

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ECONOMY, RESIDENTS AND COMMUNITIES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT BY ZOOM ON THURSDAY, 19 JANUARY 2023**

PRESENT

County Councillor A Davies (Chair)
County Councillor A Cartwright, D Bebb, I Harrison, Adrian Jones, Arwel Jones,
B Davies, G Mitchell, C Walsh, S Williams

Portfolio Holders County Councillor D Selby, D Thomas, J Berriman, M Dorrance
R Church

Officers

Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services)
Matthew Perry (Head of Highways, Transport and Recycling)
Emma Palmer (Head of Transformation and Communications)
Catherine James (Deputy Head of Transformation and Communications)
James Langridge -Thomas (Deputy Head of Transformation and Communications)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from

Cllr T Colbert, K Lewis

2. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest from Members relating to items to be considered on the agenda.

3. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPS

The Committee did not receive any disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member has been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

4. CORPORATE AND STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN

Documents Considered: The Draft Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan

A presentation was provided with overarching detail to the plan, providing statistics and information gathered through various engagement methods and data sets provided to the Council.

- The Corporate Plan has been through numerous workshops and engagement sessions throughout the summer and autumn.
- The Plan has been informed by insight and intelligence, the major data source was the Wellbeing Assessment conducted and published in March

2022, which is carried out by all Councils throughout Wales conducted as part of the Wellbeing Future Generations Act of 2015.

- A living in Wales survey was carried out in 2021.
- The Wellbeing Assessment insight was published in March 2022, the report was compiled before then and therefore the facts are from that publication.
- The plan will be reviewed annually.

Ambitions by 2027,

- Stronger - We will become a county that succeeds together, with communities and people that are well connected socially, and are personally and economically resilient
- Fairer - We will be an open, well-run, Council where peoples' voices are heard and help to shape our work and priorities, with fairer, more equal, access to services and opportunities. We will work to tackle poverty and inequality to support the well-being of the people of Powys
- Greener - We want to ensure a greener future for Powys, where our well-being is linked to that of the natural world, and our response to the climate and nature emergencies is at the heart of everything we do

Objectives

1. We will improve people's awareness of services, and how to access them, so that they can make informed choices
2. We will support good quality, sustainable employment, providing training opportunities, and pursuing real living wage employer accreditation
3. We will work to tackle poverty and inequality to support the well-being of the people of Powys

The Committee welcomed:

- A very comprehensive succinct presentation.
- A robust and ambitious plan.
- The council have been asked through the Mid Wales Growth Deal to help map the poor broadband connectivity areas in Powys.
- The development of new innovative ways to improve citizen engagement, especially around survey participation.

The Committee noted:

- The need for clear meaningful communication between the Council and its citizens to improve engagement.
- That town talks facilitated independently at a local level may provide greater engagement.
- The Plan states a full evaluation of the leisure services by 2025, however this will begin as soon as possible due to financial pressures.
- That the economic challenges have been greater than ever experienced and the focus was to do fewer things really well and ensure services were provided, with a focus on service access.

The Committee expressed concern regarding:

- The ambition of just three targeted Objectives for the next four years were limited, key changes would enable them to have more ambition and reach.
- The mismatch of what is being conducted internally and what is being supported for communities.

- That decisions can only be made using evidenced up to date statistics and data sets.
- Realistic timescales for a carbon neutral council and full electric vehicle fleet by 2030.
- That the survey methodology selected only attracts limited respondents.

The Committee requested that:

- The report could reflect the number of households affected by 4G and the issues they are experiencing.
- The language and wording of the plan could reflect the good work that is being carried out on the ground including partners, co-productions, collaborations, and stakeholders.
- All partners are aware of the plan and the integration with other plans.
- Objectives could be set to reflect Council partner numbers.
- The Plan could provide more information around the declared climate emergency and the set net zero targets.
- The Plan should include how targets will be financially met.

