

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY 2015/16 ANNUAL REPORT



FOREWORD

The Council's Constitution makes it a requirement for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to report annually to full Council on their work and set out plans for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate. On behalf of all the scrutiny Chairs and scrutiny Members, I am pleased to present the 2015/16 Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report.

At the Council AGM in May 2015, the decision was taken to revise our scrutiny arrangements and in doing so also take into account the findings of a study undertaken by the Wales Audit Office into scrutiny practice across Wales. The Auditor General's report, 'Good Scrutiny? Good Question!'¹ sets out the need for improved scrutiny arrangements that will help public services respond to the unprecedented financial challenges whilst at the same time seeking to improve outcomes for local people.

The report identified areas for improvement which included the need for scrutiny committees to undertake better project planning and scoping of scrutiny activity with outcomes in mind, and the need for scrutiny committees to identify clear recommendations or outcomes from their work. In response to this I attended the first meeting of each of the scrutiny committees to deliver this message.

I believe we have come a long way in what has been a year of transition and this report provides a detailed account of the work which has been undertaken as well as outcomes and I hope reflects the effort put in by Members and officers alike.

In all there have been 45 scrutiny committee meetings since the last AGM which does not include the working group meetings and training events which scrutiny members have attended. I would therefore like to thank everyone, especially my fellow chairs for their contribution during the year.

In conclusion, the forthcoming year will be another challenging period for the Council with further financial pressures combined with the prospect of local government re-organisation fast approaching. However, I am confident that Scrutiny will continue to play an important role in supporting the Council by providing an independent challenge to executive decision making and supporting democratic accountability.

County Borough Councillor L M Adams
Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

¹ 'Good Scrutiny! Good Question?', Wales Audit Office, 20 May 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

This Executive Summary summarises Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's 'Overview and Scrutiny 2015/16 Annual Report'.

It is recognised that the full Annual Report is detailed so this summary is intended to be accessible to a wider audience and aims to enable readers to better understand the impact that the Council's Scrutiny Committees have contributed to during 2015/16, and also where improvements are needed.

2. Scrutiny in Rhondda Cynon Taf

The Council revised its scrutiny arrangements in 2015 to support a more focus approach to scrutiny; this included revising the Scrutiny Committee structure to the following:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee;
- Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee;
- Health and Well-Being Scrutiny Committee; and
- Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee (and Crime and Disorder).

3. What has Scrutiny achieved?

There were 45 Scrutiny Committee meetings during the year (not including working group meetings and training events) whose work contributed to the delivery of the following results:

(A) Scrutiny Committee Oversight of Specific Areas Due To Performance Being Worse Than The Targeted Levels Set

Scrutiny Committees requested performance up dates during the year that helped ensure Responsible Officers took a focussed approach to improving performance in specific areas. These were as follows:

Table 1 – below target performance

Performance area	Reason for scrutiny	Outcome of work ²
% of bids/tenders submitted by local businesses (for Council contracts).	Actual performance was 55% at June 2015 against a target of 75%.	An improving performance position throughout the year (i.e. 76.42% at year end) - performance not collected on an all Wales basis.

² Outcome of work – performance is based on the performance position as at December 2015 unless otherwise stated and will be subject to change as full year information for 2015/16 is finalised

Table 1 (continued) – below target performance

Performance area	Reason for scrutiny	Outcome of work
The rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 or over.	Actual performance was 7.48 at June 2015 against a target of 4.7.	An improved performance position compared to the previous year (i.e. 9.44 at March 2015 and 6.79 at March 2016) albeit it remains worse than the targeted level and the latest available all Wales average level of 4.83.
The rate older people (aged 65 or over) whom the authority supports in care homes per 1,000 population aged 65 or over at 31 March.	Actual performance was 24.38 at June 2015 against a target of 23 (and represented bottom quartile when compared to all Wales performance).	An improving performance position throughout the year (i.e. 24.02 at December 2015) albeit it remains worse than the targeted level and remains in the bottom quartile when compared to the latest available all Wales performance information.
The percentage of carers of adults who were offered an assessment or review of their needs in their own right during the year.	Actual performance of 68.28% at June 2015 against a target of 86%.	An improving performance position throughout the year (i.e. 86.1% at December 2015) albeit it remains worse than the latest available all Wales average level of 88.3%.
Average number of days homeless households spend in B&B accommodation.	Actual performance of 43.68 days at June 2015 against a target of 40 days.	Performance at March 2016 was 28 days which was better than the annual target set – performance not collected on an all Wales basis.
% of initial assessments that took place during the year where there is evidence that the child has been seen by the social worker.	Actual performance of 74% at June 2015 against a target of 75% (and a latest available all Wales average of 78%).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An improving performance position throughout the year (i.e. 83.5% at December 2015); and • A more detailed performance comparison can be viewed by clicking here.
Estyn school inspection results	Performance below the targets set	Termly progress updates to be reported on schools in follow-up and/or categorised by the Consortium as needing high levels of support.

(B) Scrutiny Reviews Completed

Table 2 sets out completed reviews undertaken by Scrutiny Committees and recommendations made, the implementation of which will be monitored in 2016/17:

Table 2 – completed reviews

Area Reviewed	Reason for Review	Outcome of the Review
Recycling rates	Scrutiny identified an area to undertake joint work with officers from the Council's Recycling Service with the aim of improving recycling rates in area of low participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 recommendations going forward to the Executive shortly; • The area selected was Cilfynydd; • The recycling rates was 60.6% prior to the review; • This increased to 69% following completion of the review; and • A more detailed up date can be viewed by clicking here.
Empty Properties	The number of empty properties in RCT at April 2014 stood at approximately 3,375 (a 9.5% increase on the previous year), one of the highest in Wales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 recommendations agreed; and • An action plan produced to implement the agreed recommendations – click here to view the Action Plan.
Community Infrastructure Levy	The need to develop procedures for the Regulation 123 list ³	A 6 point process devised and agreed – click here to view the agreed process.
Looked After Children (LAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify opportunities that will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support improvement in LAC education attainment; and ○ Help address the rising cost of LAC placements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 recommendations agreed; • An action plan produced to implement the agreed recommendations – click here to view the Action Plan; and • Further up date required in 2016/17 on the performance of the Regional Adoption Collaborative – click here to view a full up date.
Zero hours contracts	The need to review processes that will further support an end exploitative zero hour contracts.	3 recommendations agreed that include the introduction of a policy committing contractors to ethical practices and supports the ethical management of 'zero hour' contracts.

³ Regulation 123 list – a list that sets out the infrastructure which the Council considers it is likely to apply Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) revenue to.

(C) Scrutiny Reviews Where Recommendations Will Be Reported In 2016/17 - these were:

- Governor Support Scrutiny Working Group;
- Council Accommodation Working Group;
- Fuel Poverty;
- Review of mobile library service and,
- Number of bids/tenders submitted by local businesses for Council contracts (demonstrating an improving performance position throughout the year i.e 76.42% at year end against a target of 75%).

(D) Consultation And Pre-decision Scrutiny Work – these were:

- Draft Corporate Plan for 2016-2020 – this information can be viewed by clicking [here](#) ;
- 2016/17 Revenue Budget Proposals – a copy of the presentation can be viewed by clicking [here](#);
- Draft Medium Term Strategic Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf Leisure Services 2015-2020. The full draft strategy can be viewed by clicking [here](#); and
- Draft Action Plans to deliver 2016/17 priorities (including review of 2016/17 targets).

(E) Review Of Previous Service Changes Introduced – this was in respect of:

- Meals on Wheels (introduced in 2014) – the outcome of the review was that further customer engagement was needed to inform the content of menus, take-up of the service (especially at weekends) and quality of service. An overview of the current service can be viewed by clicking [here](#) and an up date on progress against the above areas will be reported in 2016/17.

(F) Other Important Work Undertaken – this included:

- Monitoring the implementation of recommendations made by the Wales Audit Office to the Council in respect of:
 - Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training – click [here](#) for the 2015/16 up date;
 - Delivering with less (impact on Environmental Health Services) - click [here](#) for the 2015/16 up date;
 - Managing the Impact of Welfare Reform Changes on Social Housing Tenants in Wales – click [here](#) for the 2015/16 up date; and
 - Review of Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children - click [here](#) for the 2015/16 up date.

- Maesyffynnon Residential Home (transfer of residents due to building maintenance issues) – a working group was set up to oversee the transfer of residents to alternative accommodation and concluded that the transfer had gone smoothly and residents were settled in their alternative accommodation.
- Monitoring the progress the Council was making to prepare for the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act. The 2015/16 up date can be viewed by clicking [here](#).
- A briefing on the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The 2015/16 up date can be viewed by clicking [here](#).

4. **Areas for improvement**

Draft extracts of the Annual Scrutiny Report for 2015/16 were reported to relevant Scrutiny Committees during March and April 2016 before being brought together and presented as one document to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 20th April 2016. At this meeting, Members of the Committee determined that the following areas for improvement were needed:

- The changes made to the structure and approach to ‘scrutiny’ during 2015/16 will require more focussed briefings and training for elected Members to help ensure they are made aware of and fully understand the range of service areas / functions within the remit of each Scrutiny Committee;
- An increased emphasis on providing information to Scrutiny Committees that sets out the impact Council services are having on service users together with seeking more opportunities to understand the views of residents; and
- Further improvement in setting clear objectives or outcomes for Scrutiny Committees to help measure the impact of its work.

