

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - MONDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2020

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN REMOTE MEETING VIA SKYPE FOR BUSINESS ON MONDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 14:00

Present

Councillor CA Green – Chairperson

JPD Blundell	NA Burnett	N Clarke	J Gebbie
T Giffard	M Jones	RL Penhale-Thomas	KL Rowlands
RMI Shaw	JC Spanswick	T Thomas	

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Matthew Voisey

Officers:

Meryl Lawrence	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Rachel Pick	Scrutiny Officer
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Tracy Watson	Scrutiny Officer

Invitees:

Councillor Stuart Baldwin
Councillor Richard Collins
Councillor Alex Williams

176. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Nicole Burnett declared a personal interest as she was chair of Evergreen Hall.

177. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: The Minutes of the meeting of 4 November 2019 were approved subject to the following change: Cllr Blundell declared a personal interest due to being a non-playing member of the Cardiff Saracens who were in the same league as Brackla RFC.

The Minutes of the meeting of 24 January 2020 were approved.

178. CROSS-PARTY RECOVERY PANEL - PHASE 1 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chairperson of the Cross-Party Recovery Panel took the Committee through the report. The purpose of the report was to present the Committee with the Phase 1 Findings and Recommendations of the Cross-Party Recovery Panel. Section 2 noted the connection to corporate well-being objectives and other corporate priorities. Section 3 provided the background in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, and the establishment of the Cross-Party Recovery Panel and membership plus additional Members and invited guest speakers from the selected areas that the Panel wished to investigate further. Phase 1 of the Cross-Party Recovery Panel had taken a structured approach to the selection of key areas from those identified for priority to feed into the recovery process and had identified key issues following examination. The report also

included the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications. There were no financial implications directly associated with this report. The Chairperson of the Cross-Party Recovery Panel wished to thank all Members involved for what he considered to be a well-structured and attended participatory approach and hoped that it would continue.

The Vice-Chairperson of the Cross-Party Recovery Panel wished to echo the words of the Chairperson of the Recovery Panel. He pointed to Recommendation 8 as needing to be more explicit by recommending a Housing First Scheme that provided vulnerable people with housing before tackling any further needs as he did not believe there was such a scheme in Bridgend. The Chairperson of the Cross-Party Recovery Panel confirmed that V2C operated a Housing First Scheme in Bridgend.

The Chairperson took the Member's point but felt it would be unfair to do anything further with the recommendations given that these were the recommendations put forward by the Panel and the point was not raised at the Cross-Party Recovery Panel Meeting.

The Member then pointed to Recommendation 16. While he agreed in principle that it was important for the Authority to collaborate with other Authorities, he was concerned that Bridgend did not fit with the characteristics of the city councils that formed the cooperative. He felt it was better for Bridgend to collaborate with neighbouring authorities. Furthermore, he noted that Wales had different laws and principles to its English counterparts and that Welsh devolution needed to be respected.

The Chairperson reminded the Member that the recommendations were now for Cabinet to consider, who would respond appropriately should it be obvious that Bridgend did not fit with a cooperative. The Chairperson noted that the Committee could ask Cabinet to keep them informed of their findings should they take the recommendation forward. The Member agreed to this.

A Member noted that the Cross-Party Recovery Panel had been useful in its frequency and content. The work undertaken by the Panel showed what could be achieved by Task and Finish Groups and he was very happy with how it had worked to date and wished it to continue. He fully supported the recommendations, in particular Recommendation 1. He felt that the future sustainability and value of culture, leisure and green spaces had not been valued to date and therefore endorsed that it should be added to the list of key priorities that were identified in the recovery planning Cabinet report of 30 June 2020, in order to facilitate health, exercise and wellbeing.

A Member stated that she supported Bridgend becoming a Cooperative Council and noted that it was aligned fully with the Welsh Government (WG) agenda. She pointed to a WG paper published in 2013 that recognised the importance of cooperatives within Wales. A further research paper published in 2016 evaluated the corporate housing developments in Wales and included positive case studies. She noted that a lot of councils were working alongside cooperative lines. The Member felt that being part of a cooperative had nothing to do with devolution but was about cooperative work-owned models and democratising the economy. The fact that larger councils were currently counted as cooperative councils was due to their being the early responders and setting the pace. The Member saw no reason why Bridgend should not join them.

A Member pointed out that she too could see no reason why Bridgend, just because it was in Wales, did not meet any cooperative model. She pointed to the number of cooperative models, although small term and small scale, which had operated successfully throughout the pandemic.

The Chief Executive thanked the Cross-Party Recovery Panel for the efficient and prompt way in which they had come up with what he regarded as a list of sensible recommendations in the main. He was sure that Cabinet would also see it in the same way. He suggested that it would be helpful for some clarification and evidence around each recommendation so that Cabinet was clear on what basis it was being asked to undertake some of the recommendations. Broadly, these recommendations, together with those that would come from the Economic Taskforce, would form the makings of a list of priorities to take forward for Bridgend's recovery.