Questions:

Question	Response
<p>Could the report reflect 4G/broadband connectively issues households experienced for example infrastructure or house insulation.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: Infrastructure issues were experienced in pockets of Powys and the Regeneration Team have been working with communities for innovate ideas. Welsh Government provide grant funding to households in rural areas to help with 4G access. The Council have been asked to help map the situation to target poor connectivity areas which aligns with Objective 1.</p>
<p>The plans showed a poor response to the survey which averaged to be approximately 7/8 responses to each ward. It also showed that the Living in Powys survey was carried out by only 0.008% of the population.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: Survey response was high compared to other surveys carried out; however more innovative ways were needed to engage, and suggestions welcomed.</p>
<p>Survey methodology selected only attracted very limited respondents. Face Book was given as an example to demonstrate the number of active community members willing to take part and contribute to surveys.</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder Comment: Various methods were used to draw in a whole range of responses. All Councillors and employees of the Council were asked to contribute. Differing views from different methods of engagement were used and endeavour to do better in the future.</p>
<p>Were statistics available around the age</p>	<p>Officer Comment:</p>

<p>range of those moving into Powys, since covid house prices have been reasonably buoyant And future plans were affected by the retired purchasing on new local developments.</p>	<p>Land Registry and the Office of National Statistics data had been used for the Plan.</p> <p>Only a slight increase had been seen in the overall population for inward migration and the report states that Powys had an aging population greater than other areas in Wales.</p>
<p>Should we have looked at what activity was already happening on the ground as the Future Generations Act puts a duty and responsibility on the council for community wants and needs.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: The approach undertaken was not based just on the survey. Other means of data sources were obtained from wider sources that already exist.</p> <p>Under the Public Service Board, a Wellbeing Plan was currently being developed, with one specific objective for the Council as a partner to strengthen the Plan. Any evidence collated would be used broadly across partners.</p> <p>Portfolio Holder Comment: Agreed that the Council could harvest more data from wider sources, and even when subjects were broken down into segments difficulties in engagement were experienced.</p>
<p>Who was the plan for; Internal, external or both as the ambition of setting just three objectives were limited for the next four years.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: The Plan set direction for officers for the next four years to realign resources to deliver the objectives and outcomes. An easy read version would be published for the public. The next level of detail would be available through Service Integrated Business Plans. Alignment with the budget and medium-term financial strategy would be completed once the budget has been agreed. Economic challenges have been greater than ever experienced and the focus was to do fewer things really well and ensure services were provided, with a focus on service access.</p>
<p>Disconnect showed in the Wellbeing assessment survey, as jobs and wages</p>	<p>Officer Comment: As the Council is the County's main</p>

<p>were in the top three and tourism in the bottom three as it was a key employment avenue. The respondents were not a wide cross section.</p>	<p>employer with five thousand staff it would have greater impact and achieve the ambition on the Cabinet of becoming an accredited real living wage employer.</p>
<p>Were there links to academia, in relation to surveys.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: The Wales Centre for Public Policy and Office of National Statistics along with other data sources were used to compile the Plan.</p>
<p>Presentation data was surprising regarding the average household income and disposal income due to the increase in number of food banks.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: The Wellbeing bank is used for live data with over 50 reports.</p>
<p>It was asked if the Corporate Plan had greater ambitions for greater clarity around collaboration and involvement which were part of the five Ways of Working. How is it ensured that citizens understand the approach undertaken.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: The Measures were progressing, a proposal had been made for a more results-based formula. Next level detail would be in the Service Integrated Business Plans with an expectation to work with partners which is one of the five sustainable principals of the Wellbeing Act. Portfolio Holder Comments: Language was important and Internal co-production was a priority. The previous Plan Vision 2025 did not reflect the current financial constraints and details have been removed to focus on the dole and relevant elements at a strategic high level. Service Integrated Business Plans will provide more detail.</p>
<p>Why was it taking to 2025 for leisure centres to be reviewed.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: An update was provided that the leisure centres would be reviewed in 2023 which the Cabinet have committed to. Portfolio Holder Comment: Financial pressures evolved, and the ambition was to carry out a review as soon as possible. The co-production model had worked successfully in other settings including libraries run by volunteers and could be adopted in other services.</p>

