

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: **THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

SUBJECT: **CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 10TH DECEMBER, 2021**

REPORT OF: **DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT
OFFICER**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors: M. Cook
P. Baldwin
M. Cross
G.A. Davies
J. Hill
J. Holt
J.P. Morgan
G. Paulsen
K. Rowson (substitute for Cllr Meredith)
T. Smith
B. Summers (substitute for Cllr G. Collier)
H. Trollope (substitute for Cllr S. Thomas)

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Corporate Director of Education
Chief Officer – Commercial & Customer
Chief Officer - Resources
Head of Community Services
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
	<u>BEREAVEMENT</u> Members and Officers held a one minute silence for Helen Wiltshire, wife of Councillor David Wiltshire who had sadly passed away.	
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u>	

	It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier, L. Elias, C. Meredith, and S. Thomas.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 22nd October, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>SPECIAL CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 19th November, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING (JULY - SEPTEMBER 2021)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer which was presented to provide the quarter 2 update (July to September 2021) against the Corporate Communications Strategy.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Commercial and Customer spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Members considered the quarter 2 progress update against the</p>	

	Communication Strategy, prior to the report being presented to Executive Committee.	
No. 7	<p><u>COMMERCIAL STRATEGY QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING (JULY – SEPTEMBER 2021)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer which was presented to provide the quarter 2 (July to September 2021) progress update against the Commercial Strategy.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Commercial and Customer spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding private discussion rooms within hubs, the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer said this had been addressed and there was an area within the libraries that was removed from general space for the public to use for private discussions if they wished.</p> <p>A Member referred to the 924 residents who had been unable to self-serve at the hubs, the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer explained that there was a significant proportion of residents who were unable to self-serve and these were supported by Community Hub staff. There was also the need to ensure that delivery of digital services was clear and easy for residents to use. The Officer agreed to feedback to Committee details of the support provided for those residents who were unable to self serve.</p> <p>A Member referred to residents who lived outside town centres and were unable to travel to the hubs and enquired regarding the possibility of introducing a system whereby Community Hub staff could contact those residents when necessary. The Chief Officer Commercial and Customer said they were looking at ways to develop the hub approach and agreed to explore this option with the team, whilst also taking into account confidentiality issues.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding funding and expanding the number of days some hubs operated, the</p>	<p>Chief Officer Commercial</p> <p>Chief Officer Commercial</p>

Chief Officer Commercial and Customer clarified that the funding was in relation to the locality response teams which operated during the first phase of the pandemic and this funding may end in March 2022 but would not affect the Community Hubs. In relation to the expansion of operating days for hubs in Blaina, Cwm and Llanhilleth Institute, they were monitoring footfall and reviewing demand in the areas to look at how to manage this within existing staff resources. The Officer said she would ensure that the operating days of Community Hubs was clearly communicated to residents.

A Member felt that good practice should be shared amongst Community Hubs within Blaenau Gwent. The Chief Officer Commercial and Customer advised Members that staff had been extremely proactive and had created a strong network where they share information to develop a level of consistency throughout the hubs.

The Member felt that it would be beneficial for a member of the team to attend the scrutiny Committee to give more detail. The Chief Officer Commercial and Customer said that a Members briefing session could be arranged sometime in the future for Members to gain a better insight of some of the issues being addressed.

The Chief Officer Commercial and Customer responded to questions raised by a Member. She advised that in relation to the increasing footfall numbers the team were comfortably able to support the number of residents visiting the hubs. The Officer was looking at locality teams to ensure there was appropriate coverage across the hubs, this included officers who could step in for periods of sickness absence or annual leave.

The Officer said she was not aware of any complaints regarding interaction with the hubs, however, feedback from residents had been received regarding how the interaction had helped them with issues and questions. Feedback from Members had included scheduling and marketing.

With regard to improved contact between the public and the Council, the Officer felt that the hubs covered a wide range of face to face discussion to support residents to interact with the Council and navigate through specific issues.

