

Overview & Scrutiny 2017/18 Annual Report



RHONDDA CYNON TAF



L.M.Adams

Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee



S.Rees-Owen

*Chair of Children & Young
People Scrutiny Committee*



R.Yeo

*Chair of Health & Well-Being
Scrutiny Committee*



S.Bradwick

*Chair of Public Service
Delivery, Communities &
Prosperity Scrutiny Committee*



Mr.M.J.Powell

*Chair of Finance &
Performance Scrutiny
Committee*

FOREWARD

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. This is the fifteenth such report and therefore we can no longer say that Scrutiny is a new way of working and it is now embedded into our processes. However, we cannot sit on our laurels and I hope that this report reflects the hard work which has been undertaken by Members during the year and provides an insight into the expectations that is placed on scrutiny to deliver service improvements in challenging and austere times.

The first year following an election should be about sowing the seeds for the future, building on the skills of returning Members and providing new Members with the training and support that they need to enable them to take on the challenges of office. This has been achieved against a backdrop of competing demands.

Following the County Borough elections in May, 2017 the membership of the Scrutiny Committees changed almost completely, with the appointment of new Chairs and Vice-Chairs on each of the themed Scrutiny Committees and a new Vice-Chair on my Committee. I was thrilled, to once again be Chair of the Council's main Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the third consecutive year and was therefore able to guide and support those new Members.

This year has seen once again many improvements, such as the introduction of a Dedicated Scrutiny webpage (Please click here to access the dedicated Scrutiny Website); one-to-one engagement sessions were re-established between Cabinet Members, responsible Officers and the relevant Scrutiny Chairs/Vice Chairs, which further enhanced dialogue and the flow of information in terms of the work programmes of both Cabinet and Scrutiny; the Cabinet/Scrutiny engagement was further enhanced by Cabinet Members and their respective Chief Officer(s) attending meetings of the Scrutiny Committees and presenting relevant information which provided Scrutiny Members with the opportunity to challenge.

Since the last AGM there have been 46 Scrutiny Committees which does not include the many Working Group meetings and training sessions which Scrutiny Members have attended. I am grateful to my Vice Chair, County Borough Councillor G.Thomas who took up his role at the beginning of this municipal year and has been of great support to me. I must also thank my fellow Scrutiny Chairs and all the Scrutiny Members who have carried out this work and to all the external agencies and individuals who have contributed during the year.

On behalf of all the Scrutiny Chairs and Scrutiny Members, I am pleased to present the 2017/18 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report.

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

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP



L.M.Adams
Chair



G.P.Thomas
Vice-Chair



H.Boggis



J.Bonetto



J.Brencher



E.George



J.Harries



P.Jarman



D.Macey



E.Stephens



L.Walker

As from the Council's Annual Meeting held on the 17th May, 2017, County Borough Councillor J.James was a Member of this Committee up to the 29th November, 2017 when changes in the Political Balance were made as a result of the formation of a new Political Group and he was replaced by Councillor G.Williams and then Councillor L.Walker (as from the Council meeting held on the 28th February, 2018).

OVERVIEW AND 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 Chair



L.M.Adams

I was delighted to be appointed as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the third consecutive year, particularly as I was able to guide and support those Members that were new to the Council following the County Borough elections in May, 2017, as most, if not all became part of the Scrutiny process within Rhondda Cynon Taf. It was therefore vital that new and returning Members were given the tools to help them undertake their Scrutiny role, and as an Authority, we are recognised by other Welsh Councils and the WLGA in being the only Local Authority to be awarded all three levels of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development and this has been, yet again, evidenced through the Induction training that was provided to Members during the early months of Office. However, the training does not stop at the Induction process and Members will continue to receive the necessary training to help them in their roles throughout their term of office.

Following on from last year's Annual Report, when I reported on the concerns that were raised by the Wales Audit Office in their document `Good Governance When Determining Significant Service Changes` in respect of lack of visibility of Scrutiny Work Programmes and promotion of Public Involvement in the scrutiny process, where work was progressing in these areas, I can now confirm, as mentioned earlier in my Foreword that promoting the work of the Scrutiny Committees remains a priority for the Council, and steps have recently been taken to enhance the public facing aspect through the creation of a dedicated Scrutiny [webpage](#) and social media presence. These interfaces provide details of the various Scrutiny Committees and

their work programmes, as well as details of upcoming meetings. A monthly Scrutiny Chair's blog is also being developed that will provide detailed updates on the work undertaken by each Committee.

Getting the public involved in scrutiny has always been a problematical area, not just for Rhondda Cynon Taf but for all Welsh Authorities. One of the ways where we have tried to get more engaged with our residents is by taking Scrutiny out and away from the Council Chamber and later on, this can be evidenced as some meetings of the themed Scrutiny Committees have been held in different venues. For example, some of the meetings of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee have been held in the Lido, Pontypridd.

It would be remiss of me not to mention my Vice-Chair, County Borough Councillor G.Thomas, who has supported me throughout and contributed greatly to the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In being appointed to our respective roles at the Annual Meeting of the Council, we made a pledge that one of us would attempt to attend most if not all of the meetings of the four themed Scrutiny Committees. This arrangement worked very well with very few meetings being missed as our role is to ensure that the work of each of these Committees is effective and as mentioned earlier, it was important in our roles as the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council's main Overview and Scrutiny Committee that Members felt supported as well as being challenged, and this takes me nicely on to the first section of my Annual Report:-

MEETINGS OF SCRUTINY CHAIRS/VICE CHAIRS

Prior to any meetings of the Scrutiny Committees for 2017/18 taking place, it was crucial that we met as Chairs/Vice-Chairs to ensure that all concerned were "singing from the same hymn sheet" and to take the opportunity to look back on the previous year, where the new Chairs/Vice Chairs had no or very little input and to look forward to the challenges that were to face us in 2017/18.

Our first meeting was held on the 31st May, 2017, just two weeks after the AGM and where I made a presentation, which in many ways was an introduction to Scrutiny from a Member's perspective. This first meeting was very productive and put us on the right footing for what lay ahead. Whilst the items under consideration at the four meetings that followed remained the same, what became more and more apparent was the confidence and eagerness that grew in each of the Chairs/Vice Chairs:-

- 5th July, 2017
- 7th November, 2017
- 31st January, 2018
- 19th April, 2018

At each meeting, the Members gave a progress report for their respective Scrutiny Committees when considering items such as:-

- Work Programmes
- Members' Attendance
- Pre-Scrutiny
- Venues
- Training

These meetings also give the Chairs/Vice-Chairs the opportunity to address any concerns that they may have.

JOINT WORKING – CWM TAF PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

In last year's Scrutiny Annual Report, I was pleased to report that in accordance with the Well-Being of the Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015, joint scrutiny arrangement comprising elected Members of Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Councils had been put in place to scrutinise the work of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board.

At the Council's Annual Meeting in May, I was one of the five Members from Rhondda Cynon Taf to be nominated to sit on the Joint Committee and Councillor J.Bonetto was appointed as Chair with the Vice-Chair being an elected Member from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

Councillor Bonetto has attended meetings of the Scrutiny Chairs/Vice Chairs where she has reported on the progress that is being made by the Joint Committee. Members of the Joint Committee received training prior to its first meeting, which was delivered by Mr.D.Hurford of the WLGA. This assisted Members when they gave constructive challenge, in their role as `statutory consultees` to the Draft Cwm Taf Well-Being Plan during the latter part of 2017. At this meeting held in December, Members revisited the co-option of representatives on the Committee and it was agreed that nominations be sought from the Ambulance Service and the Community Health Council. In addition, following the interviews that were conducted by the Chair and the Vice-Chair two residents (one from Rhondda Cynon Taf and one from Merthyr Tydfil) were selected as Publically Appointed Independent co-opted Members. It is pleasing to see the interest that has been shown by partners/stakeholders in wishing to be a part of the Joint Committee as this will bring a sharing of learning and experiences when supporting the development and improvement of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board.

