny Committees considered the performance information earlier in the cycles.

Three of the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives were attributed a green performance status at Q4 and one Well-being Objective was attributed an Amber performance status (WBO 1). This reflected the good progress made to date in meeting the Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2023/24.

Of the 161 performance measures aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, data was reported for 85 measures where a performance status was applicable. 46% (39) measures were attributed a green performance Status, 14% (12) Amber status and 40% (34) Red status. A performance status was not applicable for 76 measures with 56 of these relating to measures establishing baseline performance for 2023/24 and for 20 measures no data was available.

In relation to the planned activities within the remit of the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee, 90.2% (275 out of 306) were attributed a green performance status and the final 9.8% (30) were attributed a Red status. Of the 23 measures reported where RAG was applicable, 26.1% (6) were attributed a green performance status, 21.7% (5) an Amber status and 52.2.% (12) were attributed Red status.

For ease of reference, performance exceptions aligned to the Scrutiny Committee's remit highlighted the current status of red performing actions identified in previous quarters to show direction of travel at end of year. This enabled Members to quickly gauge whether proposed remedial actions had been undertaken in year to progress those actions. This approach of reporting exceptions reflected the changes requested by Elected Members on performance monitoring of the Annual Delivery Plan.

The report sought Elected Members' consideration of Q4 performance results and the proposed remedial actions to address areas of identified underperformance. Following consideration, the Scrutiny Committee was recommended to refer their views and any recommendations to Cabinet for their consideration.

Councillor Dr. Johnson commented that he was not sure about the rationale for there not being an Amber status and in drawing attention to the percentage of Council staff completing Welsh language training which was not yet available on

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iDev he queried whether any progress was being made. He was also aware a number of members of staff had attended Welsh Language courses and enquired whether the 1% referred to included schools.

In response, the Director advised that in respect of the iDev module progress was being made, although there had been some delays in terms of the content being available this had been outside the control of the Organisation and Development Team. The information, it was his understanding, did not relate to schools but that he would look into the matter and provided an update to Members by email following the meeting. He was also aware that there were a number of other methods for staff to learn Welsh and he would look into how this data could be brought together and presented to the Committee in due course.

In referring to social media and the fact that this type of engagement was continually changing, Councillor Dr. Johnson asked whether the Director could explain where the Council's current position, what the objectives were for going forward and whether there were any further developments currently underway.

In referring to the use of Twitter and X the Director advised that there had also been a conversation at the Senior Leadership team earlier in the week re internal and external comms and the role of Twitter and X. The Director further advised that the Council had been dialling back on the number of tweets it put out with more focus being on what organisational pieces the Council wished to share. As part of the changes that had been introduced on the platform there had also been a drop in public engagement (that was being experienced by many accounts) and further work was required in this regard. The Council tracked and monitored engagement and also looked at how successful it was in pointing people to relevant information.

Councillor Goodjohn, in referring to the Carbon Management Plan, asked whether a secure date had been provided in relation to the Plan. The Director commented that this was scheduled to be reported to Cabinet after the recess and referred to the Scrutiny Committees Corporate Performance and Resources and Environment and Regeneration thereafter.

Councillor Goodjohn also enquired as to whether there was any progress in relation to the Review of Street Names Group that had been established. The Director advised that under the work of the County of Sanctuary some aspects were being explored, the Council was committed to look at this area of work and that he would work with Democratic Services colleagues to progress as soon as possible.

In referring to the first point of contact service and noting that it had dramatically decreased, Councillor Goodjohn enquired as to whether there was any reason why the decrease had taken place. In response, the Director advised that a report was due to be presented to the Committee from the Operational Manager for the service area and that he would ensure that reference was made to the first point of contact service with detailed information provided. He would also ensure that complaints and compliments would be included in the report to the Governance and Audit Committee.

No.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently.

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Q4 performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 commitments as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives within the remit of the Committee be noted.
- (2) T H A T the remedial actions to be taken to address areas of underperformance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee be noted and that the views and recommendations of the Committee be referred to Cabinet for their consideration and approval.
- (3) T H A T the comments of the Committee as outlined above be referred to Cabinet for consideration, namely that further information be presented in relation to other methods being undertaken for staff to learn Welsh; the detail of the progress being made in relation to the iDev module and when the module was likely to be in place; what progress was being made in relation to the Review of Street Names Group and that further information in relation to the first point of contact service be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To ensure the Council clearly demonstrated the progress being made towards achieving its commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.
- (2) To ensure the Council was effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to meet performance requirements as outlined in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and reflecting the requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that it maximised its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.
- (3) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.