



CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 13TH MAY 2025 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor G. Johnston - Chair
Councillor A. McConnell - Vice Chair

Councillors:

M. Chacon-Dawson, G. Enright, C. Forehead, A. Gair, D. Harse, L. Jeremiah, J. Jones, S. Kent, M. Powell, D. W. R. Preece, C. Thomas, L. Whittle, W. Williams, and C. Wright

Cabinet Members:

Councillors: N. George (Corporate Services, and Highways), and J. Pritchard (Prosperity, Regeneration and Transformation).

Together with:

Officers: L. Lucas (Director of Transformation Digital and Procurement), I. Evans (Procurement and Information Manager), M. Cuthbert (Information Security Manager), C. Evans (Information Governance Manager), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer) and A. Jones (Committee Services Officer).

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live-streamed and recorded and would be made available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#) Members were advised that voting on decisions would be taken via Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: J. Fussell, and C. Mann and M. S. Williams (Executive Director for Corporate and Regeneration).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement of or during the course of the meeting.

3. CORPROATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 18TH FEBRUARY 2025.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th February 2025 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 13 for, 0 against and 2 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 18th February 2025 were approved as a correct record.

4. SPECIAL CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 13TH MARCH 2025

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th February 2025 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 11 for, 0 against and 5 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of Special Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 13th March 2025 were approved as a correct record.

5. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

6. CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report, which outlined details of the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period May 2025 until March 2026.

Members were asked to consider the FWP alongside the Cabinet work programme and suggest any changes prior to publication on the Council's website.

Following consideration of the report It was moved and seconded that the report recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 16 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers be published on the Council's website.

7. CABINET REPORTS

There had been no requests for any of the Cabinet reports to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.

8. NOTICE OF MOTION – PLEASE STAND WITH US

The Chair invited Councillor Carl Thomas to introduce the Notice if Motion report which

was brought to the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee for Members to consider the Notice of Motion as set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report and make an appropriate recommendation. In accordance with Rule 11(3) of the Constitution.

The Notice of Motion met the criteria set out in the Council's Constitution and in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure was now referred to Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee for consideration, prior to its consideration by Council if supported.

Councillor Thomas introduced a motion to support union pay claims submitted by Unions (Unison, GMB, and Unite), on behalf of council and school workers for an increase of at least £3000 on all pay points. The motion also called on the Local Government Association to make urgent representations to Central Government to fully fund the NJC pay claim.

The Member emphasized the importance of supporting Unions and their pay claims, highlighting the need for a pay increase for Local Government workers to be funded with new money from Central Government.

Councillor Thomas advised that he had been contacted by Union Members within his ward who supported the motion and that it was a good opportunity to support Unions to try and get a better settlement for workers not just in Caerphilly but for the whole of the UK.

Councillor Woodland confirmed that he supported the motion and expressed support as a member of Unison and emphasised the importance of equal pay and the role of Unions in advocating for workers' rights.

The motion received unanimous support from the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, with Members expressing their agreement on the need for a pay increase for Local Government workers.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the Notice of Motion, be supported.

RESOLVED that the Notice of Motion as outlined in paragraph 5.1 of the Officers report, be supported.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

9. INFORMATION GOVERNANCE AND CYBER SECURITY UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Property presented the report to provide the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee with a status update in relation to Information Governance and Cyber Security.

The update related to the Council's approach to Information Governance specifically in relation to Access, Risk, Records Management and Corporate Complaints.

The Council's Cyber Security Strategy ('Strategy') and Associated Action Plan which were formally endorsed by Cabinet on 30th November 2022 and implemented in December 2022.

The report provided quarterly statistics for calendar year 2024 in relation to Freedom of Information requests, Environmental Information Regulations request, Data Subject Rights

requests, and Data Breach Incidents/Complaints.

It also highlighted continuation of the positive work being progressed in relation to Cyber Security in accordance with the agreed Strategy and Action Plan successes which included Securing PSN Accreditation in 2024, Microsoft Secure Score in excess of 90%, Passwords., 98.7% of staff up to date with Matobo Cyber Ninja Training and Continued collaborative approach across the Council and the wider UK and Welsh Public Sector.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and advised Members of the Committee that Officers would explain the report in further detail in two sections and invited Officers to address the Committee firstly on Information and Governance.

Officers detailed the responsibilities of the Corporate Information Governance Unit, including handling information access requests, managing data protection incidents, and maintaining records management policies.

It was explained that the Corporate Information Governance Unit handles information access requests under the Freedom of Information Act and Environmental Information Regulations, as well as data subject rights requests under data protection legislation. The unit processes around 1500 requests per year, with a compliance rate of 73% for FOI/EIR requests and 88% for data subject rights requests in 2024.

