

SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE PANEL.

Minutes of a remote meeting
on 17 August 2021 at 10 a.m.

Present: Councillors Alec Clark (Chair), Laura Brennan-Whitefield, Andy Campbell, Douglas Campbell, Iain Campbell and Derek McCabe.

Apologies: Councillors Hugh Hunter and Bob Pollock

Attending: M Newall, Assistant Director – People; W Carlaw, Service Lead – Democratic Governance; J Bradley, Assistant Director – People; T Eltringham, Director – HSCP; D Hutchison, Depute Chief Executive and Director – People; K Anderson, Service Lead – Policy Performance and Community Planning; J Andrew, Co-ordinator – (OD, Change and Improvement); D. McVey, Team Leader – Information Governance; and A Nelson, Co-ordinator – Democratic Support.

Opening Remarks.

The Chair took the sederunt and confirmed that today's meeting was not open to the press and public, which was permissible under the COVID-19 legislation. He also confirmed to Members the procedures to conduct this meeting and that the meeting was being recorded for minuting purposes only.

1. Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

2. Minutes of previous meeting.

The minutes of 8 June 2021 (issued) were submitted and approved.

3. Action Log and Work Programme.

There was submitted an update of the Action Log and Work Programme ([issued](#)) for this Panel.

With regard to Item 1 of the Action Log relating to housing complaints, the Assistant Director – People advised the Panel that of the 41 complaints, received, 12 related to private contractors, of those, after investigation, 7 were upheld and 5 were not. As part of any discussion with contractors, during an investigation, any learning that can be gained is noted and recorded to prevent a similar situation recurring. .

Regarding Item 2 of the Action Log regarding the impact on pupils who had not engaged in remote learning, the Depute Chief Executive and Director – People advised that schools had kept in touch with pupils and followed up where there was a lack of engagement. He further advised that the Scottish Government had provided funding for Covid recovery purposes and that included the appointment of approximately 30 Closing the Gap teachers and their purpose was to identify and support pupils who had lost ground.

Some of the additional funding would also be used to purchase standardised assessments which would allow the Council to have a baseline in numeracy and literacy and thus be in a position, by the end of September, to identify the cohorts that had not done as well. Once the cohorts had been identified resource would be targeted to those in most need of additional support. A Member then enquired as to what interventions would be put in place and the Depute Chief Executive and Director - People advised that they would be similar to the range of interventions that had proven to be effective when utilised in relation to the Pupil Equity Fund and the Scottish Attainment Challenge. The additional teachers and teaching assistants would also be used to support this work.

With regard to Item 6 of the Action Log, relating to ensuring our schools and other community hubs were placed at the heart of our communities. The Service Lead – Policy Performance and Community Planning provided the Panel with an update on the successful Wallacetown Project and in particular the role of the school and advised that the project involved a multi-agency approach from Community Planning Partners assisting the most vulnerable within the community and that this work was supported by the Strategic Delivery Partnership within the Community Planning structure.

In relation to the Work Programme, the Assistant Director – People confirmed that the report on Mainstreaming Participatory Budgeting being presented to the Service and Performance Panel on the 17 September 2021 would contain the most up-to-date information available.

Decided: to note the current status of the Action Log and Work Programme.

4. Corporate Workforce Plan – Annual Update

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 11 August 2021 by the Assistant Director – People providing an update on the 2018-2022 Council Workforce Plan.

The Assistant Director – People provided an overview of the report covering the key aspects.

A Member highlighted that in the 2018 Survey Outcome of the Workforce Planning Survey Update No 3, 10% of managers had not been aware of the Workforce Strategy and a quarter did not consider workforce planning in developing their Service Improvement Plans; and sought comments on this statement. The Assistant Director – People advised that sessions had been delivered to all Service Leads on this approach and that a key part of the People Strategy was workforce strategy and planning. She also informed the Panel that the Future Operating Model of the Council Workstreams had Service Lead and Trade Union representation and part of this work would be strategy development and keeping other Service Leads informed of progress. The Service and Improvement Plans had also been amended to include a focus on workforce planning.

A Member of the Panel enquired about the absence figures relating to Health and Social Care staff and what interventions were in place and enquired if there was a strategy for Long Covid; and the Assistant Director- People advised that Managers had been asked to identify staff that were struggling to work in the current environment to enable measures to be put in place now to change that rather than wait until the Future Operating Model of the Council exercise had been completed. Managers were actively being encouraged to refer staff to Occupational Health who were struggling.

The Director – HSCP advised that there had been pressures in terms of absence particularly within Care at Home and that throughout the pandemic, Wellbeing Hubs had been created to help support staff. Going forward, the Director - HSCP intimated that the organisation was finding that staff were exceptionally tired and further discussion within the Management Team would take place to establish if anything further could be done to address this. In terms of a strategy for Long Covid, the exceptions were that further guidance would be received from the Scottish Government regarding this.

A Member noted the high turnover of staff, 266 per year, resigning from the Council and enquired if this was related to the pandemic; and the Co-ordinator – OD Change and Improvement advised that staff leaving the Council were asked to complete an exit interview and staff were asked to clarify their reasons for leaving the Council. He further advised that, as the job market became more fluid and working practices had changed as a result of the pandemic i.e. working from home, the Council could take advantage of this as people may consider working for the Council that had not previously likewise the Council may lose staff for this reason. He agreed to provide a briefing note with regard to exit interviews.

