



## Report of the Director of Corporate Services

Corporate Services & Financial Resilience Service Transformation  
Committee - 23 April 2024

# Corporate Services & Financial Resilience Service Transformation Committee Annual Report 2023-2024

**Purpose:** To provide an annual report to the committee on the progress made in relation to its work plan for the Municipal Year 2023-24

**Report Author:** Emily Davies

**Finance Officer:** Paul Roach

**Legal Officer:** Debbie Smith

**Access to Services  
Officer:** Rhian Millar

### For Information

## 1. Introduction

1.1 During the municipal year 2023-24, the Corporate Services & Financial Resilience Service Transformation Committee (the 'STC') explored and contributed to the following items:

- Swansea – A Human Rights City
- Digital Transformation: Customer Charter and Service Standards
- The Council's Coproduction Policy
- The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan
- Workforce Transformation: Leadership, Management, Learning and Development

- 1.2 All items included within the work plan for 2023-24 have been discussed and suggestions related to policy development have been taken into account.
- 1.3 During the municipal year 2023-24, a total of 6 committee meetings will have been held (including the meeting in April 2024 to present this annual report, and excluding the meeting in May 2023 to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair). The majority of meetings have included formal written reports, published a week prior to the meeting and together with the agenda pack are available to the public on the Council's website.
- 1.4 The items explored by the committee have ranged from complex programmes of work, such as the Council's Digital Transformation Programme, to the development of smaller bespoke policies such as the Council's Co-Production Policy.

## **2. Human Rights City**

- 2.1 At the June 2023 meeting of the STC, the Head of Communications and Marketing, assisted by the Consultation Co-ordinator, submitted a report which provided information on the Human Rights City Action Plan event (held on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2023) and sought input on the creation of Swansea Council's Human Rights City Action Plan.
- 2.2 Members were asked about their views on the report. Committee discussions focussed on the training opportunities for Members and officers, the importance of early intervention and publicity regarding workshops and events.
- 2.3 As a result of the committee deliberations, it was agreed that further training sessions would be organised for committee members and that members be given the opportunity to participate in the survey.

## **3. Digital Transformation: Customer Charter and Service Standards**

- 3.1 At the July 2023 meeting of the STC, the Head of Digital & Customer Services presented for discussion the draft Customer Charter and Service Standards, highlighting that excellent Customer Service aligned with our Service Standards is the first goal of the new Digital Strategy agreed by Cabinet in April 2023.
- 3.2 The Committee was asked to discuss the draft Customer Charter and Service Standards, and members focused on the following questions:
  - The Charter lists a series of promises to residents across a range of ways for people to access services. Would the Committee like to see any changes or additions?

- The Service Standards have been reviewed by Heads of Service and build on existing service levels. They have also been described in ways which residents may ask for services, as opposed to a Council hierarchy. When the information is online it will be easy for people to search using key words. However, could this be improved to make it easier for residents to find the information?
- 3.3 Committee members discussed the importance of managing expectations, consulting with residents in areas of poor digital connectivity and ensuring those people who are not digitally literate are consulted, including groups and organisations. Members suggested it was important to have regard to the inclusion of 'digital exclusion' in the Strategy. Work around digital inclusion is being taken forward by the Tackling Poverty Service following the report from Audit Wales in March 2023, 'Digital Inclusion in Wales'.
- 3.4 The committee noted the use of plain language throughout the charter documents, considering this to be a very positive move.
- 3.5 Members examined the timescales for actions and raised queries around the suggested 28 working days to process requests for free school meals.
- 3.6 The Charter and Service Standards were approved by Cabinet on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and provided delegated authority to the relevant Director(s) and Cabinet Member(s) to approve any changes moving forward. Proposals for the re-wording of the free school meals standard was the subject of a 'call in' discussion at the Scrutiny Programme Committee on the 13<sup>th</sup> February. The proposals have been accepted and approved by the relevant Directors and Cabinet Members, and the listing has also been moved under the Benefits section of the service standards.
- 3.7 At the December 2023 meeting, the committee was presented with an updated report, following input from public consultation and engagement, in the form of a survey. The committee heard that there were 73 responses to the survey, of whom 81% were Swansea residents and 16% were Swansea Council staff. In addition, the Partnership and Involvement Team provided the support for further direct engagement and feedback through both the Ageing Well Steering Group and a large engagement event in December. The event had representation from groups who work with the Council on the LGBTQ+ Forum, Disability Liaison Group and Ageing Well. Another 71 responses were received from this work. Overall, 144 people responded and the Customer Charter and Service Standards Framework was updated as a result of their feedback.
- 3.8 As a result of the Committee's work the Customer Charter and Service Standards will be operational from the beginning of the new financial year.

#### **4. The Medium-Term Financial Plan**

- 4.1 At the September 2023 meeting of the STC, the Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer presented a report which detailed the information on the Medium-Term Financial Plan in preparation for contributing to future savings proposals.
- 4.2 Members noted that the current economic climate presented a number of difficulties in terms of forecasting levels of inflation, pay awards and future funding. This was further complicated by the requirement to meet policy commitments as well as balancing legal requirements, generally with insufficient core funding.
- 4.3 On 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024, Cabinet recommended the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2025/26 - 2027/28 to Council as the basis for future service financial planning. The STC noted the MTFP as a planning assumption, and the MTFP was subsequently approved at Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

#### **5. Co-production**

- 5.1 Also at the September 2023 meeting of the STC, the Head of Communications and Marketing introduced an update from Co-production Lab Wales, detailing the work undertaken in building and embedding co-production within the Council.
- 5.2 Members were provided with a detailed summary of the Co-production Policy which included the background, a definition of co-production, co-production and other engagement approaches, levels of co-production, applying co-production, when not to co-produce, high level guiding principles for implementation, roles in the process and additional information.
- 5.3 The Head of Communications and Marketing thanked the Committee for their views which had helped shape the draft policy. The Committee provided further comments directly to officers or via the Council's consultation page, and agreed to promote the Policy to any hard to reach groups with their communities.
- 5.4 Following discussion at the STC, this item progressed to Cabinet. On 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024, the Chair of the Corporate Services & Financial Resilience Service Transformation Committee submitted a report that sought adoption of the Co-production Policy. Cabinet subsequently approved the policy.

#### **6. Workforce Transformation: Leadership, Management, Learning and Development**

- 6.1 At the January 2024 meeting of the STC, the Head of HR & Service Centre presented a report which detailed the Workforce and OD Transformation

Programme work in relation to the Leadership and Management development theme. This theme focuses on two key areas of work – developing our workforce culture and enabling growth of leadership and management skills.

- 6.2 Members asked a number of questions about the transformation programme. It was noted that a report to Leadership was scheduled for February to provide a full analysis of all Organisational Development activity that is being undertaken in addition to new possibilities that could be considered for 2024/25.

## **7. Integrated Assessment Implications**

- 7.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socioeconomic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

- 7.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

- 7.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

- 7.4 There are no integrated assessment implications associated with this report. There is no impact identified on people and/or communities when considering all the impacts identified in the screening. This is a for information report and does not require any decision making which could impact on others.

**8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.

**9. Legal Implications**

9.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

**Background Papers:** None

**Appendices:** None.