

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 22ND JANUARY, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors M. Cook (Vice-Chair)
P. Baldwin
G. Collier
G. A. Davies
L. Elias
J. Hill
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
H. McCarthy
C. Meredith
T. Smith
B. Summers
S. Thomas
P. Baldwin
G. Collier
G.A. Davies
L. Elias
J. Hill
W. Hodgins (substituting for Cllr J.P. Morgan)
J. Holt (substituting for Cllr L. Parsons)
H. McCarthy
C. Meredith
T. Smith
B. Summers (substituting for Cllr G. Paulsen)
S. Thomas

WITH: Corporate Director of Social Services
Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
Corporate Director of Education
Chief Officer - Commercial
Chief Officer - Resources

Head of Organisational Development
 Head of Governance & Partnerships
 Principal Revenues & Benefits Officer
 Chief Operating Officer, SRS
 HR Advisor
 Press & Publicity Officer
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Cross, J.P. Morgan, L. Parsons and G. Paulsen.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor Wayne Hodgins declared an interest in Item 9 - ICT Investment Roadmap.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 11th December, 2020 were submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Forward Work Programme</u></p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding the timeframe for the report on the Use of Consultants, the Chief Officer Resources confirmed that the report would be presented to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 5th March, 2021 and would cover a 2 year period 2018/19 and 2019/20.</p>	

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.

No. 5

INFORMATION SECURITY POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the revised Information Security Policy and recommend its adoption by the Council.

The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

A Member commented that it was a good policy that needed to be in place to carry out Council business and to safeguard information appropriately. He felt that Members comments regarding the current situation, had been taken on board and addressed in the policy.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee recommends that the Information Security Policy be approved by Council.

No. 6

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development which was presented to give Scrutiny Members the opportunity to scrutinise, challenge and give views on the proposed revisions to the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence policy (VAWDASV) (“the existing policy”) (Appendix 1) in accordance with the draft amended Domestic Abuse, Violence and Sexual Violence Policy (“the amended policy”) (Appendix 2).

The Head of Organisational Development spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

A Member commented on the organisations listed in Appendix 2 under Help and Support and felt that the list should be revisited to include other organisations such as Clare’s Law and Victim Support as they provided important information and support to people. He also enquired if the organisations listed still provided the same level of support, as in previous years, because of the pandemic. The Head of Organisational Development would look to include other organisations and check on the level of services delivered by the organisations listed in the Appendix.

A Member pointed out that Appendix 1 referred to LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) and enquired if this should read LGBTQ+. The Head of Organisational Development said the policy had been developed in line with ACAS guidance in terms of research, but would look into this point.

The Chief Officer Resources clarified that Appendix 1 was the current policy and Appendix 2 was the proposed new policy and some of the Members comments may have been addressed in the proposed new policy.

The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that confirmation be sought that the help and support services delivered by the organisations listed in the Policy were currently still offering the same level of support; and other organisations that supported victims throughout Gwent be explored and added to the Policy.

No. 7

ACCEPTABLE USAGE POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the revised Acceptable Usage Policy and recommend its adoption by the Council.

The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and advised that the policy provided guidance and an overview of the Council's expectations of the acceptable usage of systems, resources and workspaces. The policy had been revised and replaces the Council's current policies on acceptable email and internet uses.

In relation to Local Authority equipment, both hardware and software, a Member enquired if this was for use on Council business only or could it be used for personal use subject to authorisation from the Authority. The Chief Officer Resources said that the expectation was that it would be used primarily for Council purposes, however, if there was a requirement to use it for personal use that could be considered on an individual basis.

A Member enquired if the equipment was used for personal use would the personal information contained on the system be subject to the same scrutiny as other material used for Council business. The Chief Officer Resources clarified that anyone using Council equipment for personal use, should be aware that the expectation was that all information held on Council equipment was subject to audit by the Council. Any personal information stored on Council equipment should be removed.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee recommends the Acceptable Usage Policy be approved by Council.

No. 8

TRANS EQUALITY POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development which was presented to give the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to scrutinise, challenge and give views on the proposed Trans Equality Policy, prior to being submitted to Full Council for approval to implement.

