



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Service Improvement & Finance**

Remotely, via MS Teams

Monday 14th December 2020 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor C A Holley (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

P Black
L James
P Jones

Councillor(s)

P Hood-Williams
M Thomas

Councillor(s)

J Jones
M Jones

Other Attendees

Cllr Louise Gibbard

Cabinet Member for Supporting Communities

Officer(s)

Joanne Portwood
Adam Hill
Emily Davies

Policy and Strategy Officer, Strategic Delivery Unit
Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Resources
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

P Downing, I Mann, B Rowlands, D Thomas

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Cllr Peter Jones is a Committee Member of the Iberian and Latin American Association, represented in the Grand Theatre cultural and digital hub.

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

No declarations were made.

3 Minutes

The Panel considered letters and minutes from previous meetings and agreed the minutes of the meeting on 9th November 2020 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Public Questions

No questions were submitted by members of the public.

Equality Plan Review 2019/2020

Cllr Louise Gibbard, Cabinet Member for Supporting Communities, and Joanne Portwood, Policy and Strategy Officer, attended the meeting to present the Equality Plan Review and answer questions. Adam Hill, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of

Resources also attended. The Panel thanked those involved for a very comprehensive and informative report. It was noted that:

- The report is a cross-cutting whole council review, highlighting the breadth and depth of work across the Council and with partner organisations.
- The aim is to make services as accessible and inclusive as possible.
- There is particular significance of the Review this year in light of the pandemic, which exposed a lot of inequalities across the country.
- The Review reports on some excellent case studies showcasing a range of events, ongoing work of Equality Reps in each department, liaising with Equality forums, and work with older people through Local Area Coordinators.
- It highlights the continued corporate commitment to tackling poverty.
- Improvements would be valued in terms of gaps in data held on Council staff and those interacting with us. This is a difficult topic as this is voluntary and people are often suspicious and weary giving such data. Without this data it is difficult to present patterns and develop awareness of trends. It is useful data in identifying differences such as pay gaps.
- The Council is developing a more co-productive approach to gathering data and it was heard that more engagement across the Council would be valuable.
- Swansea coproduction network have been co-opted onto a number of Policy Development Committees (PDC).
- A new consultation and co-production strategy is being written.
- The Panel requested more information on the case histories section of the Review and the names of the schools that took part in the schools swap. It would be interested to know more about the cross section of schools used and the partner authorities involved.
- The Panel also acknowledge that steps are being taken to improve data collection, but wish to know more about what these steps involve and what assurances can be given to people that their information will be used properly and appropriately.
- Cllr Gibbard explained that a new data management system is outlined in the Review. It was explained that data is anonymised and thus looked across the organisation rather than at individuals.
- It is understood that if we do not have this data to analyse, we will not be able to ascertain whether or not discrimination is inadvertently or indirectly taking place.
- There is a new Strategic Equalities Board being established to drive forward objectives.
- Adam Hill, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Resources, explained that the new system ('Oracle Cloud') will build on the current Human Resources (HR) and finance system, making it more resilient and easier to access and record information.
- Up to date and accurate data will help us respond and react more quickly to situations, such as the effect of the pandemic on the Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community.
- The Panel heard that the Council is working closely with HR and Unions to understand how better to ask questions, phrase questions and generally reassure data subjects that any information collected has no negative purpose, but rather to be able to respond and react, supporting the workforce.

- Voluntary data collection currently takes place at the point of recruitment, and not again thereafter during the course of employment. It would be useful to question how we can improve and build on this current process.
- Development of current culture is needed to assure people that information can be shared openly, and that it will only ever be used to aid them and to help them.
- Panel Members drew attention to some concerns expressed by individuals in the community who would prefer the term 'BAME' not be used, but instead perhaps Minority Ethnic Group. The Panel recognised this is a UK-wide concept and as such has a place for wider discussion outside of this Panel.
- Report section 'A Better Welcome to Swansea' – relating in particular to refugee and asylum seeking minority groups. The Panel recognised the presence of such groups and the need for them to have escaped violence and threats of death in their own communities. Panel Members thanked the Council for making funding available for food packages being delivered to such groups, including children's toys. The work of third sector and voluntary groups was also acknowledged as being a vital component of this City of Sanctuary.
- Equitable Provision of Services For All (P9) – The Panel felt that some projects, such as Families First, are not facilitated universally so the title could be misleading. Panel Members raised concerns over this title being fit for purpose in this context.
- Officers explained that Families First and associated programmes have been subject to Welsh Government funding based on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. Officers accepted there were gaps in provision and this should be taken on board in future reporting. Officers undertook to provide a comprehensive answer on this point and how best to address pockets of deprivation in every ward.
- The Panel queried general understanding of the legal requirements of the Review. Officers explained that the obligation arises under the Equality Act 2010 and there are specific duties to report annually and develop a new Strategic Equality Plan. Officers acknowledged that the report is quite legalistic and that future reports could develop language to ensure better clarity and understanding.
- The Public Sector Equality Duty places an obligation on the Council to demonstrate and report on steps taken each year. In future reporting it would be useful to separate legal duty from Council actions taken over and above legal requirements.
- The Panel highlighted that a cost-benefit analysis should be included within the Review.
- Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) Paragraph 5.3: Members queried whether there is any follow up on EIAs and questioned whether we gather information from them and follow through with results. Cllr Gibbard acknowledged that this should be done and it would perhaps be appropriate for the new Strategic Equalities Board to oversee.
- Cumulative impacts of EIAs need to be looked into in more detail, now being intrinsically linked with Well-being of Future Generations Act assessments.
- Officers expressed hope that departments would take ownership of EIAs, with support from the Equalities Team, and these assessments should mature within any project process.
- The Panel heard that work is underway to review EIA procedures and develop a new process surrounding Integrated Impact Assessments; taking into account the

new socio economic duty which will be a requirement from April 2021, ensuring council decisions take into account those from disadvantaged socio economic backgrounds.

- Community Cohesion, Paragraph 5.7: The Panel felt this should be the top priority and therefore the first item of reporting. Community leaders take responsibility for community cohesion and this principle should be used as a touchstone for equality. Equality is about cohesion and involving everyone; this should become a primary feature of future reporting.
- Views were expressed about how the pandemic has highlighted a greater sense of community cohesion and we should build on that.

The meeting ended at 10.40 am