

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 - MONDAY, 3 JUNE 2019

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON
MONDAY, 3 JUNE 2019 AT 09:30**

Present

Councillor CA Webster – Chairperson

TH Beedle	JPD Blundell	NA Burnett	RJ Collins
SK Dendy	J Gebbie	M Jones	B Sedgebeer
RME Stirman	LM Walters	KJ Watts	A Williams
AJ Williams			

Apologies for Absence

PA Davies

Officers:

Nicola Bunston	Consultation Engagement and Equalities Manager
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Martin Morgans	Head of Performance and Partnership Services
Philip O'Brien	Digital Transformation and Customer Services Manager
Liam Ronan	
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Tracy Watson	Scrutiny Officer

Invitees:

57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor PA Davies.

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairperson declared a personal interest in Agenda item 4. in that a family member Contracts for the County Borough in the field of Marketing.

59. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 dated 29 April 2019 be approved as a true and accurate record.

60. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

The Chairperson commenced proceedings by welcoming the Invitees to the meeting and the necessary introductions were made.

The Chief Executive began by giving an outline of the report, the purpose of which, was to update the Committee on the work of the Communications, Marketing and Engagement Team for the period of 2018/19.

The Chairperson then opened up the meeting for questions to the Invitees from Members.

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A Member felt that the likes of Communications and Marketing etc, needs to be spread to all levels including being cascading down to organisations such as Town and Community Councils, where information regarding events can be placed on Noticeboards and even in shop windows. It was important he considered, to spread as wide as possible, publications such as Overview and Scrutiny Call-in meetings which are arranged at short notice. He appreciated that there was no one solution that fits all, however, he felt that social media was not accessed by everyone, especially some of the more elderly in society.

A Member added to this, by stating that Schools should be also be used as a method of relaying the holding of important events onto the public, ie in bulletins to parents.

The Chief Executive confirmed that he was in agreement with suggestions of this nature.

A Member confirmed that consideration could also be given, for information to be shared with the elderly in residential homes and sheltered accommodation, and possibly for learning and development courses being introduced in Call Centres and/or Community Centres. This would assist the Council, due to more of the public communicating with it digitally, rather than in letter/paper format.

The Head of Performance and Partnership Services advised that a considerable amount of Communication type of information, is channelled through the Citizen's Panel, and a number of the people that comprise this are of an elderly status.

A Member added that local shops and post offices should be used to display notices regarding up and coming events, and as was alluded to earlier, literature should also be sent to Clerks of Town/Community Councils to display in their offices/Community Centres. She further added that the public visit places such as this, more than they do Libraries and Leisure Centres.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager advised that paper copies of events and issues that require to be communicated to the public, ie consultation on the Budget (MTFS) are displayed through Council providers such as Arwen (libraries) and Halo (leisure centres), though the Communications Team may need to consider being more proactive with asking retail proprietors to place notices in the window of their premises. If asked, they would have to agree to this in any event she explained. Further work was also needed in this area in more rural communities and this would be looked at further. There were however, audiences that were targeted for emotive issues, particularly those aligned to services to the public and any proposed reduction of these, for example reduced bus subsidies and the closure of public toilets.

The Head of Performance and Partnership Services advised that he could look at 'hits' from the public on Council business subject to consultation, through social media avenues such as Facebook and Twitter. He would give information regarding this to Members outside of the meeting.

A Member stated that she was aware of a number of complaints from the public, whereby they have attempted to contact a particular Officer in the Council, had failed to achieve this and left a message for that employee to get back to them. However, this did then not take place.

The Chief Executive advised that whilst this was not acceptable, the public may not have the knowledge Members have, in that since austerity, the Council have had to make significant savings due to the recession for a number of consecutive years. This had resulted in a considerable number of staffing reductions, particularly back-office staff. The Council was therefore far less resilient than it once was, ie having around 30-40%

less staff than it did several years ago. There should be a response though for any query or complaint made, even if this is a holding response, until such time as a more substantive response can be given following any research that may be required to be undertaken.