5. **Conclusion**

Following on from Section 4 above, at the 20th April meeting, Members of the Committee also concluded that in general good progress had been made during the first year of operation but that more would be expected during the second year.

WHAT HAS SCRUTINY ACHIEVED?

The following information is intended to provide a summary of the contributions to the Council's policy development and governance arrangements made by the Council's Scrutiny Committees between May 2015 and April 2016.

Empty Properties

The Empty Properties Scrutiny Review led by Councillor Geraint Davies considered not only the current work of the Council in tackling the issue but also considered the external factors that can influence the numbers of empty properties and the extent to which these can be addressed. As well as visiting those parts of the County Borough particularly affected by the blight of empty properties Members met with renowned architect Jonathan Adams who contributed to the BBC Wales programme 'How Green is my Valley: a Future for the Valleys'.

In total **9 recommendations** were identified which it is believed will further strengthen the services available to bring back into use empty properties. The Cabinet responded positively to these recommendations accepting them all in principle and the Cabinet Member in conjunction with officers presented their action plan to the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee setting out how they aimed to implement these recommendations. Amongst this work will be the launch of a specific and targeted campaign to raise awareness of the issues caused by empty properties and the benefits of bringing them back into use to include: -

- Development of a brand;
- Use of various media eg website, radio, posters;
- Improvements to the Council's website and reporting mechanisms; and
- To improve and update the Council's empty property pack.

Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny - Performance Indicators

At the start of the municipal year the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee identified 3 key areas which they wanted to review given that the Council was in the bottom quartile for performance in 2014/15, namely:

- Supporting people in their own home – reducing the number of people aged 65+ that are placed in residential care homes;
- Delayed Transfers of Care; and
- The percentage of carers of adult services users who were offered an assessment in their own right during the year.

The latest figures indicate that performance for 2015/16 across all three indicators has improved, the most notable being in respect of Carers' Assessments.

With regard to Delayed Transfers of Care, the end of year figure is expected to be around 6% to 7% which while higher than the target figure is still a significant improvement on the 2014/15 figure of 9.44%.

In relation to the rate of older people over 65 whom the Authority supports in care homes, whilst current performance is below the ambitious target for 2015/16 there has been an improvement on 2014/15 with numbers of people reducing from 1061 in December 2014 to 1048 in December 2015. Year end figures are expected to show a

continued improvement but the target figure of 23% will not be attained and may need to be re-visited for 2016/17.

Looked After Children

The findings and recommendations of the two scrutiny working groups in relation to children looked after by the Council were presented to Cabinet on 24th November 2015. The working group focusing on educational attainment was led by Councillor Christina Leyshon whilst the working group which focussed on placements costs was led by Councillor Margaret Davies. As part of these reviews Members visited schools and met with the Regional Commissioning Manager for the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru and Dr Claire Ball the Clinical Director for Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

In total, **15** recommendations were made which were all accepted and an action plan put in place which includes reviewing the current Pupil Education Plan system, developing a training programme for designated teachers for LAC, education staff and foster carers on the needs of LAC, improve the collation and interrogation of data to track and monitor outcomes of LAC (education) and Children's Services will produce a LAC Reduction Strategy as part of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014.

Educational attainment

The role of governing bodies is crucial to the leadership and direction of schools and is an important element in driving performance. The Governor Support Scrutiny Working Group has not yet published its report but will be making several recommendations to support the recruitment and retention of school governors. The Working Group has also had a key role in redesigning the Service Level Agreement between the Governor Support Service and Schools to place a greater emphasis on governors' leadership role.

Community Infrastructure Levy

Scrutiny recommended a **6 point process** to Cabinet for formulating, monitoring and revising the Regulation 123 List and these were considered and accepted by Cabinet on the 23rd July 2015.

'Zero Hour' Contracts

This Scrutiny Working Group made **3 recommendations** to Cabinet which were all accepted. Principally the working group developed and recommended the introduction of a policy which commits contractors to ethical practices and supports the ethical management of 'zero hours' contracts.

Recycling-Participation Rates

The Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee was concerned that as a Local Authority we have no mandatory powers to make people recycle and although the Scrutiny Committee was very much aware of the initiatives to improve performance it realised that improving participation among the residents of RCT whilst maintaining the same level of service was crucial to meeting the 2015/2016 target set by Welsh Government of 58% and avoid financial penalties from Welsh Government. The Committee learnt that by identifying an area with low recycling rates and raising awareness to encourage residents to participate in reuse and recycling initiatives we could influence behaviours towards recycling and improve

the recycling figures within that area. Following evaluation of the proposals we identified an area in which to undertake a specific participation campaign (Cilfynydd) based on its recycling figures and a previous Recycling Participation Campaign which was undertaken there in 2014.

The Committee Members undertook a door knocking exercise in Cilfynydd the week commencing 30th November 2015 alongside the Council's participation team to raise awareness which resulted in a significant overall increase in both dry and food recycling as follows:-

- Dry recycling participation increased from 60.6% in week 1 to 69.0% in week 4 83.7% of residents recycled at least once in the four week period; and
- Food waste participation increased from 33.2% in week 1 to 37.0% in week 4 51.6% of residents participating in the food waste recycling scheme in the four week period.

The final results which compare participation before and after the door knocking exercise show an overall increase in the participation rate in Cilfynydd and it became evident that continued awareness is necessary in order to raise and maintain a high level of participation. Committee believes that these recommendations will assist the Council in its efforts to raise the level of participation across the County Borough, further improve the municipal recycling rate and avoid financial penalties from the Welsh Government.

The Committee therefore intends to put forward 2 recommendations to the Executive shortly, namely:

- That all Elected Members of the Council undertake training on the recycling targets, contamination and the recycling collection system so that they can fully understand the service; and
- That the project to increase and maintain a high level of participation in both dry and food recycling is rolled out to other areas across Rhondda Cynon Taf to support the Council meet its legislative targets.

Library Service

The Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee expressed its concerns at the proposed service changes for 2015/2016 in respect of the Council's library service and agreed to submit its views as part of the Council's Service Change Consultation process. The Committee's submission expressed concern that the book acquisition could be reduced by 25% and some of the Council's libraries could become single staffed libraries under the proposed changes.

On the 15th February 2016 we received a response from County Borough Councillor J Rosser that following careful consideration of the consultation feedback from the public and from Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee the decision had been taken not to approve the proposal to introduce single staffed libraries at 5 branches. Further to Committee's request to reconsider the proposed reduction of 25% in the Book Fund, now that a better than anticipated settlement has been received from Welsh Government, the reduction in the Book Fund will be 15%.

Bids and Tenders for Council Contracts

Following referral from the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee of the key performance exception, the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee undertook a short review to consider the 'number of local businesses submitting bid/tenders for Council contracts'. The Committee received a number of reports from the Council's Corporate Procurement Unit which enabled us to assess the current provision of support for local businesses within the County Borough. As part of our review the Committee was keen to hear from the local and wider business community and so, in March 2016, invited two representatives from local businesses and a representative from Business Wales to the Committee.

The feedback that resulted from our lines of questioning to all the business representatives was very positive and we found there to be sufficient support from the Council's Corporate Procurement Unit (CPU) to enable local businesses to bid for Council contracts and that the 'Meet the Buyer' events further encourage and enable local suppliers to access Council contract opportunities. We are grateful to the local businesses and Business Wales for giving up their time to help us with our review.

The Committee identified that there are significant performance variations between reporting periods. The Council's year end position for this Key Performance Indicator is 76.42% of bids/tenders being submitted by local businesses in RCT against a target of 75%. To help address in year performance variations, the Committee has put forward the following recommendation:

"that the reporting timescale for this Key Performance Indicator (LPRO107 % of bids/tenders submitted by local businesses) is revised to an annual reporting frequency (rather than quarterly) which will reflect a more meaningful end of year aggregation"

Council Accommodation Working Group

As part of its review the Working Group was keen to consider the challenges faced by voluntary groups who are involved in Community Asset Transfers as part of the RCT Together Approach. Following consideration of the current forms needed to be completed by the voluntary groups the Scrutiny Working Group felt that they needed to offer more clarity and provide an easier to follow process. In conclusion the Working Group advised that the pro forma for those considering a request to transfer/lease an asset is re considered and more clarity applied to it to ensure it is more easily understood.

The Wales Programme for Improvement and Scrutiny's Role

The Local Government (Wales) Measure (2009) sets out that Local Authorities have a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. Improvement, in this context, "*...means more than just quantifiable gains in service output or efficiency, or the internal effectiveness of an organisation. Rather it should mean anything that enhances the sustainable quality of life and environment for local citizens and communities.*"

Authorities must publish their Improvement Objectives annually. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, this is discharged through publication of our improvement priorities in an Annual

Improvement Plan which is published in June of each year and the Council's backward-looking Annual Delivery Report which assesses progress against improvement objectives.

The Council's Improvement Priorities for 2015/16 were:

- Protecting people from harm and tackling anti social behaviour;
- Streetcare services and the natural environment;
- Supporting vulnerable adults and older people to live independently;
- Keeping all children and young people safe;
- Providing a top quality education - Every School a Great School; and
- Improving our Communities.

Each of the priorities has its own action plan which in the past would have been designated to a specific scrutiny committee. However, the monitoring of these action plans form part of the quarterly budget and performance monitoring process now undertaken by the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee.