At its meeting held in February, the Joint Committee welcomed the Chair, Professor Marcus Longley of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board and the Chair, Dr.Kelechi Nnoaham of the Strategic Partnership Board who provided Members with an overview of the role and functions of both Boards.

The future challenges for the Joint Committee is the scrutiny of the `Delivery of the Plans` in respect of the following themes:-

- Community Zones
- Thriving Communities
- Health People
- Tackling Loneliness/Isolation

The scrutiny of the above work streams will commence during the Summer months and in accordance with the Joint Committee's terms of reference will then be Chaired by a Member from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and supported by the Vice-Chair which will be a Member from this Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee who will be appointed at the AGM in May.

I would, on behalf of all Members, like to thank Councillor Bonetto for all her hard work and commitment in developing solid foundations which will assist the future work of the Joint Committee and which will also be eased by the co-option of experienced individuals.

CALL-IN

In accordance with the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the Committee is responsible for dealing with all Call-Ins. There have been two Call-Ins during 2017/18 resulting in the need to convene two special meetings of the Committee.

The first Call-In was dealt with at the Special Meeting of the Committee held on the 2nd October, 2017 in respect of a decision taken by the Cabinet – Review of the Council's Senior and Associated Management Post Structure. The reason for the Call-In being:-

“To consider pre scrutiny of the report which did not feature on the Cabinet Work Programme. Out of accord with Local Govt (Wales) Measure 2011 – Need to clarify the number of posts affected and savings achieved”

The meeting was attended by the Deputy Leader of the Council who responded to questions/queries raised by the three signatories of the Call-In and Members of the Committee. The Call-In was unsuccessful i.e. not referred back to the Cabinet for reconsideration.

The second Call-In was dealt with at the Special Meeting of the Committee held on the 30th April, 2018, and in my absence was Chaired by my Vice-Chair, Councillor G.Thomas. This Call-In was in respect of a decision taken by the Cabinet – Developing Community Hubs in RCT. The reason for the Call-In being:-

“To enable further consideration and reflection on those matters as outlined in Minute No.45(2)(3) of the Health and Wellbeing Committee of 16/4/18 and give

Scrutiny the opportunity of considering the more detailed report as presented to Cabinet”.

The meeting was attended by the Deputy Cabinet Member for Prosperity & Wellbeing, County Borough Councillor R.Lewis who responded to the questions/queries raised by the three signatories and Members of the Committee. Like the previous Call-In, this was also unsuccessful i.e. not referred back to the Cabinet for reconsideration.

SCRUTINY/CABINET WORK PROGRAMMES/PRE SCRUTINY

At its first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 10th July, 2017, in addition to the Committee’s suggested Work Programme for the 2017/18 municipal year, Members were also provided with the proposed list of matters requiring consideration by the Cabinet during the year to ascertain if there were any topics that could undergo pre-scrutiny by this Committee or any of the four themed Scrutiny Committees.

The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the four themed Scrutiny Committees were invited to this meeting together with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee in order that they could contribute to this item of business. The Deputy Leader and the Director, Cabinet & Public Relations were also in attendance and both indicated that further improvements had been made to the Cabinet Work Programme.

It was agreed at this meeting that the following topics be dealt with by the respective Scrutiny Committees as shown below:-

1. That the Extra Care Strategy as shown in the Cabinet Work Programme undergo pre-scrutiny by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
2. That in light of the Grenfell Tower disaster the Authority undertook an audit in respect of Fire Safety Arrangements for Social Housing, Supported Housing, Houses in Multiple Occupation and Council Owned Buildings as considered at the Cabinet meeting on the 22nd June, 2017 be a matter for consideration by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and not the Public Services Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee as referred to in the Cabinet Decision Notice, in view of the cross cutting issues;
3. That at its next meeting the Democratic Services Committee receives an update on the Document Management Proposals as shown in the Cabinet Work Programme;
4. That an update be provided at the next meeting of this Committee in respect of the Notice of Motion as considered by Council on the 23rd March, 2016 (Minute No.135 refers) regarding supporting the Welsh Steel Industry in that *“In an effort to support the Welsh Steel Industry,*

this Council will, in future, make it clear in its Contract and Tender specification documents, that as a preference, all work and structures requiring the use of steel should be sourced from Welsh Steel Works”

5. That the Notice of Motion considered at the Council meeting held on the 30th November, 2016 (Minute No.80 refers) in respect of the cessation of burial or cremation fees charged for the funerals of veterans and service men and women be referred to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee;
6. That the Notice of Motion considered at the Council meeting held on the 11th January, 2017 (Minute No.101 refers) in respect of supporting the Welsh Hearts campaign to provide defibrillators in public places be referred to the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

I am pleased to say that the above topics were dealt with, the outcomes of 1 – 4 above, are reported upon below and 5 and 6 are reported upon later on in the annual reports of the respective Scrutiny Committees.

In respect of 1 above, – The Extra Care Strategy or to give it its full title **Transforming Adult Social Care – Development of Extra Care Housing** this together with Delivering the Corporate Plan – “The Way Ahead” both were the subject of pre-scrutiny by Members at the second Special Meeting of the Committee held on the same date as the matter concerning the Call-In (as referred to earlier) i.e. the 2nd October, 2017 and the comments of the Committee were fed back to the Cabinet.

In respect of 2 above, thorough scrutiny was undertaken by Members of the Committee in respect of **Fire Safety Arrangements for Social Housing, Supported Housing, Houses in Multiple Occupation and Council Owned Buildings**, so much so, the matter was considered at the next and subsequent scheduled meetings of the Committee. At the last meeting of the Committee during the 2017/18 municipal year, which was held on the 18th April, 2018, Members received an update on the Fire Risk Assessment process currently in place for Council owned/occupied buildings; this was requested by Members as a follow up from the review that had been undertaken.

Document Management Proposal as referred to in 3 above, was the subject of consideration by Members at the meetings of the Democratic Services Committee held on the 11th September, 2017 and the 12th February, 2018 and subsequently at the Council Meeting held on the 28th March, 2018, where it was agreed to support the further extension of the paperless phased approach to all Committees of the Council as recommended by the Democratic Services Committee.

In respect of the issue surrounding the **Welsh Steel Industry** as outlined in 4 above, this matter was dealt with at the following meeting of the Committee on the 13th September, where I informed Members that this issue was widely discussed in late 2015 and the UK Government issued a note on removing barriers to `prevent UK

suppliers of steel from effectively competing for public sector contracts`. It was very general in its approach and did not cover the devolved areas in Wales. However, it did raise the profile of the issue in the Procurement world.

The Welsh Government then indicated that they would be issuing a Wales specific policy note on the use of steel in the Welsh public sector, this has been long awaited as there were problems with wording on the steel issue that would meet the various practical and legal requirements. A Welsh Government Group was established and a Procurement guidance note has been drafted but had yet to be approved and it was hoped that this would be progressed with the appropriate Cabinet Secretary in the very near future.

It was further reported that on receipt of the Procurement guidance, this Council implement its recommendations accordingly.

In our February meeting, I read out the statement that was announced by the Finance Secretary, Mark Drakeford on the 22nd January, 2018 in respect of the publication of a new Procurement Advice Note (PAN). The PAN builds on the recommendations in the Steel Report by the Tata Steel Task Force in January, 2016, which identified public procurement as an area of support for the steel industry in Wales and the UK. The PAN would also provide clarity to the Welsh Public Sector on approaches which should be adopted to open up sub-contract opportunities for Welsh and UK Steel suppliers.