The Chairperson felt that it is now more difficult to directly contact a member of staff or section of a directorate. For example, there was a direct line previously to the Street Lighting Department. However, now you have to go through the main Contact Centre, whereby a member of the public could be on the telephone attempting to get through to the person/Department they wish to, for quite a long period of time, which could cost them money. She agreed with the sentiments of other Members, in that even if you do get through to the section of the Council you wish to, this results in a holding reply rather than the matter being reported, getting resolved quickly.

The Chief Executive reiterated what he had said previously, that the public's expectation may be set a little too high in the current climate. The Council simply cannot provide the high level of service delivery to the public that it used to around 9 or 10 years ago he added, due to current resource levels.

A Member made the point that if a matter raised by the public was not actioned quickly enough, they then resort to taking this up with their local Councillor which increases the number of Member Referrals made, hence resulting in a duplication of work.

In respect of issues raised by members of the public through the Communities, Engagement and Marketing areas, the Communications Manager advised that a holding response will be sent, advising when it was anticipated that they would receive a substantive response. He added that a mop-up exercise was also carried out weekly on all issues that needed following up on.

A Member asked if frontline staff, such as those who engaged in the first form of contact with the public, for example Customer Services, were protected in any way from irate or angry, abusive customers, in order to preserve their health and wellbeing.

The Communications Manager confirmed that there was a Social Media Policy in place, the provisions of which took account of the above.

A Member felt that when consultation was carried out with the public on certain key topics, they should not be privy to an excessive amount of information/documentation to read as this can put them off. There should be wherever possible, an Executive Summary provided that would be quicker to digest and more user friendly. She felt this would give rise to more responses to consultation exercises.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager stated that Consultation documents were, wherever possible, made as concise and clear as possible and in layman's terms for ease of reading and to ensure they are user friendly. Sometimes however, when there were consultations that needed to contain more technical or legislative information, this was not always possible. The budget consultation document had been developed to be an easy read document, as it was particularly important to have as much feedback as possible from the public on proposals relating to the MTFs.

The Chief Executive added, that there had to be certain information contained in some consultation documents, ie in the form of technical detail or statutory information, as if this was not included, then the Authority could leave itself open to challenge.

In response to a question from the Chairperson on producing information bi-lingually, the Communications Manager advised that this was the case, as the Authority had to

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comply with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards as it was bound by the terms of this insofar as it affected BCBC.

The Chairperson asked if the Council had its own in-house translator.

The Chief Executive confirmed that this was something that had been looked at previously, however, at that time it would have been more expensive than sending translations out externally. This could be revisited again though he added.

A Member referred to page 49 of the report and the RAG status which was showing red in respect of developing targeted marketing techniques to improve representation on the Citizen's Panel, with the aim of increasing engagement with younger people (16 – 24 year olds) and underrepresented wards. He asked how this PI could be improved.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager, confirmed that the Citizen's Panel had reduced in size to a degree and 17 wards were underrepresented currently. Work was ongoing however, with organisations such as Arwen and Halo to seek to recruit further Panel Members. In addition to this, as part of all surveys undertaken by the Communications and Marketing team, members of the public are openly invited to sign-up to the Citizen's Panel and some progress has been made with more members having been taken on very recently, including from all age groups. She further added that she could provide further details regarding the present number and age profile of Members of the Panel to the Councillor, outside of the meeting.

A Member made the point, that there were events arranged by organisations, for example Town/Community Councils, for children to attend in the summer holiday period to participate in sports and games etc, but the literature advertising this came out too late resulting in low attendance. She felt flyers advising of this should be advertised earlier rather than later.

The Communications Manager confirmed that events such as the above, formed part of the 'Schools Out for Summer Programme,' but he would take this on board for similar events planned for the coming school summer holiday period.

A Member referred to page 10 of the report and asked what efforts are being made to encourage Council staff to complete surveys (for example Staff Surveys) digitally/on-line. This would save on paper costs she added.

The Head of Performance and Partnership Services advised that a large percentage of staff did not have access to ICT facilities, and therefore, though steps were being pursued to improve the use of communicating digitally, this was not possible for certain staff who carried out manual as opposed to office duties. Around 2,000 BCB employees did not have access to a PC.