The Head of Organisational Development spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein which included the Council's increased commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity and human rights.

In response to a Member's question regarding a staff champion working across all directorates, the Head of Organisational Development said that the Senior Business Partners in Organisational Development provided advice and support to Managers and the workforce, there was also a range of policies and services in place to support Managers such as the Employee Assistance scheme.

A Member referred to the organisations listed in the Appendix under Help and Support and felt that the list of organisations needed to be revisited to include other organisations such as Umbrella Cymru, an LGBTQ+ organisation active throughout Gwent. He once again referred to the support provided by these organisations during the pandemic and suggested that the level of services currently being delivered be checked. He also enquired if the references to LGBT should read LGBTQ+. The Head of Organisational Development took these comments on board and would look at the reference to LGBT and check that the level of services currently being delivered by the organisations listed had not been reduced due to the pandemic. She would also explore and look to include other organisations in the Appendix.

The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that confirmation be sought that help and support services delivered by the organisations listed in the Policy were currently still offering the same level of support; and other organisations that supported victims throughout Gwent such as Umbrella Cymru be explored and added to the Policy.

No. 9

ICT INVESTMENT ROADMAP

Councillor Wayne Hodgins declared an interest in the following item and remained in the meeting.

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Chief Officer Commercial; Chief Officer Resources; and Chief Operating Officer, SRS which was presented to provide the Corporate Overview Scrutiny with a full set of proposals on investment options required to maintain a stable and resilient ICT infrastructure.

The Chief Officer Commercial introduced the report and gave an overview of the report which included that the last 12 months had shown how important ICT was in terms of resilience and providing services. A number of changes had taken place in a short period of time with a strong infrastructure behind the changes to ensure that the systems remain active and supported in the medium and longer term.

The Chief Operating Officer, SRS, highlighted each of the different elements of the infrastructure and commented on the benefits of maintaining an up-to-date infrastructure.

In response to a Member's question regarding costs for renewing equipment every five years, the Chief Operating Officer said there would be an annual cost every year to replace the equipment, this had been shown over five years in the Medium Term Financial Plan. In previous years, replacement of equipment had been carried out on an ad hoc basis when equipment failed. There was now a move to plan more effectively especially with remote working currently in place.

The Chief Officer Commercial said the aim was to be in a position to know exactly what the ongoing investment needed to be in relation to the ICT infrastructure and a more strategic approach was needed to look at what that investment requirement was in order to maintain the services in a timely manner.

A Member commented that during the pandemic people relied more heavily on technology and this was a proactive approach by the Council, whereas historically they had been reactive. The Chief Officer Commercial said this approach provided an opportunity to control the spend in this area and make cost effective decisions if planned in advance.

In response to a Member's question regarding the Contact Centre infrastructure, the Chief Operating Officer explained that the Contact Centre infrastructure was shared with other local authorities. There were separate call queues for each authority but the same hardware infrastructure. SRS provided an Out of Hours service for Torfaen County Borough Council and could look to provide a similar service for Blaenau Gwent. The Chief Officer Commercial added they were currently looking at the Out of Hours arrangement as part of the review of C2BG.

The Chief Officer Resources highlighted the infrastructure investment proposals, the revenue costs for the implementation of Teams Telephony and Contact Centre and the transitional costs moving from one system to another.

A Member referred to Microsoft Office 365. The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that running costs for Microsoft Office 365 were already included in the revenue budget.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Committee recommend the ICT Infrastructure Investment to Executive prior to approval by Council.

No. 10

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 5TH MARCH 2021

Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.

A Member requested that the report on the Use of Consultants be included on the Forward Work Programme for the next meeting on 5th March, 2021.

The Head of Governance & Partnerships suggested that due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the lack of people movement nationally and globally that the report on the Global Resettlement Programme be postponed and presented to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report on the Global Resettlement Programme be postponed and presented to a future meeting of the Committee and the report on Use of Consultants be included on the Forward Work Programme for the next meeting on 5th March, 2021.