Continuing with the subject matter of Work Programmes, at the Committee's meeting in January, Members once again welcomed the Deputy Leader and the Director, Cabinet & Public Relations, who provided Members with an updated Cabinet Work Programme for the remainder of the municipal year, which gave the Chairs/Vice Chairs of the themed Scrutiny Committees further opportunity to look at topics that could undergo pre-scrutiny.

It was agreed at that meeting to approve the items that were to under-go pre-scrutiny by the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee and the Health & Well-Being Scrutiny Committee, namely `Increasing Recycling Performance` and `Review of Housing Allocation Scheme` respectively. The outcomes of both reviews will be reported upon later on in this Annual Report by the respective Scrutiny Chairs.

CABINET AND SCRUTINY ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the course of the year, the Deputy Leader and the Director, Cabinet & Public Relations have frequently attended meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for which, I am very grateful and as a means of establishing best practice and improving the decision-making arrangements within the Authority, 1-1 Engagement sessions have been reintroduced for Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Chairs/Vice-Chairs to meet on a quarterly basis. These sessions provide an opportunity for Members to discuss their respective work programmes and to assist in ironing out any issues that may have arisen.

Further to this, it was also agreed at the Committee's meeting on the 22nd January, 2018, that Cabinet Members would attend the relevant Scrutiny Committee and deliver a report or presentation alongside the relevant Chief Officer for challenge and questioning.

This practice has commenced and Members have reported that it has been a useful and positive development thus far, as the respective Portfolio Holders have attended meetings of each of the themed Scrutiny Committees. We were pleased to welcome the Deputy Leader, in her role as Cabinet Member for Council Business, to our last meeting on the 18th April, 2018, where she provided Members with an update on the progress made in advancing the following areas for which she has responsibility:-

- Democratic Services
- Communication & Marketing
 - Social Media
 - Events
- Human Resources
 - Staff Resources
 - Sickness/Absence
 - Apprentices/Graduates
- Equalities
- Armed Forces
- Coroner Service
- Elections

This gave the Committee the opportunity to challenge any arising issues with the Cabinet Member thus ensuring that appropriate mechanisms are in place to effectively scrutinise the Executive.

WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS

In addition to the two special meetings that were held on the 2nd October, 2017 as referred to earlier in this report, special meetings of the Committee were also held to consider consultation documents of the Welsh Government.

At the Full Council meeting on 19th July, 2017, it was agreed that two Working Groups of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet be established to consider the Welsh Government's consultation document titled "**Electoral Reform in Local Government in Wales**".

As Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, I felt it more prudent to invite all non executive Members, the Education Co-opted Members and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Audit Committee to the meeting that was held on the 30th August to consider the consultation document.

The consultation broadly sought to obtain views on electoral and registration arrangements in Wales, with the ultimate goal of increasing turnout and promoting

competition at elections. Whilst the meeting was lengthy, it proved to be very productive meeting and Members were keen to respond to the 40 plus questions that were posed by the Welsh Government. The views of Members were reported to Council on the 20th September, 2017 and these together with the comments of the Members of the Cabinet Working Group formed the basis of the Council's full response which was submitted by the deadline of the 10th October, 2017.

At the full Council meeting held on the 28th March, 2018, it was once again agreed that two Working Groups of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet be established to consider the Welsh Government's Consultation document titled **"Strengthening Local Government: Delivering for People"**

As with the previous consultation document, for consistency, I felt it wise to invite the same individuals that were asked to attend the meeting that was held in August.

I convened a special meeting on the 10th April, 2018 and Members gave consideration to the `Green Paper` which explained the ambitions for Local Government and presented options which could lead to larger and more sustainable local authorities in Wales.

In the main the Welsh Government was consulting on:

- A potential policy to create larger, stronger local authorities and options for implementation
- How the Welsh Government could ensure elected Members would have the support and reward they need to undertake their roles effectively;
- What additional powers and flexibilities Local Government needs.

The consultation document dealt primarily with the proposal to create fewer, larger authorities by way of three options namely:-

- Option 1 – Voluntary Mergers
- Option 2 – A phased approach with early adopters merging first followed by other Authorities
- Option 3 - A single comprehensive merger programme

Members were very strong in their views in that they did not support the proposal of the Welsh Government in the creation of fewer larger authorities and unlike the previous consultation document they did not see the need to go through the questions that were posed. The views of Members were reported to Council on the 25th April, 2018 and these together with the comments of the Members of the Cabinet Working Group formed the basis of the Council's full response which was submitted by the deadline of the 12th June, 2018.

CONSIDERATION OF FURTHER TOPICS

As can be seen from my presentation of the Annual Report on behalf of the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it has been a very busy year and it would be very remiss of me not to mention other important areas where scrutiny has been undertaken and I would therefore like to report briefly on the following:-

Information Management and Data Protection

In accordance with the Committee's Work Programme and as requested by me, as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 5th June, 2017 the following action for improvement was proposed:-

"The Council should report on a periodic basis, for example annually, its work and performance around Information Management and provide opportunity for review and scrutiny".

Therefore, at the meeting held on the 14th November, we received the Council's Information Management & Data Protection Officer, Mrs.L.Evans who presented the Committee with an overview report on the Council's Information Management functions and governance arrangements and dealt specifically with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We, as a Committee were satisfied with the robust arrangements that are in place but wished to receive an annual report from the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) on the Council's work and performance around Information Management.

Corporate Safeguarding Policy

Also at the meeting in November, we received an overview of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy. The Council's Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services and the Group Director, Community & Children's Services were in attendance to answer any questions from Members, as they are the Joint Lead Officers of the Strategic Group that had been established to ensure the governance and scrutiny arrangements that complements the arrangements for children and adults at risk were working.

We, as a Committee, are now waiting for the publication of the Annual Safeguarding Report which will be considered and further challenged as it will contain more detail in relation to keeping people safe.

Agile Working

In last year's Scrutiny Annual Report, I reported on the pre-scrutiny that was undertaken by the Committee in respect of Digital Workplace/Agile Working on the 13th December, 2016 and the recommendations and findings therefrom were reported to the Cabinet. In January, we received Mr.T.Jones, Head of ICT who presented the report of the Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services which provided Members with an update in relation to the Agile Working pathfinder project which was undertaken within two Service areas that were based at Ty Elai namely,

Public Health & Protection and Adult Services. We were informed that other small scale Agile Working projects had also been deployed during the same period that included Stay Well@ Home (RCT & Health Collaboration Project), Access & Inclusion, with work currently underway for the Resilient Family Project and Building Control. As a Committee we were satisfied with the information that was provided at that meeting.

Wales Audit Office Reports

Following the meeting of Council held on the 21st June, 2017, at our meeting held in September Members had the opportunity to consider the progress made in respect of the five reports of the Wales Audit Office which included the Annual Improvement Report 2016/17.

- WAO risk-based assessment of corporate arrangements: improvement and performance;
- WAO risk-based assessment of corporate arrangements: collaboration and partnerships;
- Savings Planning; and
- WAO risk-based assessment of corporate arrangements: financial and service planning

We were pleased to confirm to the Cabinet that we were satisfied with the information provided by the Chief Executive.

Notice of Motion

Following the Council meeting held on the 17th January, 2018, the Committee was tasked with dealing with the under-mentioned Notice of Motion and at our meeting held on the 22nd January, 2018, I agreed that we would consider it as an `Urgent item of Business`:-

“Whilst this Council has recently acknowledged the Southern approaches to the Rhondda along the A4119 should be a Gateway to the Rhondda no such status has been afforded to the Northern approaches.

This motion calls on the Council to also adopt and suitable signpost the Northern approaches to Cwm Rhondda via Cwm Cynon. If both valleys are to benefit in the delivery of economic growth, job creation and prosperity it is important that prominent directional signs are immediately placed along the highways in the northern approaches as well as the A4119 in the South.

