

# Notes

## OF AN INFORMAL MEETING OF



Listening Learning Leading

## Scrutiny Committee members

HELD ON MONDAY 21 MARCH 2022 AT 6.00 PM  
VIRTUAL MEETING

This meeting was live streamed. The recorded meeting can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JVFPYdSsQ4>

### Present:

**Councillors:** Ian White (Chair), Mocky Khan, Anna Badcock, Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Alexandrine Kantor, George Levy, David Turner and David Bartholomew

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Andrea Powell (Corporate Services)

**Officers:** Harry Barrington Mountford (Head of Policy and Programmes), Candida Mckelvey (Democratic Services Officer), Adrianna Partridge (Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations), Shona Ware (Communications and Engagement Manager)

Other councillors present: Cabinet members Sue Cooper (Environment) and Leigh Rawlins (Finance) were present.

### 37 Apologies for absence

No apologies were received from committee members. Chair noted that Council Leader, Councillor David Rouane had wished to attend, but was unable to due to an urgent meeting, and he sent his apologies.

### 38 Declarations of interest

None.

### 39 Urgent business and chair's announcements

Chair updated the committee on the progress of the joint pollution task and finish group. It was going ahead but there was a slight delay to progress at present.

### 40 Minutes

No comments were raised on the minutes of the meeting of 7 February 2022.

## **41 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings**

The work programme was fluid and had provisional dates in place that would be confirmed at the chair's review.

## **42 Public participation**

None.

## **43 Quarter 3 Corporate Plan performance monitoring report**

Cabinet Member for corporate services introduced the quarter three report.

Cabinet Member commented that the reporting process was scrutinised in order to check whether it would be onerous, but the Cabinet Member was satisfied now that the reporting was not an unnecessary burden to officers and was a useful process that did not impede action on projects. The reporting helps us to begin recognising trends and make improvements.

Some areas were identified as annual measures for reporting, so there was not much to report on a quarterly basis.

Comments raised about the Corporate Plan quarter three report:

- It was queried whether we could line up quarter three data to be seen before budget / by Cabinet member for Finance. It was responded that there were time constraints to gather and analyse the data and line it all up with the democratic cycle. Cabinet Member for finance added that there were aspirations to provide data quicker for the key, most changeable items. There were IT dashboard and Unit4 system developments that could aid data production. Committee were reminded that Corporate Plan and budget monitoring were different processes. Cabinet Member for corporate services added that a data / statistics hub was been explored by officers.
- A suggestion was made to present lowlights as well as highlights – shift focus onto delivery and making improvements. Colour coding was also mentioned to present the data (traffic light colours). It was felt that a performance review should flag areas that aren't satisfactory as well. Cabinet member for corporate services felt that the report showed a genuine reflection of the good work of officers even in difficult circumstances and stated no progress where relevant.
- Committee were asked whether they could identify areas of the report they wish to investigate further. Chair mentioned bringing any identified topics to another scrutiny meeting.
- The key paragraphs were praised for being useful by a committee member. PRN1 was mentioned and whether a note can be added to such items where it was only possible for a yearly update (but the work was going on steadily throughout the year).
- A member stated that more detail on what was being done to improve the council's financial position would be of interest.

A separate note (not regarding the report) was made regarding business rates retention scheme and how this information was publicised. Chair to look into this with officers.

Cabinet member would take these comments away for consideration and those involved in the production of the report were thanked.

## 44 Communications and engagement strategy

Cabinet Member for corporate services introduced the communications and engagement strategy. It was a joint proposal with VOWH. It had been created to pull together all the strands of communication and line up with corporate priorities, with continuous improvement in mind, ensuring we effectively communicate. We needed to set some key performance indicators (KPI). Live up to our slogan of being a listening, learning and leading council. This strategy would sit together with other key strategies to help achieve our priorities for the district.

Comments raised were:

- How do we plan to reach hard-to-reach communities and those who don't normally want to engage with the Council? Can we have easy read? Cabinet member added that we will use all the tools we have to increase reach, but not everyone wants to engage and regularly check the tools available for communicating. Social media activity for the council was much more active, and the tone of voice used had been effective in reaching more people.
- Comms and Engagement Manager added that the strategy was an overarching framework that sets out the standards we want to continue to reach and maintain, tools and key messages we want to give. There will be annual action plans that will include all engagement groups. Diversity and inclusion strategy will assist with this. Cabinet member also mentioned the customer service transformation strategy which was being developed. It was confirmed that easy read had been used already and was still being used.
- Can we ask who was engaging? What demographic data can be gathered. For example, responses to surveys.
- Congratulations given to officers for improving communications
- Comms and Engagement Manager responded to a question about political neutrality in messages. Officers were drafting a press and media protocol. It was asked when it would be viewed at scrutiny. The press and media protocol was in draft form and would confirm the code of practice for media posts and political neutrality. A member requested, and with chair's agreement, that the press and media protocol should come to scrutiny in future.
- A view was expressed that district councillors had responsibility to communicate to wards to help spread any messages from communications. It was noted that many messages already were communicated to wards direct through communications, and councillors had noticed this improvement.
- Improve clarity of vision statement.

In summary, the main actions to note were to improve the vision statement, and to bring the press and media protocol to scrutiny at a future date.

Meeting closed at 19.02

Chair

Date

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