Over the last two years, and in response to feedback from the Wales Audit Office with regards to our scrutiny arrangements, scrutiny working groups have been formed from each of the appropriate scrutiny committees to undertake scrutiny in relation to the progress made in delivering these action plans to inform the Council's Corporate Performance Plan and to also form a view on the proposed draft plans for the forthcoming year.

However, the Council's new Corporate Plan 2016-20 has created three wider cross cutting priorities, namely:

- Place – creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live;
- Economy – building a strong economy; and
- People – promoting independence and positive lives for everyone.

Therefore, this year 3 scrutiny working groups have been formed with a cross section of members from each of the thematic scrutiny committees to undertake this work which was carried out between March – May 2016.

Policy development/review

Considering draft policy/impact of policy change/providing Cabinet with the views of scrutiny members:

- Consultation on Home to School Transport – new policy;
- Consultation on Revenue Budget Strategy;
- Welsh Government Consultation – Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill;
- Impact of service change – Meals on Wheels Service;
- Library service; and
- The draft Council Performance Report for 2015/16.

Pre-decision scrutiny

Where scrutiny has commented on policy proposals prior to Cabinet's consideration providing an opportunity to influence Cabinet's decision making:

- Draft Corporate Plan for 2016-2020;
- 2016/17 Revenue Budget Proposals;
- Draft Medium Term Strategic Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf Leisure Services 2015-2020; and
- 2016/17 action plans to deliver priorities.

Monitoring performance/progress

Monitoring the Council's performance or monitoring the implementation of actions previously agreed:

- Director of Social Services Annual Report;
- Social Services Annual Representation & Complaints Report 2014/15;
- Cwm Taf Carers Information & Strategy Annual Report 2014/15;
- Cwm Taf Safeguarding Adults' Board Annual Report 2014/15;
- Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report 2014/15;
- School Attendance Performance;
- Educational attainment at Foundation and Key Stages along with School categorisation;
- ESYN Inspection Outcomes;
- Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative;
- Quarterly budget & performance monitoring;
- Monitoring of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy; and
- Rhondda Cynon Taf's Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Assessment Report 2014-2015.

Inspection/regulation

- CSSIW Annual Council Performance Evaluation Report 2014/15;
- ESYN Inspection Outcomes; and
- WAO review - Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children.

Call-in

- Home to School Transport: Maintaining the Existing Service but Reducing the Subsidy for Discretionary Travel – a Public Consultation on a Proposed New Policy. The Call-in was unsuccessful. However, as a result of the debate it was agreed that Scrutiny should play a role in the consultation process on the proposed new policy.

Scrutiny Reviews

- 'Zero Hours' contracts;
- Governor Support;
- Maesyffynnon Residential Care Home;
- Council Accommodation;
- Fuel Poverty;

- Participation rates in recycling across the County Borough;
- Mobile Library Service; and
- The number of bids and tenders submitted for Council contracts by local businesses.

SCRUTINY IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

What is Scrutiny?

The Centre for Public Scrutiny has identified four principles of good scrutiny⁴ :-

- Provides 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy makers and decision makers;
- Enables the voice and concerns of the public to be heard;
- Is carried out by 'independent minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny role; and
- Driving improvement in public services.

Whilst Scrutiny has no direct control over service delivery, it can play an important role in influencing the Executive through making recommendations as a result of in depth investigations, policy review and the monitoring of budgets and performance.

The Scrutiny Framework

At the last Council AGM held on 20th May 2015, the Council revised its scrutiny structure moving away from a structure which reflected the directorates of the Council to a more thematic approach.

As part of revising the approach, the Council also took into account the Auditor General for Wales' published report 'Good Scrutiny? Good Question!'⁵ which highlighted the need for improved scrutiny arrangements to ensure that scrutiny plays a fully effective role in the good governance of local authorities in Wales.

The Council's new scrutiny structure is as follows:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee;
- Children and Young People;
- Health and Well-Being; and
- Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity (and Crime and Disorder).

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - The role of this Committee is to co-ordinate the work of the four thematic scrutiny committees ensuring that each is delivering effectively, in essence, 'scrutinising the scrutineer'. In previous years the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees have sat on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee; under the new arrangements it is not felt appropriate as there could be occasion when they are summoned before the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. To address this, the Chairs and Vice Chairs now sit on the Finance & Performance Committee. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee also deals with all Call-ins and decides which scrutiny committee will deal with any Councillor Calls for Action under the auspices of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 or under the

⁴ 'Good Scrutiny Guide' – CfPS May 2006

⁵ Good Scrutiny? Good Question! – Wales Audit Officer 2014

requirements of the Police and Justice Act 2006 following validation by the Council's Monitoring Officer.

Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee - This committee is responsible for scrutinising financial and operational performance; treasury management arrangements; the annual revenue budget consultation process; statutory performance reporting requirements; and monitoring the implementation of medium term financial planning.

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – This committee is responsible for scrutinising all education provision from 3 – 19 year along with children's social services.

Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee – This committee is responsible for the services provided by the Council which support the health and wellbeing of our communities and includes working with our partners such as Health Services. This includes adult social services as well as leisure services and public health and protection related services.

Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Committee (and Crime & Disorder) –This committee is responsible for scrutinising public service delivery across a range of Council and public sector services. This includes frontline and corporate functions of the Council and includes environment and sustainable development and areas which contribute to prosperity such as economic development, regeneration and skills. The Committee is also the Council's designated Crime & Disorder Committee (under Sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006) and is required to meet at least once a year in this capacity.

THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Council also has a separate Audit Committee. The purpose of the Audit Committee is to monitor the adequacy of the risk management framework and associated control environment; provide independent scrutiny of the Authority's financial and non financial performance to the extent that it affects the Authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment; and to oversee the financial reporting process.

The Audit Committee membership will include at least one lay member and the chair of the Committee is decided upon by the Committee. The Council's external and internal auditors also attend committee meetings.

The Audit Committee is not a scrutiny committee. However, there are close links between the Audit Committee and scrutiny and if deemed appropriate, the Audit Committee will refer issues to scrutiny for consideration. To assist this close relationship, the Chairman of the Audit Committee is an ex-officio member of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee.

PREPARING A WORK PROGRAMME

There is a requirement to devise and publish a work programme for each of the Council's scrutiny committees as set out in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution, (Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules). The new Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 also emphasises the need to take account of the views of the public and requires that local authorities publish their forward work programmes.

Each committee is responsible for setting and agreeing its own work programme. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee has always had a co-ordinating role to ensure that there is no duplication of work and deliberate, if necessary, on any cross cutting issues. However, under the new scrutiny arrangements this role has been strengthened with the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee accountable for delivering the new way of working for Scrutiny; meeting regularly with the four Chairs of the thematic scrutiny committees to monitor the work programme; and liaising with the Cabinet on issues affecting the Scrutiny Work Programme.

It is up to each committee to select items for inclusion in its work programme. However, there will be a number of issues which need to be considered, for instance, there may be outstanding pieces of work which need to be completed.

The Cabinet is also required to produce forward work programmes and the scrutiny committees should keep abreast of forthcoming items or topics which may enable scrutiny to be involved in the development of Council policy prior to its formal consideration by Cabinet.

Ideas for inclusion may come from a number of sources such as:

- Individual Councillors;
- Performance or budget monitoring information;
- Inspection reports;
- Service officers;
- Referrals from Council/Cabinet/Audit or other scrutiny committees;
- Service users; and
- Monitoring the implementation of recommendations previously made by the Committee.

Research by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) over a number of years has reinforced that effective work programming is essential for effective scrutiny. Done well, it can help to lay foundations for targeted, incisive and timely work on issues of local importance, where scrutiny can add value. Done badly, scrutiny can end up wasting time and resources on issues where the impact of any work done is likely to be minimal.

With this in mind, this year each of the scrutiny committees attempted to take a more analytical approach to determining their work programmes. This involved applying a criteria and requesting more detailed background information from officers to inform 'topic' selection, and also considering up front what outcomes would be achieved from the work of scrutiny.

It is important that each committee can react to important issues as they arise. Undertaking 'task and finish' investigations through working groups can also place great demands on the time of those involved. Therefore the Committees needed to consider these potential additional demands in order to develop well thought out and deliverable work programmes: it is considered better to scrutinise fewer issues and do it well.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference:

To co-ordinate the work of the four thematic scrutiny committees and ensure that the work of each of these committees is effective. The committee is responsible for approving the work programmes developed by the four themed scrutiny committees to ensure deliverable, co-ordinated and outcome focused programmes of work. To fulfil the overview and scrutiny role in relation to “all Council” cross cutting themes which cut across the terms of reference of the four thematic scrutiny committees. The committee is also responsible for dealing with all ‘Call-ins’ (under the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules).

Overview from the Chairman



**County Borough Councillor
L M Adams**

Membership of the Committee:

County Borough Councillors
L M Adams and J Watts (Chairman & Vice
Chair respectively);
County Borough Councillors J Bonetto, W J
David, (Mrs) M E Davies, S Evans, A S Fox, P
Jarman, (Mrs) S J Jones, R Lewis, B Morgan,
(Mrs) S Pickering, S Powerhill, S Rees-Owen,
G Smith, P Wasley and R Yeo.

