



**To/
Councillor Clive Lloyd
Cabinet Member for Business
Transformation and Performance**

BY EMAIL

*Please ask for:
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Overview & Scrutiny

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25th July 2019

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Performance Panel from the meeting on 13th May 2019 to the Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Performance. The letter concerns the Commissioning Reviews Progress Update and the Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring Report 2018/19.

Dear Councillor Lloyd,

On the 13th May, the Panel met to discuss the Commissioning Reviews Progress Update and the Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring Report 2018/19.

The Panel are grateful to all officers who attended to provide information and answer questions.

The Panel do have some thoughts and observations to share with you.

Commissioning Reviews Progress Update

We heard how this was a follow on from the information which was provided at the Scrutiny Programme Committee a few months ago.

We were told that the Regeneration and Planning savings which were listed as 'not achieved' are down to delays and will be achievable. We heard how Council costs in relation to Corporate Building Services and Corporate Property Services are starting to come into line with the costs of external contractors and so more work is being done 'in-house'. We were happy to see that the Route Planning Update is in hand and look forward to hearing more about this as it develops

It is encouraging to hear that you are confident the Business Support Programme savings when mapped over 5 years, will generate some significant savings, we will continue to monitor these and their progress against target.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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We heard how the ongoing issue of staff sickness is still a problem. We feel that there is a link between the savings and inevitable cuts caused by austerity and these sickness figures. People who are left after teams have been cut inevitably have an increased workload. You told us that although some departments and projects are impacted by sickness, services are still being delivered, albeit not to the highest standard which they were before.

Following on from this, we heard how some roles are being reviewed to ensure they are multi-skilled to accommodate staff cover in the event of sickness. We do feel that this may have some impact for staff as they could be taking on extra work which they are not familiar with. Again we will monitor this as part of the performance reports.

Overall, we are content with progress but will continue to look at performance against targets, and the commissioning process itself.

Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring Report 2018/19

We were told that the format of the performance monitoring report has changed due to the new way in which the report is produced with new software. It was encouraging that the Local Development Plan has now been accepted and that there is good progress with work within the City Centre regeneration.

We heard how meeting challenges around safeguarding within Social Services continues to be difficult due to the demand led nature of the work, but this is being closely monitored by the department and the relevant scrutiny performance panel.

Regarding the Quarter 3 Performance Report itself, we make the following comments:

Social Services

Regarding Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding assessments, we heard that although there was a drop in performance in quarter 3 after improvement in quarter 2, the backlog is reducing which is very positive. However the Panel does feel that the information which is being gathered from the person being assessed is accurate to ensure they get the best service possible for their needs. Again the issue of delayed transfer of care for people is still problematic. Whilst there is a specific scrutiny panel looking closely at this, we will also add that this ongoing delay needs to be rectified. We hope to see substantial progress on this going forward.

We were pleased to see that the number of Councillors undertaking safeguarding training has risen but the staff figure is below where it should be and we hope to see an improvement on this in the coming year.

Education

We are glad to see that school attendance still remains stable. We see there are some signs of weakness within Quarters 2 and 3 but we are pleased to see this is being monitored. We do have a query around national reports stating that pupils are being removed from the school roll for the school benefit rather than the child's benefit. We are not implying this happens in Swansea, but can you explain how we manage this situation to ensure this does not happen in our schools?

We are disappointed that the number of apprenticeships and traineeships will be reduced going forward as a result of austerity. We hope that there will be an uplift in these targets in the future. We will come back to this issue of apprenticeships and trainees in a future scrutiny meeting.

Tackling Poverty

We heard that the time taken to process Housing Benefit applications shows improving trends but the time taken to process changes in circumstance is still relatively high. We understand that this may be due to the roll out of Universal Credit but still have concerns that people are waiting a long time for money which is due to them, causing financial hardship.

We were interested to see there are new performance indicators around gaining employment and gaining qualifications and have asked the department to share their ethos behind these performance indicators.

Transformation and Future Council

You explained that some services have changed as a result of staff loss but they are not necessarily worse. We heard how some services are taking a more advice based role rather than direct support which was previously in place.

Again the ongoing issue around staff sickness continues to show a declining trend in performance. We will be asking the relevant service to provide some further information around sickness for our information. However, we look forward to seeing what approach is taken to tackle this issue.


We know that the delivery of financial savings is challenging as it is linked with complex transformation but will continue to monitor this going forward.

We welcome any thoughts you may have in relation to the points raised but would like a response to the following;

We do have a query around national reports stating that pupils are being removed from the school roll for the school benefit rather than the child's benefit. We are not implying this happens in Swansea, but can you explain how we manage this situation to ensure this does not happen in our schools?

We would be grateful if you would respond to this letter by 15th August 2019.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'CH Holley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Chris Holley

Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel

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