Members were advised on the unit's role in managing data protection incidents and complaints. In 2024. The unit investigated 115 data protection incidents and 13 data protection complaints, with only one data breach meeting the criteria for reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office.

It was highlighted to Members about the unit's responsibilities in maintaining records management policies and procedures, managing three corporate record centres, and providing secure storage for approximately 45,000 transfer cases of records. The Unit was also focused on the implementation of SharePoint Online as the new Corporate Records Repository.

The Chair thanked the Officers and Members were invited to ask questions.

One Member sought clarification on whether the work entailed collaboration with the Citizens Advice Bureau. Officers explained that while they did not directly deal with the Citizens Advice Bureau, they process requests advised by the Bureau when received.

A Member sought confirmation on the number of Freedom of Information requests from the press and whether there was a charge for those requests. It was confirmed that there were approximately 180 requests submitted by the press, and that all requests were free unless they exceeded 18 hours of work then they would be refused. The Member queried the number of FOI requests submitted by Members. It was confirmed that there had been 38 requests submitted by Members.

Confirmation was sought on whether anyone had given out information they should not have provided. Officers explained the approval process in place to prevent such occurrences.

There were no further questions, and the Chair invited the Officer to discuss the details for Cyber Security within the report.

Officers discussed the Council's Cyber Security achievements, including PSN accreditation, Microsoft Security scoring, and staff training completion rates.

It was reported that the Council achieved PSN compliance in the past year, following a rigorous IT health check by an external accredited company. The team was already working on the submission for the current year, due in early August.

Officers highlighted that the Council's Microsoft Security score exceeded 90%, significantly higher than the average score of 45-50% for organizations of similar size. This score reflects the Council's strong cybersecurity posture.

It was noted that 98.7% of staff with a corporate email account completed Cyber Ninja training, and 61 councillors completed the Cyber Ninjas for Councillors training. The Council also conducted phishing email simulations to raise awareness and improve cybersecurity practices.

The Chair thanked the Officer and invited Members questions.

A Member sought confirmation on what protection was in place to prevent cyber-attacks and referenced recent attacks on Supermarkets. Officers explained what protections were in place, including external providers for payment information and additional security measures for key accounts.

The Director of Transformation Digital and Procurement stressed the importance for Members to know that all the software that was in use within the organisation goes through vigorous assessments before being deployed within the Authority. There are tools working in the background to protect everybody's data and our customers.

Referring to the news of reports of cyber-attacks, Members were advised that unfortunately this was happening all across the world. It was stressed that the importance of training was absolutely vital, and officers also emphasised that everyone needed to participate in training and keep their awareness as high as possible and explained that the health checks and the PSN accreditation all helped to protect both data and systems.

One Member raised concerns about the impact of AI on Cyber Security, Officers explained the Council's approach to managing AI-related threats and maintaining robust security measures. The Member expressed further concerns about the rapid advancement of AI and its potential impact on cybersecurity and questioned whether the Council's systems were evolving to cope with AI-related threats. Officers explained that the Council's current systems were in a good place to manage AI-related threats, with regular updates and enhancements. The importance of collaboration with suppliers and other councils to stay ahead of emerging threats was emphasised.

Members were advised that Officers acknowledged that AI can be used both for good and bad purposes. The Council was leveraging AI for defensive measures while being aware of its potential use in cyberattacks and highlighted the importance of continuous improvement and resilience in Cyber Security practices.

Clarification was sought on what protection was in place for Members using mobile devices. Officers explained the use of VPN, Company Portal, and recommendations for trusted Wi-Fi sources to be used.

The Procurement and Information Manager summarised the report, emphasizing the Council's commitment to improving Information Governance and Cyber Security, and announced the renewal of Cyber Ninja training for staff and Members and the Council's ongoing commitment to improving Information Governance and Cyber Security. The importance of continuous modernization and adherence to best practices underscoring the importance of ongoing education and awareness in maintaining robust Cyber Security measures was highlighted to Members.

The Chair enquired as to whether the advice, skills and services that are in house could be offered to businesses outside the Council to protect their businesses and data. It was confirmed that the Council does not provide this service for local businesses, but information was being shared between other Local Authorities. Members were informed that the team was very small with no capacity to grow that at this moment. Officers advised that providing an external service could be looked at in the future but would need investment.

There were no further questions. The Chair thanked Officers and moved to the recommendations within the report.

Following consideration of the report it was.

RESOLVED that: - Members of the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny noted the status update and the progress made in relation to Information Governance and Cyber Security.

The meeting closed at 18:26 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 24th June 2025.

CHAIR