This Council will take immediate steps to provide such signage as they have responsibility for in the wider interest of those who wish to visit and invest in both Cwm Rhondda and Cwm Cynon along the northern approaches to both valleys”.

The matter was once again dealt with at our February meeting and Members received an informative presentation from the Director, Cabinet & Public Relations. The Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Housing was also in attendance at this meeting and responded to many questions posed.

This was yet another productive meeting and the following was agreed:-

1. That a recommendation be made to Cabinet that representations be made to Welsh Government regarding reducing the threshold of footfall to visitor attractions likened to England and Scotland in order that Brown Signage can be placed in suitable locations throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf.
2. That pre scrutiny be undertaken of the Destination Management Plans when produced in the next few months.

WALES AUDIT OFFICE REVIEW – “OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – FIT FOR THE FUTURE? RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

During the latter part of last year, we were informed that a `light touch` review was to be undertaken by the Wales Audit Office which would focus on how `fit for the future` the scrutiny functions are within the Council. This included, how we are responding to current challenges such as scrutiny of the Public Services Board. They also followed up on the thematic review that was undertaken in 2016/17 – “Good Governance Arrangements for Determining Significant Service Changes”.

To inform the Wales Audit Office of their findings, they based their methodology on document reviews, interviews of a selection of Cabinet and Scrutiny Members and key Officers as well as observing some Scrutiny Committee meetings.

CONCLUSION

As I mentioned earlier it has been a very busy year and I am confident that our work has made a difference. I would like to thank all Members of the Committee, including my Vice-Chair, for their valuable contribution this year.

I would also like to thank the Deputy Leader and the Director, Cabinet & Public Relations who have attended most of the Committee’s meetings and supported us in our role.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP



S.Rees-Owen
Chair



W.Lewis
Vice-Chair



J.Brencher



A.Calvert



S.Evans



H.Fychan



J.Harries



M.J.Powell



S.Powell



S.Rees



R.W.Smith

As from the Council's Annual Meeting held on the 17th May, 2017, County Borough Councillor L.Hooper was a Member of this Committee up to the 29th November, 2017 when changes in the Political Balance were made as a result of the formation of a new Political Group and he was replaced by Councillor M.J.Powell.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

Overview from the Chair



S.Rees-Owen

As a result of the Local Government Elections in May 2017 the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee began the new Municipal Year with a majority of new Members

It is with great pleasure that I report on my first year as a Scrutiny Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee along with the Vice Chair County Borough Councillor W. Lewis who has supported me throughout a very busy first year.

The Oversight of Education and Children's Services under the remit of one Scrutiny Committee brings together all the key elements required to support and safeguard the Children and Young People of Rhondda Cynon Taf helping them to reach their potential. The bringing together of two large and highly regulated service areas has not been without its challenges and it was previously agreed that there would be separate meetings, one covering the Educational remit and one covering the Children Services remit.

As a Committee of new Members it was felt that we would benefit from an overview of the service areas in respect of how to achieve effective scrutiny of Children's Services and also the wide service areas covered by Education and Lifelong Learning.

As a result, a workshop was organised for the first meeting of the Committee 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. 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; and
- Explore best practice in the Scrutiny of Children's Service

The Committee also received an overview from the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, along with Heads of Service for Education who each presented an overview of their Service Areas.

Early on in the year, the Committee also received a comprehensive overview of Children's Services which was presented by Anne Batley, Service Director for Children's Services.

These detailed insights into the areas that the Committee is responsible for, together with the consideration that was given to the Cabinet Work Programme, informed our Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2017/18.

EDUCATION

With regards to Education as a Committee we were presented with many statutory reports which were considered in great detail.

Education Attainment

As a Committee we have considered many reports in respect of educational attainment. Over the last year we were presented with the Key Stage Performance data for 2016/17 along with the school categorisation data for 2017/18. Alongside this we received a presentation and report from the Director of the Central South Consortium in respect of its contribution to raising standards within schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

As a new Chair I recently met with the Education Scrutiny Chairs of the other four constituent authorities namely, Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and The Vale of Glamorgan of the Central South Consortium. It was recently approved by this Committee that myself and the Vice Chair would form part of a Joint Collaborative Scrutiny Working Group with the Scrutiny Chairs of the four other Local Authorities to consider the regional performance of the Central South Consortium and share best practice and information.

In respect of Key Stage Performance data, as Members we were pleased to see that Key Stage 2 and 3 Performance had made good progress in 2017. In relation to Key Stage 4 and 5 data, and the changes to the curriculum in 2017 we will continue to scrutinise in great detail the outcomes of these learners over the next year and beyond. On receiving this information, it struck us that the gap between our E-FSM - v- non E-FSM pupils remain stark and will therefore continue to be a priority for the Committee to monitor. In addition, this will also be closely monitored by the Central

South Consortium as there seems to be a trend throughout other neighbouring authorities and will be the topic of further discussion at future meetings.

ATTENDANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

One of my first engagements in taking up my role as Chair was having the overwhelming pleasure in being present at the Attend and Achieve Celebration evening which was held at the Coliseum Theatre, Aberdare on the 5th July, where the achievement of secondary school aged pupils who showed a particular commitment in term of their school attendance during the academic year 2016/17 was recognised. The focus of the award was on pupils who, despite facing personal or family difficulties have gone above and beyond to either maintain or improve their school attendance. Their stories were so touching and were a real testament to their character and resilience and it was truly an honour to meet them that evening.

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (CLA)

At our meeting in September 2017 we received an update in respect of the Outcomes of Children Looked After in RCT during the academic Year 2015/16. As a Committee we acknowledge that Rhondda Cynon Taf has a significant looked after population and takes into account the risk factors which can adversely impact on educational outcomes for our Children Looked After. We are pleased to see that outcome data for highly vulnerable learners suggest there is evidence of progress in many areas. However, in Key Stage 4 we will keep monitoring this cohort of learner closely in the coming year.

We will receive a further report in June 2018 which will provide us with data on outcomes for 2017-18.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

We have continued to make improvements in school attendance, which is a priority for the Local Authority and its schools. In our September (Education) meeting we were presented with the Annual School Attendance report for the academic year 2015-16, along with the provisional data for 2016-17. We acknowledge that excellent school attendance is key in raising educational outcomes for our Children and Young People as schools play a pivotal role in safeguarding and protecting their emotional wellbeing. At our Meeting in March the Head of Attendance and Wellbeing provided the final data for 2016 -17 which has been verified and comparable with All Wales figures that have been published. After receiving this report we as a Committee acknowledge that primary school attendance has maintained throughout this year however secondary attendance has declined and as a Committee we will continue to monitor and assess outcomes.

As an Authority we are aware that improving attendance is not an easy thing to achieve, but is something collectively Members, Officers and schools need to work together to achieve for the benefit of the young people of our Authority. We will carry

out a piece of work over the next Municipal Year to look at ways in which this can be addressed. We will also monitor the attendance gap between FSM non FSM pupils and look at ways to achieve a positive outcome. In respect of exclusions, we have noted that there has been a significant increase in the number of exclusions in RCT schools over the course of the last three years and as a Committee we will continue to support Officers in addressing and reversing the current trend over the next municipal year and beyond. In addition to this, Members have asked that further scrutiny, specifically in respect of Fixed Penalty Notices, be undertaken and this will be included on our Work Programme for 2018/19.

SEREN HUB

At our meeting held on the 22nd November, 2017, we were pleased to welcome Mr S Parry Jones, Co-ordinator of the SEREN Hub (RCT and Merthyr) along with students from Ysgol Garth Olwg and Hawthorn High School to update us on the progress and achievements of the SEREN Hub during its second cycle (2016/17) and outlining the lessons learnt that may affect current and subsequent cycles. It was extremely inspiring to hear the experiences of the students and how the hub has helped them with hands on support and advice in preparing them for University interviews. As a Committee we look forward, at a future meeting, to reviewing the findings of the evaluation of the Hub's activities which have been undertaken by an independent company appointed by the Welsh Government.

