

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Tuesday, 13th December, 2016 at 3.30 p.m.

PRESENT

County Borough Councillor L.M.Adams – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

J.Bonetto	(Mrs) S.Pickering
W.J.David	S.Rees-Owen
(Mrs) M.E.Davies	G.Smith
P.Jarman	R.Yeo
(Mrs) S.J.Jones	

Non-Committee Members in Attendance

County Borough Councillor C. Willis – Scrutiny Performance Management
Co-ordinator

Officers in Attendance

Mr.P.J.Lucas – Director, Legal & Democratic Services
Mr C. Lee – Group Director Corporate & Frontline Services
Mr C.Evans – ICT Programme & Change Manager

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors A.S.Fox, B.Morgan, S.Powderhill and P.Wasley

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED –to note that there were no declarations of interest made at the meeting pertaining to the agenda.

(It was duly noted that County Borough Councillor P. Jarman has been granted dispensation to speak and vote on all matters for the duration and adoption of the 2017-18 budget process in her capacity as Leader of an Opposition Group).

13. PRE-SCRUTINY: DIGITAL WORKPLACE-AGILE WORKING

The Group Director Corporate & Frontline Services provided an overview of the current and planned developments of the digital workplace-agile working

programme which seeks to deliver better outcomes, improve productivity and increase customer satisfaction. Committee was informed that the report before them sets out the Agile Working requirements of the Digital Transformation Plan which has been in place since January 2016. It was confirmed that the work undertaken in this area has informed the Council's Corporate Plan 2016-2020.

In presenting his report the Group Director Corporate & Frontline Services invited Committee to review and challenge the information before them so as to inform a recommended way forward to be reported to the Cabinet and asked that they pay particular regard to the questions set out at 4.6 of the report.

The Group Director assured Committee that Agile Working is not a staff reduction process but is about improving productivity and supporting staff to achieve a better work/life balance. He added that integrated approaches and changes need to be undertaken in order to support the implementation of agile working, with key service building blocks such as Technology, HR and Property/Estates in place to support the programme.

With regard to Property/Estates the Group Director referred Members to Appendix 2 which set out the Council's current office accommodation portfolio into strategic and non strategic buildings showing an analysis of the accommodation capacity and its utilisation. Committee was reminded that Scrutiny has already undertaken and completed a review of the Council Accommodation Strategy which highlighted the importance of the Council's office accommodation rationalisation strategy being delivered in conjunction with the digitalisation and agile working programmes.

Members were informed that as part of phase 1 of the programme, two key pathfinder projects are underway in Ty Elai involving the two service areas of Public Health & Protection and Adult Services with work initially focussing on Public Health & Protection. The ICT Programme & Change Manager confirmed that the two service areas are appropriate for the project and feedback from the work undertaken at this stage will inform the Business Case development and the wider implementation of agile working with the support of services such as ICT, HR, Finance & Estates.

In conclusion the Group Director Corporate & Frontline Services reported that document management, how the Council can better manage the flow and retention of documents and how it manages the storage of its historical documents, is key to the implementation of the digital solutions.

The Chair agreed with the principle of agile working which will assist staff in achieving a better work/life balance and maximise productivity but stressed the importance of having the appropriate building blocks in place at the start.

of the process and referred to the need to improve the Council's website.

A Member stated that hot desking would be inappropriate for some service areas due to the confidential nature of their work and asked who it would benefit. The ICT Programme & Change Manager reported that a hot desk facility can be used by mobile workers or fieldworkers who regularly conduct their business away from their normal base or it may be suitable for those living nearby. He added that the intention is to have between 4 and 6 hot desks available at each location to ensure there is sufficient facility for staff. The Group Director reported that the hot desks will be organised via a booking system which will ensure that the arrangements are fluid and fair although, at this stage, the take up of staff wanting to hot desk is unknown.

In response to whether any specific issues had arisen from the pathfinder projects and what test has been undertaken on which to drive this initiative forward, the ICT Programme & Change Manager reported that staff within Public Health are keen to embark upon the scheme which is in its infancy. It was confirmed that the feedback from the pilot projects will inform and influence the development of the wider Agile Working initiative. The Group Director added that the pilot has focussed on Ty Elai where there is already a reduction in desk space of between 30%-40% which will create space for other service areas. He advised that it may take up to 12 months before the outcomes are known.

A Member asked whether the work to date has impacted on residents and service users. The Group Director Corporate & Frontline Services reported that although the pathfinder project is still in its early stages it is the Council's aim to improve services to the public and achieve greater customer satisfaction by working smarter and more efficiently. Members were reminded that home working has been available to many staff for some time and has offered them a degree of flexibility.

One Member reminded Committee that the Scrutiny Review of the Council Accommodation considered the lists of occupancy levels and identified a number of vacant desks and space which ties in with the aim of consolidating staff into fewer properties alongside the digitalisation and agile working projects with consequent revenue savings.

A Member drew Committee's attention to Section 9 (ii) of the Pilot Agile Working Policy document, 'Communication and Safety' and stressed the importance of ensuring that no agile workers feel isolated. Members were also reminded that the Council had unanimously rejected the idea of remote attendance. The Member also directed Committee to section 14 (i) within the Policy Document 'Policy Compliance & Review' and emphasised the need for

such expectations to be enshrined into the employment contract of any employee.

The Group Director Corporate & Frontline Services assured Committee that all staff involved with the pathfinder projects have been fully briefed in respect of their contractual obligations but added that all the relevant contracts of employment would be checked appropriately.

With regard to the questions set out at section 4.6.1 to 4.6.5 of the report, it was **RESOLVED** that the following feedback from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee be reported to the Cabinet:-

- That the vision for transforming the way the Council works through Agile Working is clear going forward;
- That the 'key building blocks' and 'design principles' are appropriate;
- That the Council's Pilot Agile Working Policy Scheme is considered adequate subject to the following points:-
 - (i) That all employee contracts adequately reflect Section 14 (i) of the Policy Compliance & Review and;
 - (ii) That lessons from the Agile Working Policy Pilot scheme are captured and reviewed;
- That a monthly review is undertaken in respect of the specific pathfinder projects between January 2017 and March 2017 thereon a quarterly review is adopted;
- That the approach taken around Document Management is appropriate.

**L.M.ADAMS
CHAIRMAN**

The meeting closed at 4.15 p.m.