A further question was raised relating to the Employee Deal and what the response had been from staff and Trade Unions; and the Assistant Director – People intimated that the Employee Deal had been cut short due to lockdown, however staff had been working with the Digital Skills Office on a programme for enhanced training to allow staff to become more digitally confident. She further advised that work was also progressing within the Future Operating Model Workstreams to identify what would staff need in terms of support to allow them to work in different ways in the future.

Members commented on the excellent Modern Apprenticeship and Graduate Intern Programmes operating within the Council.

Having scrutinised the report, the Panel

Decided: to approve the 2021 annual update.

5. Council Plan 2018/22 – Annual Performance Indicator Overview

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 11 August 2021 by the Assistant Director – Place allowing Members the opportunity to review the measures associated with achieving the strategic objectives contained within the Council Plan 2018-22 (2020 Mid-Term Refresh).

The Assistant Director – People provided the Panel with an overview of the report highlighting the key aspects and the undernoted: -

CPL 1.10 - a fall in the number of meals provided during holiday periods was noted however the narrative update commended the work on delivering 53,000 food boxes from April – August.

SO2.2 20b - related to the reduction in benefit uptake and appeals, it also highlighted that the DWP benefit freeze contributed to this significantly.

CPL 3.05 and 3.06 – related to the number of successfully completed property projects and highlighted the challenges facing the construction industry at this time.

Members raised questions in relation to:

CPL 1.06 – Number of modern apprentices. A member enquired if the Council intended to increase the numbers of modern apprentices and also sought reassurance that the programme would be promoted to under represented groups and to women in predominately male trades. The Assistant Director - People confirmed that the numbers would be increased and as an inclusive organisation, under-represented groups would be targeted.

SO2.223 – Number of people sustaining a tenancy under Housing First. A Member asked if the level of performance would be replicated in future years and the Service Lead - Policy Performance and Community Planning advised that performance was related to extra funding and the Council had been able to employ an additional support worker, and this had helped to deal with the most complex homeless cases. It was anticipated that this would be expanded in subsequent years.

With regard to Appendix 2 page 1, a Member commented on the figures in relation to the decrease in the percentage income collected for Council Tax and the increase in the cost of collecting Council Tax. He also commented on the fact that Council Tax bands were reviewed only when a house was sold and not when any building improvement work had been completed and questioned why Council Tax bands were not reviewed after building improvement work was completed. The Assistant Director – People agreed to provide a briefing note on this matter.

Appendix 2 page 3 – Grow Well, Live Well, Age Well, particularly in relation to the proportion of care services graded good or better, a Member sought further comment. The Director of HSCP intimated that this related to registered establishments and the HSCP had introduced new arrangements in terms of quality assurance particularly with private providers, seeking to support them and enabling them to improve their quality assurance systems. He agreed to provide the Panel with a briefing note relating to this matter.

A Member also sought further comment on Appendix 2, page 3 in terms of the number of days spent in hospital when patients were ready to be discharged. The Director - HSCP intimated that the figures in the report were for 2019/20 and the HSCP had experienced a significant demand for service particularly in relation to care in care homes and at home, there was also associated budget pressures. Following discussion The Director HSCP agreed to provide a briefing note on this issue.

On page 5, Better Place to Live – Street Cleanliness Index, a Member noted that the percentage had dropped from 94.8% to 84.1%. The Assistant Director – People advised that this was a historical issue when budget pressures had reduced the number of street cleansing operatives. This was however an area where the citizens of South Ayrshire wanted an improvement and a decision had been taken to increase the number of street cleansing operatives and resources were being allocated to improve street cleansing going forward.

Having scrutinised the report and associated Appendix, the Panel

Decided:

1. to note the measures/performance indicators (PIs) covering 2020/21 set out within Appendix 1; and
2. to note the Local Government Bench Grow marking Framework (LGBF) PIs for 2020/21 that had been mapped to the Council Plan in Appendix 2.

6. FOISA/EIR – Annual Report

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 11 August 2021 by the Head of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services. The report introduced by the Service Lead – Democratic Governance advised that the report updated Members on the Council's response and the volume of requests made under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (EIRs) by subject matter and type of requester during the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

The Team Leader – Information Governance provided the Panel with an overview of the report and the following questions were raised:-

A Member referred to page 7 of the report and asked for a further breakdown of the subject matter of the enquiries recorded under the heading 'Administration'. The Team Leader – Information Governance agreed to provide a Briefing Note to the Panel relating to this.

A Member enquired as to the reason why MPs/MSPs used the FOI process rather than contact the Council direct and the Team Leader – Information Governance advised that the majority of enquiries received from MPs/MSPs were sent on their behalf by their research assistants and were normally complex and sent to all local authorities.

In response to one Member's enquiry relating to trends in enquiries the Team Leader – Information Governance advised that there were no trends, enquiries could be generated by what was happening nationally and also locally within the Council.

A Member asked if resources were diverted from service provision to respond to enquiries and was advised that for complex cases the Council could recoup the cost for the provision of information up to the value of £600.

One Member enquired as to what the type of enquiry 'multi' referred to and the Team Leader - Information Governance advised that this related to enquires that were seeking information relating to a variety of topics covering various service areas.

The Panel having scrutinised the report

Decided: to note the contents of the report.

The meeting ended at 11.27am