MOITORING WITHIN EDUCATION

We have also looked at many other reports in the Education aspect of the Committee which have dealt with various topics such as the School Holiday Enrichment Programme also known as the food and fun programme which is a pilot scheme that was coordinated by the WLGA, and two schools in RCT took part in the pilot. As a Committee we look forward to seeing what the future holds for this scheme and how it will benefit our vulnerable learners.

At our meeting in December 2017 we were presented with various reports for consideration, one of which was the School based counselling Service. The report showed that over the last three academic years more young people have accessed counselling services in RCT than anywhere else in Wales. The information received lead to great debate and as a Committee we will continue to monitor the health and wellbeing of our young people and will review the effectiveness of the commissioned Counselling Service within RCT.

We have considered various aspects of learning and the Head of Access and Inclusion service provided us with an overview of those pupils Electively Home Educated within RCT, at this meeting Members considered the proposed Rhondda Cynon Taf Elective Home Education Policy which has recently been revised in line with Welsh Government, Elective Home Education Guidance for Local Authorities.

Members were happy with the revised policy, which can now be found on the Council's website as shown in the link below.

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/SchoolsandLearning/RelatedDocuments/ElectiveHomeEducationPolicyJan2018.pdf>

CABINET/SCRUTINY ENGAGEMENT

I, along with my Vice Chair met with the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, County Borough Councillor J. Rosser on the 26th February 2018 and with the Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People on the 21st March 2018 which proved an opportunity to further underpin our work and to discuss our forward work programmes. It is vital that we are aware of forthcoming key decisions so that we can exert real influence over what is being proposed and also identify early opportunities to undertake pre scrutiny. Throughout our first year, we have been challenging the Executive and in March 2018 we welcomed the Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning to our meeting so that we could question the portfolio holder on service delivery and performance.

In the future, the Cabinet Member will attend our meetings on a quarterly basis so that we may receive relevant information relating to the portfolio and of the potential challenges facing the service. We will be kept updated with any policy changes being considered and ensure early and regular involvement of scrutiny.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

During the year the Committee has received a number of annual reports for review such as the Director of Social Services Annual Report, Annual Social Services Complaints Report, Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board Annual Report, RCT Young Carers Annual Report. As a Committee we were given the opportunity to undertake pre-scrutiny of these reports and have fed our comments into the final reports before publication.

Safeguarding and protecting our Children and Young people is a huge priority for our Committee. We have considered a wide variety of reports which has helped us understand the key priorities and challenges for Children's Services within RCT.

In October Members visited the Glynornel Education Centre and received an overview in respect of delivering an Integrated Family Support Early Intervention and Prevention Service within RCT. We also had a presentation from the Officer of the Miskin Project who works with some of the most challenging and vulnerable children within the County Borough.

As mentioned earlier, the Committee considered the Young Carers Annual Report and received a presentation from Officers. The Committee were pleased to learn that the Council is now working with both Secondary and Primary schools to identify

Carers sooner. I together with my Vice Chair were given a further insight into the invaluable work that is undertaken by the Service in recognising the individual needs of these young carers when we were given the opportunity to meet some of these Carers and their families at an event that was held at the Rhondda Heritage Park on the 26th January.

ADOPTION SERVICES

We received the Annual Report from Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Service which was very informative and provided us with a greater understanding of how the collaborative is currently performing and the future priorities that we need to look out for. In the near future a group of Members from this Committee will be meeting with a number of adoptive parents to see how they found the adoption process and get a better understanding of how we as a Committee can help provide the best service for young children.

ACCOMODATION FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN WITH RCT

A report in respect of Accommodation of Homeless 16 and 17 year old children working with youth offending teams was presented to the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board in July 2017; at this meeting I felt that the content of the report would provide useful information for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. Therefore, in our meeting in January 2018 we considered the report in depth and our comments have been fed back to the Executive. We will continue to review the progress against the Action Plan at future meetings and will consider the Accommodation Strategy Report when it is complete. As a Committee we will monitor and try and make the transition from childhood to adulthood as smooth as possible for the youth of the Borough.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF RESILENT FAMILIES SERVICE

As a Scrutiny Committee we were pleased to receive a presentation in respect of the new Resilient Families Service. We acknowledged that there have been many changes within Children's Services over the last few years and as a Committee we felt that we should look into the new provisions. It was pleasing to see that the Resilient Families Service will be able to effectively identify families at risk of family breakdown before they get to crisis point as well as providing continuing support for families no longer requiring statutory intervention.

We were pleased to see that the service went live on the 15th January 2018 and that the staffing structure will be fully operational by April 2018. We will receive an updated report after six months to assess its progress. At the same meeting we will resolve to establish a Joint Working Group with Members of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to look at ways in which we can work together to provide better outcomes for our children and young people along with adult services.

MISSING CHILDREN IN CARE

In our January meeting the Committee received an overview of those children and young people who go missing from care and the processes that are followed when this occurs.

The Service Director Children's Services explained to Members that research undertaken in July by the Church of Wales (The Knowledge Gap: Safeguarding Missing Children in Wales: Tom Davies) highlighted that in 2015/16 almost 4500 children in Wales went missing from home or care.

Members were informed of the number of children and young people in RCT who have absconded or gone missing in the years 2015/16 and 2016/17. It was explained that the majority of these children and young people go missing for short periods of time and although recorded as missing, actually fall within the unauthorised absence category. A number have gone missing on more than one occasion. We were concerned to hear that the majority of the young people are aged 8 years and over. The younger children who are classed as missing are with their parents and are missing due to parents not returning them to their placement when expected.

We received information on the processes which are followed when children go missing and as a Committee we will be receiving further data and will be monitoring the situation very closely

SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP – SANITARY PROVISION IN SCHOOLS IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

It gives me great pleasure to conclude the annual report of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with the findings of the Scrutiny Working Group which was established to deal with the following Notice of Motion (as amended in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.4.1) that was presented to the Council meeting on the 19th July, 2017

“That this Council will research the availability of free sanitary products, such as tampons and towels, in all Secondary Schools in the County as an acknowledgement that they are as essential as toilet paper for the personal hygiene of female pupils.”

I presented the final report of the Working Group which contained the findings and recommendations following the review that was undertaken from August 2017 to February 2018 to the Council meeting held on the 28th February, 2018.

Members of the Working Group reviewed a range of written evidence from the findings of the surveys that were undertaken and significant value was attached to the comments of the pupils and staff of St. John's Church School and Ferndale Community School who attended the second meeting of the Working Group on the 25th September 2017. These pupils were keen that the Working Group broaden its

scope to include pupils of Primary Schools and therefore the findings of the surveys that were carried out involving female pupils of the Secondary Schools within Rhondda Cynon Taf also reflected on the experiences of those pupils in Year 7 in respect of the availability of free sanitary products from their former Primary Schools.

The production of an animated DVD, created by pupils from Ysgol Gyfun Garth Olwg, and observed by the Working Group on the 11th January 2018 was of particular relevance and this was also watched by all Members at the Council Meeting on the 28th February.

The Working Group also reviewed initiatives that had been developed by a neighbouring Authority, the Scottish Government and New York City Council but following consideration of those initiatives it was felt that these approaches would not suit the needs of Rhondda Cynon Taf pupils. Members therefore resolved to find their own solution.

Officers from the Council's Procurement Unit were involved in the process and endeavoured to find a supplier that would be able to provide adequate dispensers that would be of suitable use for the pupils.

