



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Video

Wednesday, 23 June 2021 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor C A Holley (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

P Downing
L James
B J Rowlands

Councillor(s)

D W W Thomas
M H Jones

Councillor(s)

P R Hood-Williams
J W Jones

Other Attendees

Louise Gibbard
Robert Smith

Cabinet Member - Supporting Communities
Cabinet Member - Education Improvement, Learning & Skills

Officer(s)

Craig Davies
Sarah Lackenby
Emily Davies

Associate Lawyer
Chief Digital & Transformation Officer
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): P K Jones and I E Mann

14 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

15 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, no declarations of Whipped Votes or Party Whips were declared.

16 Public Questions

There were no public questions

17 Welsh Language Standards Annual Report

The Panel received an update from Sarah Lackenby, Chief Transformation Officer,

regarding the contents of the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report. Cllr Louise Gibbard, Cabinet Member for Supporting Communities, and Cllr Robert Smith, Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning & Skills, also attended to support discussions and answer questions.

Discussions focused on:

- New format of report this year, under guidance of Welsh Language Commissioner (September 2020).
- Officers highlighted that, generally, the report shows good progress despite any impacts of pandemic restrictions.
- Officers explained that the report aims to provide updates across the *Standards Groups* in terms of achievement.
- The Panel heard that the *service delivery* standard continues to be a priority, and this is also the main area for which complaints are received.
- It was noted from the report that the Council would like to increase the number of employees with Welsh language skills across the workforce. Officers highlighted that regard would be had to the five year strategy, enhancing training for existing staff.
- The report outlined that training last year was good despite pandemic restrictions.
- Officers have reviewed and updated the complaints policy, reflecting feedback from the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Ombudsman.
- The Panel asked about the Welsh Translation Services use of automation and were pleased to hear about increased rates of translation.
- Panel Members queried whether the translation service had now reached the point of maximum efficiency and whether anymore savings could be made. Officers explained that this is a joint service with Neath Port Talbot Council and, pending review later this year, the service is not likely to make any further savings, now working at an efficient level.
- Members queried whether a virtual translation service was available during live meetings. Officers explained that funding had been awarded by Welsh Government (E-Democracy grant) to enable upgrades of technology within the Council Chamber, including improved technology for simultaneous translation.
- Members queried the report recommendation to make more posts mandatory Welsh and the effect on recruitment. Officers assured the Panel that this will not apply to all posts, based on skills and job market, although some posts could be made mandatory Welsh in the future.
- Councillors acknowledged the hard work and efforts of staff, working at speed to turn around work within ambitious targets. It was acknowledged that the Welsh Translation unit played an important part during the pandemic helping to translate a huge amount of information.

The Panel considered the information provided, asked questions, and gave views on the available information. The Chair thanked all for their input.

18 Overview: Byelaws

The Panel received an overview regarding the current Byelaws and the process involved in revocation. Craig Davies, Associate Lawyer, attended to answer questions.

Discussions focused on:

- The Local Authority currently has 33 active Byelaws, intending to prevent or suppress nuisance. No new Byelaws have been implemented since 1999.
- Officers explained that the process involved in making a Byelaw is complex and lengthy, including a consultation period and specific timelines to adhere to.
- The Panel heard that Welsh Government do have a catalogue of model Byelaws, enabling Local Authorities to update current Byelaws.
- It was noted that Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) are similar to a Byelaw, although lasting for only 3 years.
- The Panel heard that trained officers would be needed to monitor and enforce Byelaws and any associated fixed penalties.
- Members queried the relevance of fines in terms of current monetary value.
- Revocation is a simpler process, removing obsolete Byelaws is more straightforward than creation.
- Panel queried historical Byelaws and whether the Council carry out a review of these, with a view to updating or revoking obsolete Byelaws. Officers explained that some historical Byelaws remain relevant and applicable, but agreed that a review could be advantageous.
- Panel Members agreed that current Byelaws would benefit from review and that this subject needs to be referred to the Chief Legal Officer.

19 Work Plan 2021-22

The Panel noted the Work Plan.

The meeting ended at 10.45 am