The first meeting of the Committee came shortly after the Council AGM and was convened to consider a ‘Call-in’ in respect of a decision taken by the Cabinet to launch a public consultation in relation to proposals to maintain the existing Home to School Transport service but to reduce the subsidy for discretionary travel. The Call-in arrangements had only recently been changed at the Council AGM giving responsibility to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to hear all ‘call-ins’ irrespective of topic. Given the nature of the item it was considered appropriate to invite the education co-opted members that sit on the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to receive their views. Whilst the ‘call-in’ was unsuccessful, as a result of the meeting, it was agreed that both the Finance & Performance and Overview & Scrutiny Committees would be included in the consultation process. A special meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee was held on 8th July 2015 with an open invitation to all non executive members and also co-opted members to attend and speak. A number of the co-opted members did attend and speak, and their responses were recorded along with other Members as part of the consultation process.

At the scheduled meeting of the Committee on 29th July I addressed Members on the operation of the new scrutiny framework. Arising from the discussion it was acknowledged that it was difficult for scrutiny to plan its work more effectively due to items considered by Cabinet not always being published in advance in a work programme. I resolved to write to the Leader on this issue and I am pleased to report that the November meeting of the Committee was attended by the Cabinet

Member for Council Business and the Service Director, Cabinet & Public Relations who reported that the Council Leader had issued clear instructions that to support the engagement of scrutiny, the work programmes of Cabinet were to be improved. The Service Director also informed the Committee of the formal mechanisms being put in place to deal with scrutiny recommendations, namely future recommendations to the Cabinet from the respective scrutiny committees would be considered by the appropriate Cabinet Member(s) or where appropriate, the Cabinet as a whole. The Cabinet Member along with the officer concerned will then attend the relevant scrutiny committee to update Members on the progress made in implementing the recommendations. The Cabinet Member also confirmed the commitment of Cabinet to hold meetings between the appropriate Cabinet portfolio holders and scrutiny chairs to ensure a smooth transition of business between the work programmes of both Cabinet and Scrutiny. I am pleased to say that the situation with regard to the Cabinet work programme has improved and in addition, all reports put before Cabinet now make reference to the appropriate scrutiny committee. I have also been pleased to note that where a large number of recommendations have been put forward by scrutiny in relation to a particular issue, action plans have been developed which will provide structure for the implementation of recommendations and will also assist scrutiny in monitoring progress.

At that meeting the role of the Committee was discussed in more detail and this included the need to work toward implementing the recommendations of the Wales Audit Office contained in their report 'Good Scrutiny! Good Question?' It was also agreed to produce an on-going Action Plan for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that the work of the former Overview and Scrutiny Working Group dealing with 'Fuel Poverty' be continued and the findings to be reported to full Council.

Following the decision to carry on the work of the Fuel Poverty Working Group, at its September meeting the Committee received a presentation in relation to 'Overcoming Fuel Poverty' which included details of the 3 year Cyd Cymru initiative. It also further considered its work programme and agreed that the Committee should monitor the progress of changes arising from recommendations made by external regulators. A final meeting of the Fuel Poverty Working Group was held on 30th March 2016 and a report with recommendations will be reported to Council in due course.

At the October meeting of the Committee, Members responded to the consultation document in respect of the draft Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales. This feedback, along with the views of Cabinet was presented to Council on 28th October prior to submission to the Welsh Government by the deadline of 9th November 2015.

In October, the Committee also considered the Cabinet Work Programme and identified two potential pieces of work for scrutiny, namely, the development of a new Leisure Services Strategy and the development of a Corporate Plan for 2016-20. These issues were subsequently considered by the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee respectively. Members were also made aware of the contents of the Wales Audit Office's Annual

Improvement Report 2014/15 for Rhondda Cynon Taf and it was agreed that progress in relation to three areas for improvement identified within the report should be monitored by the Committee, namely Young People not in Education, Employment or Training; Delivering with Less – the impact on Environmental Health Service and Citizens; and Managing the Impact of Welfare Reform on Social Housing Tenants in Wales.

In November the Committee received a presentation from the Public Services Partnerships Manager on the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Under the Act the Local Service Boards will become statutory bodies and be known as Public Service Boards. Whilst it would be legitimate for any of the themed scrutiny committees to scrutinise the work of the Public Service Board in relation to a specific issue, the Committee learnt that statutory guidance makes it clear that one Committee must be designated to undertake this work. The Committee discussed the issue at length and following the debate it was resolved that a recommendation be made to Council that the 'designated committee' be the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was also agreed to explore the opportunity of working with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council to undertake joint scrutiny should Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil's Public Service Boards merge. In preparation for this work both Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil Members were invited to attend a training event on effective scrutiny within the context of community leadership and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 on 31st March 2016.

Shortly after Christmas the Committee met to consider the documents published by the Welsh Government in relation to the Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill. An open invitation was given to all non executive and co-opted Members to attend this meeting to provide comments in response to the consultation documents. The responses of Members including those of the co-opted members were put before Council on 27th January 2016, along with the comments of the Cabinet Members, and together formed the basis of the Council's response to the Welsh Government.

At the meeting of the Committee held in February, Members received a progress report in relation to recommendations arising from the Wales Audit Office 2014 Review of councils in Wales which found a clear committed to further reducing the number of young people not in employment, education and training (NEET) especially those aged 16 to 18 but that planning was variable and councils had made less progress in understanding the costs and evaluating the effectiveness of interventions. The Committee received Ms. Syd Dennis, the European Social Fund Manager who provided an update of progress. Members were pleased to note the positive outcomes presented to them including a reduction in the NEET rate since 2011/12 and the commitment to continue the good work into the future.

At the February meeting, the Committee also considered the impact of reduced resources on environmental health services and citizens. Mr. Paul Mee, Service Director, Public Health & Protection outlined to the Committee the action being taken to provide sustainable environmental health services which meet the Council's statutory duties in terms of public health. In response to the recommendations of the Wales Audit Office Report, Members were informed that the Council was actively contributing to the development of the revised Practice

Standards for Environmental Health in Wales. The Council had also taken action to improve the effectiveness of the scrutiny procedures supported by elected Member training and development programmes. In addition, a new Council wide Service Self Assessment process had been introduced in 2015-16 which enabled Cabinet Member review and challenge of performance and forward looking delivery plans, and the Environmental Health Service was part of this process. The Committee concluded that appropriate action had been taken to date in achieving the recommendations of the Wales Audit Office as contained in their review 'Delivering for Less – The impact on Environmental Health Services'.

At the last meeting of the Committee held on 20th April 2016, Members considered an update on progress in respect of the Wales Audit Office recommendations in relation to managing the impact of welfare reform changes on social housing tenants and were pleased with the positive work which had been carried out. Members also considered the changes to the Council's Scheme of Delegation put forward by Cabinet for adoption at the Council's AGM in May which aimed at improving transparency.

With the Chairs and vice Chairs of the themed Scrutiny Committees and the Chair of the Audit Committee, Members considered the work undertaken by all the scrutiny committees and their effectiveness during the year alongside the draft annual report.

I would like to thank my vice chair, Councillor John Watts, and also the Members of the Committee for their support during the year and I feel confident that learning from our experiences this year we will further improve scrutiny's effectiveness during 2016/17.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference:

The overview & scrutiny role in connection with scrutinising all education provision from 3-19 years and Children's Social Services.

Overview from the Chairman



**County Borough Councillor
Mrs C Leyshon**

Membership of the Committee:

County Borough Councillors
(Mrs) C Leyshon and C Williams (Chairman & Vice Chair respectively);
County Borough Councillors: H Boggis, J Bunnage, S Carter, (Mrs) J Cass, A L Davies MBE, S Evans-Fear, M Griffiths, P Jarman, B Morgan, (Mrs) S Jones,, B Stephens, (Mrs) M Tegg, G Thomas, R K Turner and L Walker.
Co-opted Members: Reverend E Counsell (voting Diocesan Authorities' Representative); Mr J Fish, Mr J Horton and Mrs S Jones (Voting Elected Parent Governor Representatives); Mrs C Jones (representing the NUT and Teachers' Panel), Mr C Jones (representing GMB), Ms A Jones (representing UNITE); Mr M Cleverley (representing NASUWT and Teachers' Panel; and Mr D Price

The oversight of Education and Children's Services under the remit of one scrutiny committee brings together all the key elements required to help support children and young people of Rhondda Cynon Taf to reach their potential and keep them safe. However, bringing together two large and highly regulated service areas has not been without its challenges for scrutiny members many of whom had more experience of education matters than Children's Services. Based on this, Members concluded that they needed a better understanding of Children's Services in order to ensure they targeted the right areas for scrutiny. It was agreed that the Committee should move toward developing a two year work programme and that initial focus should be given to educational attainment and the impact of the Central South Consortium, Governor Support, Looked After Children and Safeguarding. Whilst 2014/15 had seen some improvement, we concluded that educational attainment and the numbers of children in the looked after system were still key issues for the Council and performance needed to improve.

Education Attainment

During the year the Committee has questioned the Managing Director of the Central South Consortium and the Chairman of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Committee as well as considering the Consortium's Joint Legal Agreement. The Committee has also considered the educational attainment and

school categorisation data for 2015 and received information on Estyn's inspection outcomes. Continuing on the theme of educational attainment, the Committee received two very interesting presentations: one from the Head teacher of Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School and the other from the Headteacher of Maesycloed Primary school, which informed us of their improvement journeys from poor performing schools to being amongst the top ranked schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Committee is pleased to acknowledge the continued improvement in standards this year both in examination success and school categorisation. However, there remains a disparity with outcomes for those entitled to free school meals generally being poorer and the Committee is keen to see more done to address this. More also needs to be done to remedy the difference in performance between boys and girls.