Following the review undertaken we, as Members of the Working Group were confident that a solution for the female pupils in both primary and secondary schools had been found and therefore I was able to present our recommendations to the Council Meeting on the 28th February, 2018. I am pleased to say that all Members supported the recommendations which were referred to Cabinet and at its meeting held on the 19th April, Cabinet Members agreed to an implementation plan `Feminine Hygiene Products in Schools, 2018/19` which will address the recommendations contained in the Working Group's final report.

This review resulted in much interest and coverage from the media and was also promoted on the Council's website and is on the Scrutiny's dedicated webpage. In view of all this publicity and the lead taken by Members within Rhondda Cynon Taf funding has been received from Welsh Government which will assist Cabinet in implementing our recommendations. This funding from Welsh Government has also been extended to other Authorities who are following the Council's lead in this initiative.

CONCLUSION

Throughout its first year, following the elections in May, 2017, Members of the Committee have grown in confidence and have worked closely together to help make the lives better for our children and young people who live in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

All Members share the same passion towards our children and young people and we strive to ensure that our services are fit for purpose, are value for money and we will continue to look for ways in which improvements can be made.

Scrutiny is thorough and Members are confident to probe, question and make suggestions on current procedures, we are committed to scrutinising educational and children's services provisions, plans and services, provided for children and young people across the whole of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

I would therefore like to thank all Members and Co-opted Members who have brought enthusiasm and commitment to Scrutiny this year and to the Officers who have supported us in our role.

HEALTH & WELL-BEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP



R. Yeo
Chair



J. Elliott
Vice-Chair



J. Davies



L. De Vet



S. Evans



M. Forey



L. Jones



W. Owen



A. Roberts



J. Williams



C. J. Willis

As from the Council's Annual Meeting held on the 17th May, 2017, County Borough Councillor L. Hooper was a Member of this Committee up to the 29th November, 2017 when changes in the Political Balance were made as a result of the formation of a new Political Group and he was replaced by Councillor W. Owen.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The overview and 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 functions which contribute to the health & wellbeing of the County Borough such as Leisure Services, Housing and Public Health & Wellbeing.

Overview from the Chair



R. Yeo

It has been a very busy year for the Members of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, the agendas for our eight meetings have been full and varied and as a new Chair, I have personally found the experience to be a fulfilling one. I was determined to focus on how Scrutiny Members can challenge organisations to ensure that Rhondda Cynon Taf is a good place to age well and continue to progress its move to a more enabling culture.

Last year my predecessor and Members of the Committee undertook a huge piece of work to closely monitor and scrutinise the `Supporting People to Live Independently at Home` agenda which looked at early intervention and prevention services and home care services as well as developing alternative models of accommodation and in doing so identified three key areas that were very much interlinked, namely:-

- Reducing the numbers of people aged 65+ that are placed in residential care homes;
- Delayed Transfer of Care; and
- Support of Carers – Carers Assessment

The work concluded in March, 2017 with invited members of the Older Person's Advisory Group (OPAG) as well as the then Cabinet Members for Adult Social Services and Children's Services, Equalities and the Welsh Language who provided valuable feedback to the review. Seven recommendations were formulated and at our meeting in February of this year, the Cabinet Member for Adult and Children's

Services presented my Committee with an oral response in respect of those recommendations.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the recommendations and acknowledged that the importance of many of them warranted further scrutiny, particularly in respect of delayed transfers of care and commissioned domiciliary home care provision. He further welcomed our input and continued support. At the beginning of the year Scrutiny had already committed to revisiting this work as I felt it had formed such a large part of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny agenda since 2015, it was crucial that we committed to reviewing the headings and this is reflected further on in this section.

TRAINING

As a new Chair and with our Scrutiny Committee made up of predominantly new Members we continued to pursue dedicated training sessions to help ensure that we had the necessary knowledge and understanding to undertake robust scrutiny during the year.

At our inaugural meeting in July 2017, we received a presentation facilitated by Mr. Tony Garthwaite, a former Director of Social Services and Corporate Director and currently independent consultant who has a wealth of experience in assisting a number of Welsh Local Authorities in his capacity as an expert advisor to the Centre for Public Scrutiny. With his guidance we considered the following objectives:-

- To develop a better understanding of the key issues facing Adult Services in the next year and beyond;
- To explore best practice in the Scrutiny of Adult Services; and
- To identify priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's forward work programme.

Hand in hand with this external facilitator we also received a presentation from our own Council Officers setting out the key priorities and challenges for Adult Services within Rhondda Cynon Taf namely, the early intervention and prevention agenda, safeguarding, modernising services and the workforce.

We found the training session to be informative and it laid the foundations at such an early stage for our understanding of the issues we should be exploring, reviewing and scrutinising. We also requested an overview of a particular service area, namely the Council's approach to Tackling Poverty since the service has worked towards a single County Borough wide governance forum, a single tackling poverty framework, a single commissioning team along with a single coherent strategy. We found this information training session on a particular aspect of the service to be of great benefit. It helped us understand the vision and principles behind the integrated whole authority early intervention approach to building resilient communities, tackling poverty and promoting wellbeing.

ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

As has been mentioned previously in this report, we have all worked closely with our respective Cabinet Members this year to improve and clarify our individual scrutiny forward work programmes and to explore opportunities for undertaking pre scrutiny. I, with my Vice-Chair, met with the Cabinet Member for Adult and Children's Community Services, County Borough Councillor G.Hopkins, so we could have open and frank discussion about the Health and Wellbeing agenda and matters within his portfolio which clarified his own respective Work Programme and future projects so we could also avoid any duplication of work. We intend to continue to meet in this informal manner so as to maintain a watching brief which will ensure our Scrutiny Committee is aware of developments within the Cabinet Member's portfolio and that our Work Programme retains relevance.

Recently, further 1-1 sessions were held with myself, County Borough Councillor A.Crimmings, Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure and County Borough Councillor R. Lewis, Deputy Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Wellbeing. It was agreed that County Borough Councillor Crimmings will attend the first meeting of the Committee following the Annual Meeting of the Council in May. She will present relevant information to the Committee in relation to her portfolio and will also speak to the report that is to be considered in respect of the investment in 3G pitches across the County Borough.

In addition to our informal meetings with the Cabinet Members, as can be seen from the afore-mentioned paragraph, it has also been agreed that they will attend our Committee meetings every quarter to provide a report on the progress and challenges facing the Services covered under their respective portfolios. With that said, in February, 2018 we were pleased to welcome the Cabinet Member for Adult and Children's Community Services who attended our Scrutiny Committee to present information on the delivery of the key respective areas covered under the Council's Corporate Plan as well as the Key Performance Indicators for the service and important details of the policies being considered for future decisions. The Cabinet Member also provided us with an update on progress of the delivery of the Extra Care facilities across the County Borough. We look forward to receiving further updates at future meetings during the next municipal year.

I would like to add that we have also received the Deputy Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Wellbeing, County Borough Councillor R.Lewis at our meeting in January, when we received a presentation in respect of Substance Misuse within Rhondda Cynon Taf (which will be considered in greater depth later in this report).

VENUES

In keeping with our commitment to engage our scrutiny process with the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf we have held our meetings in venues other than that of the Council Chamber or Committee rooms. In November, we held our Scrutiny meeting

in Llantrisant Leisure Centre which coincided with an update on the on-going performance of leisure centres and swimming pools as part of the priority capital investment programme. In February, we met at Ty Heulog, the Extra Care Housing facility in Talbot Green so we could undertake a tour of the accommodation and tie in our discussions around the Council's Extra Care Housing Strategy. We will continue to look at innovative ways of working in the future so as to engage with our residents who are always at the heart of our work.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE AT HOME

With a view to continuing the hard work undertaken by this Scrutiny Committee in previous years which had reflected the medium to long term nature of the programme of work we requested an update in respect of delayed transfers of care (DToC), the Stay Well @Home Services and that we revisit the Extra Care Housing Strategy to assess its progress. At our meeting in December, we received an update in respect of delayed transfers of care. Scrutiny acknowledged the number of complex issues surrounding DToC such as increasing complexities e.g. bariatric and Court of Protection and a hospital bed reduction programme (over the past 5 years). A number of local measures are in place to overcome the issue such as working in partnership, a joint discharge protocol and ICF Grant opportunities relating to hospital based Social Workers and Hospital Discharge Co-ordinators along with the performance of rate of Delayed Transfers of Care in RCT and have requested a report in six months time to review the figures after the winter pressures.