The Chairperson of the Cross-Party Recovery Panel noted there had been extensive minutes produced that accompanied the recommendations. These would formulate the evidence and context of each recommendation. The Panel chose to set only a certain level of context within the report for efficiency purposes. He pointed to some of the areas of discussion that were particularly lengthy, e.g. homelessness and the Authority's agenda on tackling vulnerable groups. The minutes could be provided to Cabinet.

The Chairperson proceeded with Recommendations 1 to 16 and invited any comments.

The Chief Executive asked for further clarity for Recommendations 11 and 12. He regarded these two recommendations as providing good examples of where the evidence/documentation would be helpful in order for Cabinet to understand on what basis it was being asked to write to V2C. He understood the general point and that if there were to be further lockdowns, Bridgend would want to learn lessons.

The Chairperson agreed with the above, adding that the figures presented to the Cross-Party Recovery Panel that were captured in the Minutes prompted the recommendation to write to V2C as the largest RSL provider.

The Chief Executive further pointed out that the context was important in trying to build and maintain a relationship with Bridgend's largest RSL going forward.

The Chairperson stated that she would be happy to speak to Cabinet on the above point and to provide any further information required.

A Member noted that there was a clear frustration felt, as he understood it, with V2C not cooperating as well as they could, especially during Covid-19, firstly through furloughing their staff so they were unable to carry out repairs, and secondly in trying to house people in need. They appeared to be less of the social landlord and more a landlord in the way they were operating. He said this had unfortunately been the trend for a while, and that a better deal needed to be struck in the future.

The Chief Executive said he understood the Member's point. He explained there had been a number of positive meetings in recent months with the new V2C Chief Executive who, up until this stage, had been willing to work with the Authority. He hoped that Cabinet would take on board the Cross-Party Recovery Panel's criticisms and make progress.

The Chairperson stated that the Panel felt strongly about trying to develop a better relationship with V2C and to have more cooperation in terms of their function and the Authority's function and responsibilities.

The Chief Executive asked for further clarification on Recommendation 14 and what the expectations were.

The Chairperson of the Cross-Party Recovery Panel explained that Recommendation 14 was in relation to whether the Leader would potentially utilise the vacant Cabinet

Member position. The recommendation was for the appropriate financial strategies to be put in place should a second/third wave of Covid-19 occur.

A Member further explained that Recommendation 14 was about the lessons that had been learned from the Authority's management of its responsibilities during the first wave, i.e. what had been done well and what could be improved. The recommendation asked for a plan to be put in place in the event of a second lockdown rolled out across Bridgend Borough. The plan needed to be fluid and have financial resilience to support the capital finance set up costs to support organisations such as BAVO, as well as a reserve budget to take Bridgend through a lockdown period. The recommendation was about generating and implementing a bespoke Covid-19 lockdown plan.

RESOLVED: The Committee:

a) Endorsed the Cross-Party Recovery Panel's Findings and Recommendations attached in Appendix A to be submitted to Cabinet on 15 September 2020 as part of the recovery process, in order to feed into the realignment of the Authority's Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Corporate Plan and;

b) Noted the next steps proposed for the Recovery Panel as outlined in Paragraph 4.5 of the report and agreed the work of the Panel to continue beyond September.

179. **COUNCIL PERFORMANCE AGAINST ITS WELLBEING OBJECTIVES FOR 2019-20**

The Chairperson was concerned that the report had been sent as an information report containing red status items, and it would have been beneficial to ask questions on those items. She apologised for there being no officer in attendance. She asked if there were any comments on the report.

The Chief Executive suggested that as a Committee item going forward that Directors be present to provide an overview of their area and to go through red and amber status items. It was his personal view that this would create stronger scrutiny and greater opportunity for Member involvement and to understand the reasons why targets had not been met or, in some cases, been exceeded. The Chief Executive, with the Chairperson's permission, noted that if this was a recommendation that Members wished to make, the Directors and the Chief Executive could attend the Committee annually in order to answer the detailed questions.

The Chairperson thanked the Chief Executive. She said there should be an opportunity for Members of the Committee to ask questions of the Directors/most appropriate representative to explain what was being done and what targets were being met. Red status items required more scrutiny, and without asking questions scrutiny was not being done as it should. Green status items, i.e. where targets were being met, required no further explanation.

Members indicated that they would want the Directors/most appropriate representative to answer questions on report items that were not progressing going forward. The Chief Executive agreed to take this forward.

RESOLVED: The Committee noted the performance report, and agreed that Directors/most appropriate person should attend to answer questions regarding those areas that were not achieving in future performance reports.

180. **URGENT ITEMS**

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None.