

**Rhondda Cynon Taf Council Headquarters,
The Pavilions,
Cambrian Park,
Clydach Vale.
Tonypany.
CF40 2XX**

3rd November 2014

FAO:

**Chairs of Partnership Boards
Members of Partnership Boards
Other partnership stakeholders**

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to inform you of recent decisions made by the Local Service Board on taking a new approach towards partnership working in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

We have a history of working well across partner organisations in Rhondda Cynon Taf and, as Chair of the Local Service Board (LSB), I am encouraged by the excellent initiatives that are being delivered every day across the County Borough. Many of these are showcased at the LSB through our monitoring of ['Delivering Change: a Single Integrated Plan'](#).

Traditionally, these initiatives have been directed through strategic partnership boards but, more and more, we have seen that partners are working together operationally, as a team, to achieve better outcomes for the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf. For example, despite partnership boards only meeting once during the last financial year, excellent work has been ongoing to meet the needs of our communities - as can be seen in the Single Integrated Plan [Annual Review 2013/14](#).

It is with this in mind that the LSB commissioned the Operational Steering Group (a group of senior officers from across partner organisations) to consider how partnership working has evolved over the last 5-10 years and propose how we can adapt partnership work to fit with the circumstances we now find ourselves in. The context of this piece of work is that all of our organisations are facing difficult decisions due to significantly reduced levels of funding and, over the next few years, our organisations and the services we provide will need to change even further. There are also significant changes in culture that will be needed, brought to our attention by Welsh Government through the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill.

Over the Summer, the Operational Steering Group have considered how best to move forward with partnership working and returned to the LSB with proposals in September 2014. Briefly, these were that:

- **'Education & Employability' becomes the outcome that informs strategic partnership working. (Hereby referred to as 'Skills & Jobs')**
- **Subject to appropriate transitional arrangements, the partnerships of Safety, Health, Prosperity and Fframwaith are stood down.**
- **Geographically focussed task and finish work groups are developed when required to support decisions made by LSB.**
- **The terms of reference of the LSB, Operational Steering Group and any other relevant groups are amended to reflect this approach.**

The members of the LSB agreed to these proposals, but we stress that the operational mechanisms and relationships built up between partners cannot come to an end. However, we have recognised that partnership boards are no longer the most effective mechanism for this work to be planned, co-ordinated, delivered and evaluated.

['Delivering Change'](#) will continue to be the strategic document for us all and we continue to place importance on all of the priorities within that plan. The LSB will continue to monitor progress against the actions and measures of 'Delivering Change', but will receive exceptions from now on.

The intention of these changes is not to break down the partnership arrangements that you have created but, rather, to provide a more innovative and far more focussed approach towards the key issue in Rhondda Cynon Taf of education and work. We have also agreed that work needs to be more targeted, looking at the areas most in need and working with the community to improve it. The [Cwm Taf Data Observatory](#), a local information system for Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil, will help in identifying these areas of need and in studying our progress.

Lastly, I would like to request that you meet as a partnership board once more to discuss these changes and, crucially, to discuss how you will contribute to the outcome of 'Skills & Jobs'. There are members of the Operational Steering Group on each partnership board and they will be using these meetings to listen to your views, implement this new approach alongside you and bring back information to the LSB in December.

Thank you all for your continued hard work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Merritt', written in a cursive style.

Steve Merritt
Chair of the Rhondda Cynon Taf LSB