As Chair of the Committee during the year I have met with the education scrutiny chairs of the other constituent authorities of the Central South Consortium and was interviewed by Estyn as part of their first review of the consortium. Along with my vice chair and the chair and vice chair of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee I also met with officers from the CSSIW and it is intended that this will be a regular occurrence and should assist with our future work programme preparations.

Following consideration of Quarter 2 performance, a referral was made from the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee which had concerns at the increase in the number of fixed term exclusions and in February, the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee received the school exclusion data for 2014/15. The Committee was pleased to see that the more recent datasets had demonstrated there had been a decrease on all three measures and agreed that future reports should include additional information in relation to repeat exclusions and national benchmarking to better inform the Committee's understanding of performance.

At the March meeting the Committee considered school attendance performance and Members had a debate discussing the correlation between school attendance and performance. Whilst welcoming the improvement in pupil attendance Members took the opportunity to voice their previous concerns in relation to the use of Fixed Penalty Notices.

Governor Support

When the Committee received a detailed report in relation to the Governor Support Service, it became clear that scrutiny could play an important role in supporting the key challenges face by the service such as the development of a new Service Level Agreement between schools and the Governor Support Service; exploring further development of federated governor boards; and considering the issue of recruitment and retention of governors in light of the growing shortage of people prepared to undertake the role. It was therefore decided to form a scrutiny working group to review these issues. The Working Group has completed its work and draft 15 recommendations but has not yet published its final report. The Working Group has also played an important part in developing the detail of the new Governor Support Service Level Agreement with schools which was introduced in the spring term 2016.

Looked After Children

At the December meeting, the Committee was pleased to welcome the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children's Services who reported on the Cabinet's response to the recommendations put forward by the two scrutiny working groups which had considered issues in relation to children looked after by the Council. One had focussed on educational attainment whilst the other had explored the issues around placement mix and the cost of 'out of county' placements. In total, 15 recommendations had been put to the Cabinet, all of which were accepted and the Cabinet Member presented the Committee with a proposed action plan and progress against this will now be monitored by the Committee in the coming months.

Continuing on the theme of reducing the Looked After Children numbers, the Council had been one of the most successful in Wales in terms of placing children for adoption. The Committee sought clarity that the Welsh Government's introduction of a National Adoption Service with Regional Adoption Collaboratives would not lead to a decrease in the numbers of children finding suitable homes. The Committee received representatives from the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative to its December meeting to present their progress report. The Committee welcomed the greater level of choice the new collaborative should offer children in care and acknowledged the difficulties it faced in the first year of operation. However, Members will be expecting evidence of further progress when future reports are presented.

Safeguarding

For some time, scrutiny Members had expressed concern regarding what appeared to be the Council's consistently poor performance in respect of a suite of performance indicators relating to children looked after and those on the child protection register. The CSSIW had also raised the issue of the Council's use of "unqualified workers" in comparison to other local authorities and this was one of the issues which was discussed when myself and the vice chairman, along the Chair and Vice of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, met with them to discuss the findings of their annual performance evaluation report of the Council's Social Services functions. Whilst the CSSIW did not suggest that the Council's way of managing its child care caseloads is inappropriate they highlighted that Rhondda Cynon Taf's position differs from other authorities in Wales and in their 2014/15 Annual Evaluation report pointed out that "While virtually all (95%) looked after children in Wales have a qualified social worker, 63% of looked after children in Rhondda Cynon Taff do so". This issue had also been raised at the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee and it was therefore felt important that the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee should have the opportunity to consider the arguments and form a judgement. As a result on the 18th January 2016 the Committee received a detailed report from the Service Director for Children's Services which set out the rationale of the use of appropriately qualified (Assessor Care Manager posts) but not social work qualified staff. Having considered the report and officers' responses to their questioning the Committee concluded that it was satisfied that the current use of Assessor Care Managers did not raise any specific areas of concern.

During 2014 the Wales Audit Office undertook a review of the assurance and accountability arrangements of the Council for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and being adhered to. As a result of the review the WAO made a number of proposals for improvement. In July 2015, these proposals were further reinforced by a national Wales Audit Office report on Safeguarding Arrangements across Wales. In response to this the Council drafted an action plan which was reviewed by the scrutiny committee and the Committee considered its progress at the meeting held on 21st March 2016. The Committee also requested more up to date information be presented to them on a regular basis in relation to the work of the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children's Board.

At that meeting, the Committee also received a progress report on Team Around the Family (TAF) which is part of the Welsh Government funded Families First programme which was first introduced in 2012. It was explained that TAF provides families with holistic multi-agency family support, promoting resilience and the report provided an insight into how TAF has been established across the County Borough and provided data in respect of referrals, assessments and case closures. Members were fully supportive of the initiative given its significance to potentially reducing the number of children who may go on to require statutory interventions from the Council. The Group Director pointed to the need to undertake further work to provide more clarity around the thresholds between TAF and Children's Services, and explained that some work has already begun. He did, however, suggest that there could be a role for scrutiny in this work and this is something which the Committee may wish to consider when finalising the work programme for 2016/17.

Monitoring

In addition, during the year the Committee has considered the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service, the Director of Social Services Annual Report, the Social Services Representations & Complaints Report 2014/15, the CSSIW Annual Council Performance Evaluation Report for 2014/15 and the Cwm Taf Children's Safeguarding Board Annual Report for 2014/15.

Future Challenges

As mentioned earlier, Members of the Committee had expressed some concern that as a result of the changes to the scrutiny framework they were now being asked to form judgements on the Children's Services functions which some had little background knowledge of. In addition, Members also felt that for scrutiny to move forward, the type information they received needed to change as well.

As a result, a workshop was organised which was facilitated by Mr Tony Garthwaite, who is a former Director of Social Services and Corporate Director who currently acts as an independent consultant and Senior Fellow at the Welsh Institute of Social Care at the University of South Wales. Mr Garthwaite has had experience of assisting a number of Welsh authorities in his capacity as an expert advisor to the Centre of Public Scrutiny. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Develop a better understanding of the key issues facing Children's Services in the next year and beyond;
- Explore best practice in the Scrutiny of Children's Services; and
- Identify priorities for the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.

The workshop also provided Members with the opportunity to discuss with officers the type of information which they felt they needed (in addition to standard data/performance reports) to enable them to move toward more outcome based scrutiny.

As a result of the workshop it was agreed that the membership should form interested groups to each receive more detailed information on four key themes with a view to reporting back to the Committee on specific areas to progress in the future:

- Early intervention/prevention;
- Looked After Children;
- Safeguarding; and
- Workforce.

The workshop was well received by Members and it is the intention to meet again with Mr Garthwaite later in the year to review progress.

It has been a challenging year for the Committee and no doubt next year will be the same. Educational attainment will continue to be a key focus alongside the challenges faced by Children's Services which will have the increased responsibility of introducing the changes required by the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 which became operation in April 2016.

I have every confidence in the membership, all of whom are dedicated to improving the life chances of our children. I would like to thank all Members and the co-opted members of the committee who have once again supported me and worked so tirelessly throughout the year. I would, however, like to make special mention of one of our co-opted members, Mr Jeremy Horton, who has sadly come to the end of his term of office. Mr Horton has been a great contributor to this Committee and the former Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for the last four years and will be greatly missed.

HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference:

The overview & scrutiny role in connection with scrutinising services which support the Health & Wellbeing of our communities. The Committee considers adult social services as well as other factors which contribute to the health & wellbeing of the County Borough such as Leisure Services, Housing and Public Health & Wellbeing.

Overview from the Chairman



**County Borough Councillor
R W Smith**

Membership of the Committee:

County Borough Councillors

R W Smith and (Mrs) S Rees (Chairman & Vice Chair respectively)

County Borough Councillors: (Mrs) A Calvert, (Mrs) J Cass, W J David, C Davies, J Davies, (Mrs) M E Davies, S Evans, A S Fox, I Pearce, (Mrs) A Roberts, G Stacey, (Mrs) M Tegg, L Walker, D W Weeks and D H Williams

Royal British Legion 'Insult to Injury' Campaign

The year began by the Committee considering an issue which had been referred from Council following a Notice of Motion. The Committee was asked to consider the Royal British Legion's 'Insult to Injury' Campaign which draws attention to the disparity in the means test for social care services between those retired armed forces personnel receiving payment through the War Pension Scheme and those receiving payment through the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. The Committee heard evidence from representatives of the Royal British Legion and the Service Director with responsibility for dealing with social care payments and recommended support for the campaign. It had been hoped that the awaited guidance in respect of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act would address the disparity but this has not proved the case. However, there is the opportunity to reconsider this issue again as part of a planned review of adult social care charging policies in 2016/17 following implementation of the new Act.

Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act

It was a particular challenge this year for the scrutiny committees to develop their work programmes. The complete change in the scrutiny framework meant new areas of learning for Members combined with increased expectations. I was conscious that it would be all too easy to focus on adult care services and forget about the other important issues affecting health and wellbeing. However, there was one overriding challenge which needed to be addressed, namely, the impending introduction of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and throughout the year the Committee received regular updates from the Cwm Taf Head of Transformation in relation to the implementation programme. Whilst the fundamental principles of the Act are positive, the future challenge will be to work

toward these principles and raise the public's awareness of the vision of the Act and what it means for social services across Wales.

