



**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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4th September 2019

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Performance. The letter concerns the meeting on 19th August and the End of Year Performance Monitoring Report 17/18.

Dear Councillor Lloyd,

On the 19th August 2019 the Panel met to discuss the End of Year Performance Monitoring Report 17/18. The Panel are grateful to all who attended to provide information and answer questions.

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

Safeguarding

We know there were challenges in relation to Performance Indicators AS8, Measure 18, Measure 19 and AS13. We are aware that the relevant scrutiny panels already look closely at these issues but will be referring these Performance Indicators to the scrutiny chairs for in depth review.

Regarding CFS18, we heard how there has been a 6% increase in Looked After Children compared to 17/18 but the trend is decreasing overall. Regarding SAFE 8b, we are very pleased that the number of elected members having received training in safeguarding is now 100%.

We observed that the length of time it takes for information to come to the panel is unacceptable. It can take months for the information to be reviewed and then a further delay in writing to the Cabinet Member and getting a response. We appreciate that this is linked to the reporting cycle of the Council but does make the timely scrutiny of the reports difficult.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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However, even with the challenges we have identified, the panel are impressed that the current standard has been achieved given the severity of the financial cuts the directorate has faced.

Education and Skills

You told us how the majority of these targets were met or within 5% of being met. We heard how EDCP18D showed a 12% increase in the number of NEETS (not in education, employment or training) compared to 17/18. The comments states that 3.9% of the year 11 cohort had a very high vulnerability profile. Is this 3.9% of the NEETS or 3.9% of year 11 overall?

EDCP18D – Refers to ‘known’ NEETS, but we do have a query about ‘unknown’ NEETS. Do you believe that there are unknown NEETS, and if so, can you tell us what the strategy is for supporting them?

Regarding BBMA4 which relates to the number of apprenticeships or trainee starts in the Council, we have not met this target. Given the financial restraints of the Council, should this target be reviewed to be more realistic?

You told us free school meals claims had missed target in both primary and secondary schools due to absence resulting from illness.

Economy and Infrastructure

We heard how 86% of performance indicators here met target with 57% of those improving. You told us how EEF002, the measurement of carbon reduction across all CCS public building portfolio, had met its target but was 50% lower than 17/18. We also heard how EDS1, inward investments related to property based projects was missed due to delays getting on site with a major scheme and this should complete in 19/20.

Regarding the percentage of waste collected by us WMT009B, we heard how the target was met but due to changes in wood collection and a dry summer reducing garden waste the figure is down.

Tackling Poverty

You told us how 62% of targets were met but 67% showed a decline in performance. Regarding HBCT01a/1b/2a/2b, which relate to the speed and processing of new and current claims of housing benefit and council tax reduction, was declining.

We are aware that the roll out of Universal Credit has had some influence on these delays, however reducing staff within these teams has directly impacted the Councils ability to deal with these issues. Our residents are directly affected by this decrease in staffing and we are losing valuable experience in this area of work. We feel this area needs to be resourced properly.

Transformation and Future Council

CH002, the performance indicator which measures staff sickness has again missed its target. We feel that we are not getting to the bottom of this issue and this is an area for concern as staff are under pressure. You explained that there is not as much support from Human Resources anymore but there will be additional training for managers on sickness processes. We will be inviting the Deputy Chief Executive to speak to the Panel about what is being done to help staff who are dealing with reducing resources.

As has been identified previously, FINA6 still highlights the difficulties this Council has in balancing the budget. We will continue to monitor this closely.

National Indicators

You told us there are a series of national indicators for Councils of which 61% met their targets and 52% improved compared to 17/18.

PAM20/21/22, which relate to the condition of roads all missed targets due to budget pressures and a reduction in condition of roads on a yearly basis will continue unless funding is increased.

We heard how PAM029 which relates to the percentage of children looked after on 31 March who have had three or more placements during the year has increased. This is due to the complex needs of the children providing challenges in creating stability.

We questioned how targets are set and you explained that departments set their own targets but the Strategic Delivery Unit review and challenge these where necessary. They then go on for approval at the Corporate Management Team meetings.

The national indicators seem to be changing year on year from Welsh Government/Welsh Local Government Association) and we do not feel this allows for effective compilation of data and trend analysis.

Given the sustained financial pressures and the service challenges facing the Council, we will be inviting various Heads of Service to this Panel in future meetings. We hope to discuss with them their plans and strategies for effective service delivery.

We are interested in any thoughts you may have but could you please respond to the following questions;

1. You told us how the majority of these targets were met or within 5% of being met. We heard how EDCP18D showed a 12% increase in the number of NEETS (not in education, employment or training) compared to 17/18. The comments states that 3.9% of the year 11 cohort had a very high vulnerability profile. Is this 3.9% of the NEETS or 3.9% of year 11 overall?

2. EDCP18D – Refers to ‘known’ NEETS, but we do have a query about ‘unknown’ NEETS. Do you believe that there are unknown NEETS, and if so, can you tell us what the strategy is for supporting them?
3. Regarding BBMA4 which relates to the number of apprenticeships or trainee starts in the Council, we have not met this target. Given the financial restraints of the Council, should this target be reviewed to be more realistic?

Could you please respond to this letter by 25th September 2019.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CHolley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Chris Holley
Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel
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