<p>The Plan states by March 2025 we would have evaluated the leisure provision. What would that mean for community provision in the interim.</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder Comment: A decision would be made once the full review has been completed and dependant on the current financial situation. It was noted that leisure services include a wide variety of strands not just centres.</p>
<p>How did the key objectives and the continued work below them support ambitions and help address the declared climate emergency and how approaches would be embedded into strategic documents.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: Initially separate objectives were development; however, it was felt that climate subject would weave through all elements. The Impact assessment would be updated to reflect this alongside side biodiversity and climate plan being worked on.</p>
<p>Fears that if an agency picks up just the three objectives in silo, it does not mention climate /nature in Objective 3.</p>	<p>Officer comment: A specific Objective has been placed in the Wellbeing plan for the Public Service Board for all partners around climate issues.</p>
<p>The document does not state how all the elements mentioned will be funded. How would targets be achieved if it cannot be afforded.</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder Comment: There was a direct link between the Corporate Plan and Corporate Transformation Plans, services cannot continue to be funded as they are currently. Despite £16m in efficiencies, severe deep service cuts have not been implemented, but the budget is set for future transformation. The council need to deliver a better standard of services and mitigate any adverse impacts. Reserves have only been used to finance this year and not next year.</p>
<p>Delivering the Objectives would be reliant on partnerships and third parties, how were key partners aware of all the plans and moving plans forward together.</p>	<p>Officer Comments: Reassurance was given that a close working relationship was in place with the Health Board with ongoing discussions with other partners of long-term plans together. It was vital that the council have conversations with communities to manage expectations, as some services cannot be continued and how services can provide value for money.</p>
<p>Demonstrate and provide assurance that</p>	<p>Officer Comments:</p>

<p>this plan was integrated with the numerous other plans produced.</p>	<p>The golden thread showed alignment of all plans, if the council delivered a successful corporate plan the impact reflects positively in other areas/plans.</p>
<p>Were the timescales realistic for the council to be a carbon neutral council by 2030.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: A costed decarbonisation plan was required, and one of the steps suggested by the Public Service Board is climate strategy. Green energy is being looked out for the whole of the Council and comply with Welsh Government regulations.</p>
<p>Was the target for all vehicles to be all electric by 2030 achievable.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: The fleet currently had three electric sweepers and one refuse collection vehicle. The aim was for the fleet to be fully electric by 2030 and built into the fleet replacement programme. The cost comparison to standard vehicles can be one hundred percent more.</p>
<p>Would depots have green energy charging solutions</p>	<p>Officer Comment: Infrastructure within the nine depots was being reviewed, all charging currently is provided by the grid.</p>
<p>A target has been set based on demand and based on previous reports which was unachievable.</p> <p>Under Objective three (we will work to tackle poverty and inequality to support the well-being of the people of Powys) showed a target to complete 350 new council homes for social rent between 2025 to 2031.</p> <p>We must set targets that are ambitious, realistic yet achievable but in the previous plan 2025 vision only 118 out of 250 were built at the end of Administration (May 2022) 109 waiting or held up.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: Attention was drawn to affordability which is a Council and Welsh Government issue. The number of trades required to carry out the work was limited. Phosphate issues need to be addressed with Government and partners.</p>
<p>Key changes for the Objectives would have more ambition and reach</p> <p>1 – share information on a wider range of support services</p> <p>2 –encourage good employment and</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder Comment: It was suggested that regular briefings are conducted to keep members up to date</p> <p>Officer Comments:</p>

<p>training opportunities. 3 – how we can achieve better depth and breadth of service through partnership working</p>	<p>Transformation portfolio was not made explicit in the corporate plan, separate transformation work will piece together to meet aspirations. The Corporate Plans set the direction but is made up of many different pieces that form one picture.</p>
---	---

Scrutiny's Recommendations

1. Language within the Plan could reflect the ongoing good work with partners, co-productions, collaborations, and stakeholders.
2. Citizen engagement improvement to reach a wider audience to achieve higher participation rates.
3. Demonstrate integration of this plan with others.

5.	SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME
-----------	--------------------------------

A meeting to discuss the work programme was proposed to prioritise items for the coming months.

County Councillor A Davies (Chair)