Supporting People at Home

When considering the work programme, the Committee identified 3 key areas which they considered warranted scrutiny involvement given that the Council was in the bottom quartile for performance in 2014/15, namely:

- Supporting people in their own home – reducing the number of people aged 65+ that are placed in residential care homes;
- Delayed Transfers of Care; and
- Support for Carers – Carers' assessments.

These three issues are very much interlinked i.e. better support for service users and their carers should enable vulnerable people to stay in their own home for longer and also lead to a reduction in those hospital admissions which are not attributable to an acute medical emergency. Fewer admissions should then lessen the opportunity for delayed discharges. The Supporting People agenda is in itself a significant undertaking, the ability of people to remain in their own homes depends not only on the support provided by the Council and carers but is also dependent on primary health care support i.e. the support of GPs, Community Nursing, Community Pharmacists and the 3rd Sector. With this in mind, it was agreed that the bulk of the Committee's time this year should focus on this work including the support for Carers. This work also ties in with one of the fundamental principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 which is to increase preventative services within the community to minimise escalation of need. It will be vital to increase the community capacity across Rhondda Cynon Taf to provide the type of support which will allow people to retain their independence.

As part of this process the Committee has received detailed presentations through the year from officers in relation to the Council's early intervention and prevention services and its long term and home care services. Linking both the Supporting People at Home agenda and the implementation of the SSWB Act, the Committee met with the third sector Community Co-ordinators for Cwm Taf who provided an insight into their work and the administration of the Community Capacity Fund. Their presentation highlighted the need to promote the services provided by 3rd Sector organisations across the statutory public sector services and the Community Coordinators will be critical in signposting people to those organisations and groups who are able to assist in reducing isolation, reducing loneliness and assisting in the prevention of hospital admission and support hospital discharge. The Committee has decided that as part of its next steps it wants to consider the Choice Protocol for patients requiring placement in residential or nursing care and the Committee intends to invite representatives from Cwm Taf UHB to attend when this item is discussed.

Support for Carers

In particular this year, the Committee tasked itself with ensuring that performance in relation to the percentage of carers of adult services users who were offered an assessment in their own right during the year improved and I am pleased that performance is expected to improve significantly by year end. Small improvements have also been seen in Supporting People at Home and Delayed Transfers of Care.

Housing

Housing has an important influence on Health and Wellbeing and during the year the Committee learnt about the Housing (Wales) Act. The Act will enable improvements in the operation of the private rented sector and will assist in helping people to meet their housing needs effectively and prevent homelessness.

Following a referral from the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee, we also reviewed the Council's performance in relation to homelessness and the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. The Committee learnt of the volatile nature of these performance indicators and the challenges faced in sourcing appropriate accommodation for those who are deemed vulnerable or a potential risk. The Committee was pleased to note that following a challenging period performance in meeting targets had improved.

Continuing on a Housing theme, the Committee was pleased to receive the response from the Cabinet Member to the recommendations made by the Empty Properties Scrutiny Working Group. All recommendations were accepted in principle and an action plan has been developed which the Committee will be monitoring.

Impact of service change

In October the Committee was made aware of guidance being produced by the Older People's Commissioner on Equality and Human Rights Assessments and the role of scrutiny in relation to changes to community services in Wales. The two-part Guidance is aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of impact assessments and scrutiny in Wales, ensuring that any changes to community services are thoroughly and rigorously thought through and analysed, the impact on older people and others has been fully explored, and that older people have been given every opportunity to comment on these proposed changes. The Committee felt that to undertake its obligations effectively it was important to have an understanding of the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process and the factors which have to be taken account of by Cabinet when considering service change. As a result, the Committee received an informative presentation from our HR Advisor who reported on how EIAs are used by the Council to inform key decision making.

Linking in to the spirit of the Commissioner's guidance regarding decisions affecting older people, the vice chair and I attended a Cabinet meeting in October where we presented our concerns regarding the impending transfer of residents from Maesyffynnon Residential Home due to building maintenance issues. In response to our concerns, Cabinet agreed that the scrutiny committee should play a part in overseeing the process of the transfer of residents and therefore a small working group was formed which included the local members. Having followed the transfer and settlement of residents into their alternative accommodation the Working Group concluded that the transfer of residents had gone smoothly and all are settled well into their new homes. The Working Group was also pleased to note that residents have been complimentary with regard to how they have been treated by staff. The Working Group also contributed to the consultation process which was organised to consider the future proposals for Maesyffynnon. The Working Group's report will be

presented to the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee when it next meets following the Council's AGM.

Leisure Strategy

Shortly after Christmas, the Committee had the opportunity to consider the draft Medium Term (2015-20) Strategic Plan for Leisure Services for Rhondda Cynon Taf and influence its content prior to its consideration by Cabinet. The vision of the strategy is that all residents will be able to access opportunities to undertake regular physical exercise, as part of a healthy lifestyle, which maintains and improves their health and well being.

Monitoring

The Committee has considered a number of reports during the year, including the Director's Report, Cwm Taf Carers' Strategy Annual Report, the CCSIW's annual performance evaluation report, Social Services Annual Representations & Complaints Report and the annual report of the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report alongside a progress report on the new Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.

Along with my vice chair and the chair and vice chair of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee, I met with officers from the CSSIW on 17th November 2015 to discuss their findings as set out in their annual evaluation report. This proved to be a very constructive meeting and the intention is to meet twice yearly, probably around April and September time. The feedback from the April meeting can then help inform the scrutiny committees' work programmes for the forthcoming year.

Future Challenges

The Committee is keen to engage with representative groups of the public in relation to its review of Supporting People at Home and Rhondda Cynon Taf's Older People's Advisory Group has assisted the Council in recent years in challenging the Council's performance improvement plans. The Committee also sees a role for itself in assisting in the development of information, advice and guidance for the public to explain what the new Social Services & Wellbeing Act means for them.

Our work in relation to Supporting People at Home will continue into the new municipal year and I am sure will have a sharper focus and be the better for the preparatory work which we have undertaken this year. One of the areas we want to consider is the Choice Protocol for inpatients requiring a placement in a residential or nursing home. The intention will be to broaden our discussions to include health and the third sector with a view to making a positive impact on the future direction of services for those who need support in maintaining their independence.

I am also aware that there are other areas within the Committee's remit which we need to have a better understanding of, in particular, the areas of public health and protection and this will need to be addressed over the next 12 months.

Members of the Committee have also expressed a desire to receive additional training in Safeguarding and be provided with a financial / budget overview of the services under its remit.

In conclusion I would like to give particular thanks to my vice chair for her support during the year and also my committee members for their hard work and dedication.

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

The overview and scrutiny role in connection with scrutinising public service delivery across a range of Council services. The Committee considers areas which contribute to prosperity and also community safety issues. It is the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Committee (pursuant to Section 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006).

Overview from the Chairman



**County Borough
Councillor
G R Davies**

Membership of the Committee:

County Borough Councillors

G R Davies and S A Bradwick (Chairman & Vice Chair respectively)

County Borough Councillors: (Mrs) J Bonetto, J Bunnage, S Carter, (Mrs) A Davies, (Mrs) L De Vet, J Elliott, G Holmes, P Howe, W L Langford, (Mrs) S Pickering, (Mrs) A Roberts, M Weaver, D Weeks, T Williams, R Yeo

As Chair of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee the prospect of a new Scrutiny structure which would bring about a changing emphasis in the way it enhances the contribution of the Council services and its impact on the delivery of the priorities within the Single Integrated Plan as well as a shift towards a more outcome based focus was a challenging one. The Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising public service delivery across a range of Council and public sector services which includes frontline services delivered by the Council and the corporate functions of the Council. It also considers matters relating to the environment, sustainable development, economic development, regeneration and skills. Incumbent with the Council's move towards a more thematic approach the Committee is also the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Committee (under Sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act, 2006). With such a wide remit one of our challenges was to produce a work programme which delivered good outcomes from recommendations that are aimed at bringing about changes and improvements to Council services.

Recycling- Participation Rates

In the first instance we received a report from the Director, Highways and Streetcare Services which informed us that in 2014/15 Rhondda-Cynon-Taf failed to meet its target around waste recycling; therefore improvements were needed to support the Council's priority of 'Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf Clean and Green' and also avoid financial penalties from Welsh Government. The full year

performance for 2014-2015 represented below Welsh average performance i.e. 53.82% compared to 56.24% so we felt it was crucial to review this item as part of our work programme and look at producing appropriate recommendations in response to the findings from our review which would make a positive contribution to improving the overall municipal recycling rate within Rhondda Cynon Taf to at least meet the 2015/16 target set by Welsh Government of 58%. At our meeting on the 14th September 2015 Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee resolved to consider participation rates in recycling across the County Borough as part of our work programme and subsequently deliver a project aimed at increasing recycling in a targeted area.

During the week commencing 30th November 2015 Members of the Committee accompanied the Participation Teams on the door knocking exercise for a period of one week of the total four week campaign which continued up to Christmas. In that one week Members visited a large number of properties to understand the Council's role in improving recycling rates, to engage with the local residents and hold discussions relating to recycling. Following our involvement with the participation work, the Committee held a feedback session so that Members could discuss their own experiences and evaluation of the response from local residents. We found that the majority of residents were prepared to engage in discussions in respect of recycling, many were actively participating in the Council's recycling service with no reported incidences of negative responses.