	<p>A Member commented that she had referred residents to the Community hub in her area and had received feedback that it was a fantastic service with knowledgeable staff and felt it was important to pass these comments on to the whole team who had helped develop the service.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Members considered and provided comment on the quarter 2 progress update against the Commercial Strategy, prior to the report being presented to Executive Committee.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW REPORT - 1ST APRIL 2021 TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to give Members the opportunity to scrutinise the Treasury Management activities carried out by the Authority during the first half of the 2021/22 financial year.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding the short term investments made, the Chief Officer Resources explained that all the individual loans would have totalled £692,000,000, however the Council would not have had that amount of investment at any one time but may have had 20 loans at £5 million each for short periods of time. She explained it was more beneficial to borrow short term than to borrow long term because of the level of interest rates currently operating in the market.</p> <p>A Member referred to the treasury position as at 30 September 2021, the Chief Officer Resources explained that the table showed a decrease as borrowing levels had reduced as the Council borrowed less on 30th September, 2021 compared to 31st March 2021.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that Members scrutinised the treasury management activity undertaken</p>	

	during the 2021/22 financial year and did not provide comment prior to its submission to full Council.	
No. 9	<p><u>PROGRESS REPORT CONTRACTS OVER £500K</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Community Services which was presented to provide Members with updated information on the progress of capital projects over £500,000 in cost, undertaken within the Authority and, where appropriate, seek the necessary approval required under the Contract Procedural Rules to additional expenditure incurred on a particular project.</p> <p>The Head of Community Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding work at the Big Arch, Steelworks Road, Ebbw Vale. The Head of Community Services advised that work was due to start shortly and would then become a live scheme over £500,000 for reporting into Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding progress on the allocation of funding to redesign the junction at Bedwellty Pits. The Head of Community Services advised this was not yet a contracted scheme to report on. Feasibility money had been received from the Welsh Government to look at what could be done at the junction and currently the Council were seeking approval to extend that funding into next year to move forward on that scheme.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the information included within the report be accepted as presented.</p>	
No. 10	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 4TH FEBRUARY, 2022</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.</p>	

	<p>The Chair advised that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 4th February, 2022 had been rescheduled and would now be held on 23rd February, 2022.</p> <p>Members were also advised that the Counter Terrorism – Chanel Duties and Contest report and the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy had been moved to the next Committee cycle and would be replaced with the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022/23 and the Capital Strategy Review as the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee meeting scheduled in March 2022 had been cancelled.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 23rd February, 2022 consider the following reports:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Finance and Performance Report • Welsh Audit of Commemoration • Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022/23 • Capital Strategy Review 	
No. 11	<p><u>CCTV DELIVERY MODEL PROPOSALS</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer which presented an update on the review of the CCTV function and the proposals for an improved service delivery model.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Commercial and Customer spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p>	

A Member referred to connectivity issues in his area and the need for more cameras. The Chief Officer Commercial and Customer said that this report covered the current infrastructure, there would be an on-going review of placement of cameras. She advised that covert cameras would be part of a wider discussion around CCTV.

A Member raised concerns with public safety, he felt this proposal was not a full package and did not provide live monitoring of cameras, there was a need for more cameras in all Wards as anti-social behaviour was an issue within Blaenau Gwent and felt that CCTV provision should be brought back in-house.

The Chief Officer Commercial and Customer said that live monitoring of cameras was not included, however the model did offer an enhanced position on access to, and provision of footage. She advised that Gwent Police were supportive of the proposed improvements as the current CCTV service provision fell short of expectations and the review exercise had focussed on what was needed to deliver an enhanced service model bespoke for Blaenau Gwent.

The Chair advised that the proposed model would offer clear improvements on the current level of service provision.

A Member commented that the current system was not fit for purpose and felt that the move to develop a partner service delivery model and SLA would be beneficial and the first step to improve the system.

In response to a Member's question regarding progress updates, the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer advised that regular reviews on progress would be reported into this Committee.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report which contained information relation to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. noted the progress made as part of the review exercise, provided comment; andii. supports the proposed improvements and the move to develop a partner service delivery model and SLA for the CCTV function prior to being presented to Executive Committee for approval.	
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