In keeping with the recommendation of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to evaluate the impact of the Stay Well @ Home Service scrutiny learned that the new Service has seen the creation of a multi-disciplinary team of staff, including Social Workers, Occupational Therapists based at the two acute hospital sites of Prince Charles Hospital, Merthyr Tydfil and the Royal Glamorgan Hospital, Llantrisant. We were pleased to hear that the improvements in place since its implementation have been noticeable with assessments undertaken outside core hours, a care/support package being agreed and established with immediate effect, seven days a week and information is shared across health and social care using one record. We learned of a number of measurable improvements since the implementation of the service such as 79% of referrals having been responded to within 1 hour following assessment by the Stay Well @ Home Service.

We acknowledged that the new Stay Well @ Home Service will support the Council's priority of "supporting independent lives for everyone" as people will be cared for in their own homes as much as possible by avoiding unnecessary hospital admissions and discharging people home from hospital as early as possible. Again, we have requested a further report in six months to assess how the service has managed the winter pressures but we will continue to monitor its future development.

As I reported earlier we visited the Extra Care Housing facility in Talbot Green in February as part of our commitment to reviewing the delivery of the Council's Extra Care Housing programme. It was pleasing to note that Cabinet has agreed to the development of the extra care housing provision on the former site of the Maesyffynon Care Home and has approved the Council's strategy to modernise accommodation options for older people across the County Borough and deliver the new housing facility across Rhondda Cynon Taf. As mentioned in an earlier paragraph, County Borough Councillor G.Hopkins, Cabinet Member for Adult and Children's Community Services was present at this meeting in February and we thank him for his input and response to the questions posed by Members. Scrutiny felt that these were positive steps in line with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 in promoting the wellbeing of our residents.

MONITORING

Scrutiny has considered a number of reports during the year; including the Director of Social Services draft Annual Report (which we were also consulted upon), the Cwm Taf Carers' Annual Report, Social Services Annual Representations & Complaints Report and the Annual Report of the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board, Children, Adult and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). We learned that in 2016/17 the Safeguarding Adult Board and Safeguarding Children's Board in conjunction with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub have continued to safeguard people of all ages and this has resulted in the creation of a joint regional multi-agency Cwm Taf Safeguarding Annual Report which incorporates all ages. Scrutiny raised concern in respect of the waiting lists for the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding assessments (DOLS) so we will receive an update at a future meeting.

We have also received a progress report in respect of the 2017 Air Quality Progress Report and an update on the Air Quality Action Plans for Rhondda Cynon Taf and in November, a report on the performance of our Leisure Centres and swimming pools. We welcomed the evident increase in participation at our leisure centres across the County Borough which has been as a result of the priority capital investment programme and the improvement to several fitness facilities; however, we did feel that more could be done to promote the National Exercise Referral (NERS) through wider promotion of the initiative.

We received a presentation in respect of the current substance misuse service provision for adults, children and young people which highlighted a review of the substance misuse service, the integrated Substance Misuse Service in Cwm Taf. Data from the PHW Annual Profile for Substance Misuse 2016/17 informs us that:-

- RCT is in the top 10 Local Authorities in Wales for alcohol specific admissions (343 individuals per 100,000 population); and
- On average 3,000 referrals are received annually into Substance Misuse Services in Cwm Taf.

We learned that much is being done to tackle substance misuse within the County Borough through a variety of early intervention and prevention services such as multi agency approaches to education and prevention specifically with young people, teachers and parents, through the prevention of underage sales and through the proposed Public Space Protection Order 2018.

We discussed these issues at length with the Officers present and as a result of such a lengthy debate we have requested that this important issue which directly affects all our communities is brought back before us at a future meeting. We have also asked for an update in respect of the Integrated Substance Misuse Service in Cwm Taf.

REVIEW – EMI NURSING BED PROVISION

We received a presentation in respect of the provision of Adult Mental Health in our Local Authority which explained that the service for adults aged 18 – 65 works in partnership with Cwm Taf University Health Board, the voluntary sector and other stakeholders to provide a network of support services for adults with mental health problems, their families and carers. We were presented with the challenges facing our Adult Mental Health provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf such as the lack of specialist accommodation which can restrict the opportunity for people to move on, along with the lack of Elderly Mentally Infirm (EMI) beds. From this presentation we resolved to form a Working Group which would allow us the opportunity to look into greater detail at the lack of EMI beds within the Independent Care Home Provision within RCT and formulate appropriate recommendations to the Cabinet.

In advance of our inaugural meeting of the Working Group which was held on the 27th February, we agreed that this would be a whole Committee review and would therefore involve all Members of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. We looked at the Terms of Reference for the Working Group, which were further considered at our following meeting on the 16th April. We gave consideration to a list of the Independent Care Homes, 25 in total, which provide different categories of care and it was with concern that we learnt that only four provide EMI nursing care. We have also reviewed the Cwm Taf Regional Market Position Statement for Care Homes and examined the progress being made to implement agreed commissioning intentions relating to EMI nursing care provision. We have explored the choices available to the residents of RCT and a range of alternative services to EMI nursing care provision.

Based on the information we have gathered we will shortly formulate recommendations for improvement which will be passed onto the Council's Executive and relevant partner boards/agencies for consideration, as set out in our Terms of Reference.

NOTICE OF MOTION

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 10th July, 2017 referred a Notice of Motion (formerly considered and adopted at Council in January, 2017, Minute No.101 refers) to the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in respect of supporting the Welsh Hearts campaign to provide defibrillators in public places:-

“This Council seeks to support the Welsh Hearts Campaign to provide defibrillators in public places. This Council notes the difference the availability of such equipment can offer in emergency situations and we already have these at a number of Council sites, such as Sports Centres, recognise their importance and commits to fund an increased provision of equipment across key Council locations”.

We received an overview of the current provision of Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) within Leisure Centres across the County Borough and learned that the Council’s Leisure Services has worked in partnership with the South Wales Ambulance Service to develop the Community First Responder Scheme at facilities in RCT where staff are highly qualified in advanced resuscitation. Further, the Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services reported that following discussion with the Welsh Hearts Campaign and in conjunction with the Welsh Ambulance Service a number of additional AEDs have been purchased during the current financial year with plans to purchase a further eleven in 2018/19. We are satisfied that the additional devices will be in place and staff trained to use them shortly and we will be kept informed of the purchase and implementation of any further devices in the future. We were also invited to undertake training on the AEDs should we wish to do so.

CONSULTATION

We were afforded the opportunity to feed into the eight week consultation relating to the Housing Allocation Scheme Review and Key Policy changes. As a local housing authority we have a statutory obligation under the Housing Act, 1996, the Homeless Act, 2002 and the Housing (Wales) Act, 2014 in relation to the publication of a Housing Allocation Scheme and for ensuring equality of access to social housing for all those with a housing need.

The existing scheme had not been reviewed substantially since 2012 and to ensure the scheme is in compliance with the law and good practice and to ensure the housing stock in RCT is used in the most effective way the review had been undertaken and Scrutiny was asked to consider the changes proposed. Those proposals include changes to the allocation of adapted properties and bungalows, changes to the Priority Band and/or wording of some of the criteria in Bands and allow Housing Associations to sensitively let individual properties where there have been specific issues.