Training

In advance of the participation work Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee together with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Culture and Leisure received Contamination Training which was held at Ty Glantaf, Treforest Industrial Estate on the 23rd November 2015. The training was delivered by Mr James Kay, South Wales Regional Waste Coordinator. Members found the training to be a valuable source of information in terms of understanding that contamination in recycling is an increasing problem for the local authority as recycling that is contaminated cannot be recycled and will be sent to a landfill. It is considered that in Rhondda Cynon Taf 20% of all household recycling is contaminated due to residents failing to recycle properly which undoubtedly has an impact upon the overall recycling rates. Committee agreed that this training would be beneficial to all Members of the Council.

Community Recycling Centres

Committee felt that addressing the under performing recycling rates could not be done in isolation and by restricting our review to the participation work. Therefore, we also considered the arrangements and impact of the new Community Recycling Centres in Llantrisant and Treherbert on the overall municipal recycling rate. The recycling centre in Llantrisant is the first of its kind operating as a 100% recycling facility with a view to increasing recycling rates across the County Borough. We allowed the new arrangements to become embedded and conducted a site visit to the Llantrisant Community Recycling Centre on the 15th March 2016 to consider the overall position and whether the new facilities could prove to be a contributing factor to the improving picture. We will continue to look at and monitor the performance of the Community Recycling Centres to assess their impact on the overall recycling rates in the next municipal year.

The final results of the project to increase recycling rates through a targeted approach which took place in Cilfynydd from the 30th November to the 25th December 2015 were reported back to Committee in March 2016, 3 months after the initial work had been undertaken and demonstrated an increase in the participation rate in the Cilfynydd area. It was clear to us as a committee that continued awareness is necessary in order to maintain a high level of participation. From these results Committee identified two recommendations for the Executive to consider and where necessary implement.

Mobile Library Review

As with all Local Authorities the library service in Rhondda Cynon Taf faces challenges in view of the reduction in funding to the service in 2014/2015. As a way of mitigating some of the adverse effects of the Medium Term Service Planning Review in 2014, specifically the impact of the reduction in the number of static libraries, the County Borough saw a rise in the number of mobile libraries from 3 to 4. We considered the service change in 2014 as an opportunity to review the mobile library service and as part of the review we were asked to factor in the financial aspect of the service change by our colleagues in the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee, to establish whether or not the savings identified as part of the service change have been realised.

In December 2015 we considered the feedback received from Welsh Government in respect of the Library Service's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) for the period 2014/2015. The report generated a substantial debate and highlighted some concerns for our Committee particularly in view of the proposed service changes for 2015/2016 and following discussions Committee agreed to submit its views as part of the Council's Service Change Consultation process. A response to our submission was received on the 15th February 2016 from County Borough Councillor J Rosser, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Libraries & Heritage.

In February 2016 the Committee began its review of the mobile library service since the service change in 2014 and at this stage we considered and agreed our Terms of Reference, scope and methodology for this piece of work. We considered the current mobile library stops by ward as our baseline data with a view to re evaluating them and submitting our views on the development of the draft mobile routes which will be distributed to all Elected Members in May 2016. Following any amendments the new routes will be implemented in June 2016 and in September 2016 we will receive and consider the results of the Customer Survey to assess customer satisfaction and identify any additional needs. We will also review the relevant data in respect of the new routes and make sure that the Council is delivering a service that meets the needs of our residents. Committee looks forward to continuing this review in the next municipal year. This represents an example of how scrutiny can inform service delivery.

Bids & Tenders for Council Contracts

At its meeting on the 7th October 2015 the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee resolved to refer the following key performance exception to the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee for review in more detail:- *'The no. of local business submitting bid / tenders for Council contracts'*. In response to the referral the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee received a detailed report setting out the reasons behind the Council's underperforming Quarter 1 and 2 figures (Financial Year 2015/2016) in respect of the number of bids and tenders submitted for Council contracts by local businesses which had fallen below target and the mechanisms in place to support local businesses. However, at that stage committee felt they wanted to explore their lines of enquiry in more detail and expressed concern at the underperforming PI. We therefore resolved to undertake a short review with the aim of developing evidence based recommendations at the end of this piece of work.

As a result of our review Committee was satisfied that the relevant processes and support is in place to assist local businesses to bid for Council contracts; however, we identified that there exists variations between the quarterly reporting periods and we found that the end of year cumulative reporting demonstrated that performance had exceeded the annual target set. Committee has formulated a recommendation which will address this fluctuation in results.

Crime & Disorder Committee

As the Council has moved towards a more thematic approach in its new scrutiny arrangements the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee is now the Council's designated Crime & Disorder Committee (under sections 19 & 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006) and is required to hold at least one meeting per year. The Committee met on the 11th January 2016, also in attendance was the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, Councillor R. Smith and the Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Libraries & Heritage, Councillor J Rosser. At the meeting the Crime & Disorder Committee had the opportunity to question Sally Burke, the Chief Superintendent and Divisional Commander, South Wales Police, on a number of issues such as the strategic projects and priorities for delivery during 2015/16 and 2016/17. Committee acknowledged the considerable change programme for services such as domestic abuse, substance misuse, tackling extremism and offender management as well as consideration of a future review of the community safety partnership landscape across Cwm Taf which will explore opportunities for integration of services and put in place more robust governance arrangements. Having considered the report and subsequent responses by officers to a rigorous line of questioning the Committee concluded that it was satisfied that at this time there were no areas of concern or areas they wished to scrutinise in greater depth. However we will continue to monitor and review these topic areas.

The Committee has since extended an invitation to the Police Crime Commissioner to attend a future Crime and Disorder Committee.

Conclusion

It has been a busy year for the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee but we have seen some positive outcomes in respect of our work to contribute to the municipal recycling rate and meet the national target for 2015/2016 and our review to consider whether the Council is supporting local businesses bid for Council tenders. We recognise that this new approach to scrutiny is an evolving one and many topics within our work programme will continue into the next Municipal Year. We are already looking to arrange a site visit and hold a future Committee meeting in Bryn Pica, the integrated waste management facility in Aberdare so that we can continue to monitor the recycling facilities within Rhondda Cynon Taf to ensure that we meet the 2016/17 target.

I would like to thank my Vice Chairman and all Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee for their valuable input and continued support and I look forward to further developing our work programme to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference: This committee is responsible for scrutinising financial and operational performance; treasury management arrangements; the annual revenue budget consultation process; statutory performance reporting requirements and monitoring the implementation of medium term financial planning decisions.

Overview from the Chairman



**County Borough Councillor
M A Norris**

Membership of the Committee:

County Borough Councillors

M A Norris and (Mrs) J S Ward (Chairman & Vice Chair respectively)

County Borough Councillors: (Mrs) J Bonetto, S Bradwick, G R Davies, S Evans, P Griffiths, (Mrs) S Jones, (Mrs) C Leyshon, (Mrs) S Rees, G Smith, R W Smith, P Wasley, E Webster, C J Williams, C J Willis and R Yeo.

Ex-officio Member: Mr R Hull, Co-opted member and chairman of the Council's Audit Committee.

This Committee differs from the other scrutiny committees as the membership includes the chairs and vice chairs of the other three themed scrutiny committees. The Chairman and vice chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as well as the Chairman of the Council's Audit Committee also regularly attend which provides the Committee with a good balance of knowledge when reviewing the Council's performance.

The Committee has had a very busy first year and perhaps we were ambitious in the tasks which we set ourselves at the start. However, we have been tasked with monitoring the Council's performance and I believe that we have a duty to do whatever we can to drive improvement and efficiencies. The work which we are unable to complete will be carried forward into the new municipal year.

Community Infrastructure Levy

Some of the work that I and other scrutiny colleagues have been involved with this year has stemmed from the former Corporate Service Scrutiny Committee and one of these topic areas is the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The CIL Scrutiny Working Group met in May to consider the process for formulating, monitoring and revising the Regulation 123 List and the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed this piece of work in June 2015 following which the recommended process was forwarded to the Cabinet for consideration.

Zero Hours Contracts

Also stemming from the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee, several members of the former committee including myself undertook a review into Zero Hour Contracts. This was an issue which had been referred to scrutiny from Council following a Notice of Motion. This led to the development of an ethical procurement policy which has since been adopted by Cabinet.

In June the Committee considered the work undertaken by the scrutiny working groups that were tasked with assessing the Council's 2014/15 priority plans and support the development of the delivery plans for 2015/16. The Committee also considered the draft Corporate Performance Report for 2015/16 alongside the feedback from the scrutiny groups and endorse the report for presentation to Council. Later in the summer the Committee also endorsed the draft summary of the Corporate Performance Report 2015/16.

As a result of a 'call-in' considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in June the Committee acted as a consultee to a consultation process in respect of changes to the Council's Home to School Transport policy. An open invitation was also given to all non executive members and co-opted members to attend and present their views, all of which formed part of the information pack considered by Cabinet prior to them making their decision.