A Member advised that this issue could be overcome to a degree, through employee Portals, as were used in Neath Port Talbot CBC.

The Head of Performance and Partnership Services advised that this was being looked into, though he added that the ICT system of Neath Port Talbot CBC was not the same system used in BCBC.

A Member referred to page 13 of the report and specifically to the local event ie Roots Music Festival, street markets etc. In terms of this, she asked if BCBC were promoting this and would it also generate income.

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The Communications Manager advised that this was a partnership project that BCBC were assisting in promoting.

The Member added that Wales Audit Office had made a recommendation, namely that, the Overview and Scrutiny process of the Authority be promoted more in order to increase engagement with the public in this area of work. She asked if the Communications team could take a part in driving this forward, to which the Communications Manager advised that he would.

A Member further made the point that the Council should become more involved in web casting events, ie Committee meetings etc, and that the equipment in the Council Chamber should be improved in order to better facilitate this.

The Chief Executive confirmed that this could be looked into, though as far as he was aware, the viewing figures produced in terms of the number of hits the Council were getting through the public looking at Committee meetings 'live' were not that high.

A Member advised that most if not all of Schools have School Councils and she felt that these could be utilised more for the purpose of publicising events through various avenues of communication and engagement.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager confirmed that the Authority engaged considerably with all County Borough schools and also literature was regularly given to pupils to pass onto their parents/guardians.

The Communications Manager added that the Council worked with a series of different partners across Wales, for example the South Wales Police, Health Authority and other cross party bodies. He further added that there was a joint budget for this purpose.

The Chairperson felt that there was still scope for improvement in engagement with stakeholders and the wider community, including with Members of the Welsh Assembly, in order to increase the promotion of certain events.

The Communications Manager advised, that it was more down to event organisers to inform stakeholders etc regarding the holding of any organised event, while it was down to the Council to promote it.

As this concluded debate on the item, the Chairperson thanked the Invitees for attending today, following which they retired from the meeting.

Conclusions:

Members recommended the following:-

- A Media Pack is provided to Town and Community Councils as a way to increase communications e.g. BCBC events, consultations, etc.
- Greater collaboration with Town and Community Councils in finding members for the Citizen's Panel, particularly from under represented wards.
- Exploring engagement with Retailers, Post Offices, Community Post Offices, Doctors Surgery's, Bus Company's and Kier as a further way to increase BCBC communications.
- Looking at ways of introducing an employee portal to capture data from the Staff Survey.

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- Members raised concern with the lack of financial contribution towards joint partnership communications and recommended BCBC explore ways in which partners could contribute.
- Confirmation why the literature for the 'Schools out for summer' programme was delayed in reaching schools.
- The figures in terms of targeting costs for Facebook.
- Data on how we capture feedback from dissatisfied customers.

61. CORPORATE PARENTING CHAMPION NOMINATION REPORT

The Head of Legal and Regulatory Services submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to request the Committee to nominate one Member as its Corporate Parenting Champion to represent the Committee as an invitee to meetings of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting.

The Chairperson invited nominations from the floor, following which it was

RESOLVED: That Councillor J Gebbie be nominated as the representative of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 to sit as an Invitee on the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting.

62. NOMINATION TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD SCRUTINY PANEL

The Head of Legal and Regulatory Services submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to request the Committee to nominate one Member to sit on the Public Service Board Scrutiny Panel.

The Chairperson invited nominations from the floor, following which it was

RESOLVED: That Councillor K Watts be nominated as the representative of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 to sit as a Member of the Public Service Board Scrutiny Panel.

63. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (FWP) UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report, which provided an update on the above.

Attached to the report at Appendix A was details of feedback from the previous meetings of the SO&SC 1 to consider and approve. This section of the report, also included a list of responses including any that were still outstanding.

Attached at Appendix B to the report was the overall FWP for the SO&SC's which included the topics prioritised by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the next set of SO&SC's in Table A, as well as topics that were deemed important for future prioritisation at Table B

64. URGENT ITEMS

None.

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The meeting closed at 11:37