European Funding Programme

In October, the Committee received a report from the Director of Regeneration & Planning in relation to the delivery of the European Union Funding Programmes in Wales for 2014-2020. The Committee formed a view that local authorities should have a key role in planning and delivering these programmes and Members were extremely concerned that the guiding principles of the new programme of European Funding provides fewer opportunities to local government to lead on the delivery of projects. At the request of the Committee, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development and Planning wrote to the Minister for Finance and Government Business expressing the Committee's concerns.

Service Change Evaluation

In terms of the Committee's Work Programme, in addition to its standard tasks the membership agreed that they should evaluate those service changes introduced in 2014 namely, libraries, meals on wheels, day centres and youth/e3 services.

With regard to the library service, the Finance & Scrutiny Committee were made aware of the intentions of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee to review the mobile library service and we therefore requested that they widen their brief to include a review of the financial outcomes arising from the service change.

To date the Committee has reviewed the impact of the changes to the Meals on Wheels Service following the service change introduced from November 2014. As a result of the information considered the Committee advised on a number of issues going forward including improving engagement and consultation with clients and it is the intention that the Committee will receive regular update reports to monitor progress.

Performance Monitoring

One of the fundamental changes to the scrutiny framework has been the move away from each committee receiving its own performance exception report to one committee, namely the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee, receiving all information. In July 2015, the Committee considered the Council's year end performance and key exceptions for 2014/15. At the same time Members agreed a mechanism for the provision of information on performance and key exceptions on a quarterly basis. As a result, Members have received quarterly performance presentations which provides information on budget and performance variances and exceptions; budget virements and re-profiling, progress against key financial and operational risk, traffic light assessment of performance and lead officer summaries on WPI progress. As a result of this a number of referrals were made to the other themed scrutiny committees, namely;

Children & Young People:

- Estyn school inspection results (officers are now working on a new more meaningful way of presenting this information);
- Initial assessments where there is evidence that the child was seen by a social worker (this has been considered by the C&YP Committee); and
- Fixed Term Exclusions (this has been considered by the C&YP Committee – performance has improved slightly and further reports will be received by the Committee).

Health & Wellbeing:

- Homelessness - Average no. of days homeless households spent in B&B accommodation (this has been considered by the H& WB Committee, performance currently on track).

Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity:

- Bids / tenders submitted by local businesses for Council contracts (the PSD, C & P Committee has undertaken a short review of this issue).

During the year we have also fulfilled our responsibilities to monitor the Treasury Management arrangements by considering the Treasury Management Strategy and mid and year end reviews.

During the autumn the Committee received some baseline information in relation to performance indicator targets and it was agreed that a working group be formed to review the extent of the Council's ambition in driving improved performance through stretching targets. Due to existing work programme commitments, this group has not yet met and it may be that much of this work will be addressed by scrutiny working groups set up to form a view on the adequacy of the Council's priorities for 2016/17. If not the working group will need to pursue this work during 2016/17.

Office Accommodation Strategy

In line with the agreed work programme, the Committee received a report in relation to the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy. Following consideration of this it was agreed to form a small working group to identify opportunities for more effective and efficient use of Council Accommodation, including flexible working and 'hot desking'. To date the group has met on 4 occasions and is now concluding its work. It has had an input into improving the forms being used by Community Groups in respect of the RCT Together initiative and assisted the Director of Corporate

Estates with the preparation of his report in respect of Council Accommodation prior to its submission to Cabinet.

Consultation & Pre Scrutiny

Early in December the Committee took part in the consultation process in respect of service change proposals in relation to the library service, youth engagement, supported bus routes and day nurseries

Again in December, the Committee had the opportunity to undertake pre-scrutiny of the Council's Draft Corporate Plan 2016-2020. The Committee generally accepted the proposed principles of the Plan put forward by the Chief Executive and the Senior Leadership Team and following input from the scrutiny committee the draft plan was put out to public consultation. One of the key points made by Members was that scrutiny should help form the development of the detailed action plans for each priority. This work has recently been undertaken by a series of cross cutting scrutiny working groups comprised of members from all the Council's scrutiny committees who initially reviewed progress against delivery of 2015/16 priorities and then scrutinised the proposed priority actions for 2016/17.

In early January, the Committee took part in the consultation process for the 2016/17 draft Revenue Budget. The meeting was open to all non executive and co-opted members. Arising from this, the Committee requested that it should have an opportunity to undertake pre-scrutiny of the 2016/17 Revenue Budget Strategy. As a result later in the month the Committee received the proposals of the Council's Senior Leadership Team for scrutiny prior to their presentation to Cabinet.

Corporate Self Evaluation

During the year Cabinet Members and officers at various levels in the organisation undertook a corporate and also individual service self evaluations to inform the improvement planning processes and help support further improvement in the quality of services provided by the Council. The results of the corporate self evaluation were reported to Cabinet in January 2016 and this report was then passed to the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee to form a judgement as to whether it provided an accurate and robust reflection of the position of the Council's services. The Committee endorsed the report and also acknowledged the potential usefulness of the service evaluations in informing the scrutiny work programmes for 2016/17.

Future Challenges

The first task for the Committee in the new year will be scrutinising the draft Corporate Performance Report before presentation to Council in June.

The Committee will need to continue in its budget and performance monitoring role, providing a strong challenge if the Council is to meet the performance expectations as set out in the new Corporate Plan. The Committee will also need to ensure that it has room in its work programme to continue with its evaluation of service changes.

In order for Members to undertake their roles competently the Committee has received training sessions in relation to the Council's budgets and also specialist

training from the Council's Treasury Management Advisors. Members have also expressed a wish to receive further training during the coming year.

It has been a very busy first year for the Committee but I would like to think that we have been effective in our role and I am sure that as we progress into 2016/17 we will begin to see results and through the hard work of both members and officers performance will improve across all service areas.

In conclusion I would like to thank my vice chair County Borough Councillor (Mrs) J S Ward for her support and the members of the Committee, including Mr Roger Hull, Chair of the Audit Committee who have attended diligently through the year.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

The challenge set in last year's Scrutiny Annual Report was 'making an impact' - how can scrutiny make a difference and how can this be evidenced. This report is an attempt to set out not only the hard work and effort put in by scrutiny Members during the year but also tries to demonstrate and evidence the valuable contribution Scrutiny has made to the work of the Council.

It has been a very challenging year for each of the scrutiny committees who have strived to deliver outcome based work programmes. The changes to the scrutiny framework led to a slow start in terms of setting these work programmes and there was understandably concern by Members at the rate of progress made. Members have also questioned the type of information they need to be able to scrutinise topics properly and generate outcomes leading to Members being more challenging of officers, asking for more contextual information and case studies alongside the usual data to enable judgements on the impact services are having on users. Several Members have also voiced their concern that the quarterly budget and performance exception reports are no longer reported to each scrutiny committee and that this responsibility is now undertaken by the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee. It has to be pointed out that all Members have access to this information via the Council's website and the new process in no way precludes the themed scrutiny committees from receiving information related to their areas of work. In theory this process should 'free up' Committee time to enable the themed scrutiny committees to undertake scrutiny of specific areas of underperformance or concern.

It will be for Members to decide whether on balance the new arrangements have improved scrutiny in Rhondda Cynon Taf, not forgetting that the first year of any change will always be challenging. However, it will be important to learn from the experiences of this first year in order to improve and this issue was discussed at the last meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 20th April 2016 when Members made the following points:

- In general it was concluded that good progress had been made during the first year of operation but that more would be expected during the second year;
- There is concern at the heavy workload of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee;
- Scrutiny Committees need to be clear about the questions they want to ask and the outcomes they want to achieve;
- Officers have been asked to include in their reports more information in respect of the impact which their service has on service users;
- It is important that the scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs communicate closely with service officers and Cabinet Members; and
- Scrutiny has to do more to ensure that they are taking on board the views of the public.

Aside from the scrutiny process itself, there will be a number of challenges for scrutiny to face going into 2016/17, not least the run up to the local government elections in 2017 and the potential for local authority re-organisation in the medium term. There will be a need to plan for the training and development of all new Members and it will be essential that their scrutiny role is included in this.

Scrutiny will need to continue to work toward addressing those areas of weaknesses reported upon by the Auditor General for Wales in his report ‘Good Scrutiny? Good Question!’

The implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires that Local Service Boards become statutory bodies known as Public Service Boards and these must be established for each local authority area in Wales. There is also a requirement for a designated local government scrutiny committee of the relevant local authority to scrutinise the work of the Public Service Board (PSB). In the case of Rhondda Cynon Taf it is proposed that this role be carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Act also provides for two or more PSBs to merge and collaborate in situations where the same Local Health Board is a member of each board. Therefore should Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil PSBs decide to merge, being part of the Cwm Taf Local Health Board area, there would then be an opportunity for joint scrutiny.

Each of the scrutiny committees have areas which they have identified they wish to pursue during the forthcoming year but a particular challenge for the Health & Wellbeing and Children & Young People Scrutiny Committees will be supporting the Council’s services in their response to the implementation of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act. In addition, as more services are delivered by partnerships it will be more important than ever to involve Health and the 3rd Sector in the work being undertaken by scrutiny.

In addition, the number of services delivered collaboratively across Wales is also growing for example the education services provided by the Central South Consortium and the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative. These developments will require us to consider the suitability of our arrangements in scrutinising collaborative services.

Above all, scrutiny will need to support the Executive in delivering the services to support the Council’s Corporate Plan and its priorities to:

- Promote independence and positive lives for everyone;
- Create neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work; and
- Build a strong economy.