We scrutinised the policy in depth by means of a detailed report and presentation and asked for further clarification around the proposal for sensitive letting. In

conclusion we concurred with the changes proposed and our comments and feedback were incorporated into the Council's formal consultation.

COMMUNITY HUBS

At our last meeting held in April 2018 we received a progress report concerning the proposals to develop the Community Hubs across the County Borough. The Hubs represent the bringing together of services and partnerships which will better serve the communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf and enable residents to access a range of services and support at an early stage from within one or a number of closely located buildings.

Scrutiny was advised of the specific progress made within several locations across the County Borough such as Mountain Ash where it is proposed to develop the existing Day Centre as a Community Hub. This will enable the co location of services for the benefit of local residents together with a library service and ICT suite which would provide support for employment and skills development. A four week consultation had been undertaken in respect of the Mountain Ash proposal from the 26th February 2018. Likewise it was reported that a four week focussed consultation had been undertaken in respect of the proposal in Ferndale.

We learned how the neighbourhood networks and location of the Hubs would be identified based on a number of criteria such as population size, identifiable communities and existing community support as well as through a mapping exercise to identify Hub buildings from existing public and third sector assets and services together with input from the community and Elected Members who would be able to provide local information and knowledge concerning our community needs. We received valuable input from the Deputy Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Wellbeing who explained that funding would be shaped by local circumstances and is very much dependent on existing facilities and assets within the individual areas. He added that the Council would look to target resources in areas of greatest need.

Some Members of the Committee expressed concern in respect of the proposal to develop the existing Mountain Ash Day Centre as a Community Hub, specifically concerns about the space allocated to the library provision in the Community Hub being less than in its current location. It was considered that this specific proposal warranted further scrutiny by the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to ensure it reflects the needs of the local community as the model going forward and therefore we asked Cabinet to consider deferring its decision in respect of this model. At the Cabinet Meeting held on the 19th April the decision was taken to develop the Community Hub at Mountain Ash Day Centre and that *'further consultation is taken forward with service users in respect of the layout of the Community Hubs and to ensure that current service user needs are incorporated'*.

Following the meeting a Call-In was received in respect of the decision taken which was dealt with at the Special Meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 30th April 2018. The reason for the Call-In being:-

"To enable further consideration and reflection on those matters as outlined in Minute No.45(2)(3) of the Health and Wellbeing Committee of 16/4/18 and give

Scrutiny the opportunity of considering the more detailed report as presented to Cabinet”.

The Call-In was unsuccessful i.e. not referred back to the Cabinet for reconsideration.

FUTURE WORK

Our priority as we enter our second year as a Scrutiny Committee is to complete the review into the provision of EMI Nursing beds within RCT and formulate our recommendations for consideration by the Executive. We are also committed to establishing a joint Working Group comprising Members of this Committee and our colleagues within the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to review and scrutinise the `Delivery of Integrated Family Support – Early Intervention and Prevention Services within RCT`.

We will continue to monitor the important issues that were considered as part of the `Supporting People to Live Independently at Home` review as we have done during this municipal year and will visit the new Extra Care Unit at the previous site of Maesyffynon Care Home.

As with our Work Programme this year we will continue to examine topics of public concern but also retain some degree of flexibility to our next work programme to allow for referrals from the Executive or Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

CONCLUSION

I firmly believe that the work of this Scrutiny Committee has been aided by strong relationships we have forged with our partner organisations and colleagues as well as Council Officers, leading to a more transparent and open discussion about the key issues that concern us and the residents of RCT. The future challenge of this Committee is to maintain its relationships, knowledge and understanding of the social care agenda and to continue to request training where necessary to further our ability to carry out good scrutiny.

I would like to thank my Vice Chair for his support throughout the year and to every Member of the Committee for their commitment and hard work.

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES & PROSPERITY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP



S. Bradwick
Chair



T. Williams
Vice-Chair



A. Chapman



P. Howe



M. Fidler Jones



G. Jones



W. Jones



D. Owen-Jones



G. Stacey



W. Treeby



M. Weaver

As from the Council's Annual Meeting held on the 17th May, 2017, County Borough Councillor J. James was a Member of this Committee up to the 29th November, 2017 when changes in the Political Balance were made as a result of the formation of a new Political Group and he was replaced by Councillor P. Howe.

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 Chair of the Committee

Councillor S A Bradwick



I was delighted to have been given the opportunity to chair the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee, having been a member of the Committee for many years. I have found the last year to be a very rewarding year and I would like to thank the Committee members and officers as well as my Vice Chair for trusting me with the role. I feel we have grown in confidence as a committee and I am grateful to everyone who contributed to our work and helped shape the results outlined here.

The qualities needed to ensure good scrutiny are objectivity, logicity, constructive challenge, sound evidence, and thoughtful and balanced recommendations that deliver change. The outcomes set out here demonstrate how these principles underpin the work we do.

Effective scrutiny also depends on the opportunity for members to have early input into the development of appropriate policies, plans and decisions in advance of the Cabinet Member taking the decision. I am pleased to report that much has been done in the way of promoting this early involvement so that backbenchers have real influence. Myself and the Vice Chair have met with our respective Cabinet Members (given the wide ranging themes within the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee which cuts across a number of Cabinet Members' portfolios) in order to discuss the Cabinet Work Programme to avoid any duplication of work and identify any early opportunities for pre scrutiny.

It has been agreed that the engagement sessions will take place on a quarterly basis and will be scheduled to coincide with relevant themed items on the scrutiny agenda. They represent an opportunity for scrutiny to carry out a relevant and effective line of questioning and challenge the policy changes that are being considered as well as to receive a progress report from the Cabinet Member of their portfolio areas.

To date, we have received two Cabinet Members at our Scrutiny Committee, in January and March 2018 (the Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure and the Cabinet Member for Enterprise Development and Housing respectively) who have delivered a report alongside their relevant Chief Officer on their portfolio areas for challenge and questions. We have also had the pleasure of the presence of the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Council Business together with the Deputy Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Wellbeing at our Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committees.

VENUES

We have endeavoured to promote public involvement in our Scrutiny Committee by identifying opportunities to access more informal settings to hold our meetings. We have held meetings in several venues this year which have linked into the themes under scrutiny e.g. the Taff Vale Precinct review was held in the Lido Meeting Room, Ynysangharad Park, Pontypridd, the meeting to consider the report 'Improving Recycling Performance' which we had the opportunity to pre scrutinise, was held in Bryn Pica, Llwydcoed, Aberdare and our first Crime & Disorder meeting was held in Aberdare Community School. As a Committee we have found the experience to have eased the formality at meetings and the specific locations have complimented the topics under scrutiny.

REVIEW UPDATE

One of the identified gaps in the Scrutiny process at the beginning of the year was the lack of consistent tracking and reviewing of progress following the implementation of Scrutiny recommendations accepted by Cabinet and from consultations that we have previously participated in.

In view of this we requested an update on the Annual KPI in respect of the number of local businesses submitting bids/tenders for Council contracts – one year on from the scrutiny committee review. Scrutiny formulated a recommendation which acknowledged that there was a need to alter the reporting timescale from a quarterly to an annual frequency which would better capture the Key Performance Indicator and produce a more meaningful end of year result and it was pleasing to hear that the change in the reporting timescale has had a positive impact on the Key Performance Indicator (LPRO107 % of bids/tenders submitted by local businesses). We have committed to receive a progress report in twelve months to further monitor the impact.

In July 2018 we received the Executive response in respect of the Mobile Library Review which was conducted and concluded by this Committee in 2016/17 and from which five recommendations were formulated. The Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning responded by thanking scrutiny for its input into the review and acknowledged that the five recommendations would support the development of the mobile library service at a time when it had undergone significant changes. The five recommendations have since been implemented to include further promotion of the service to residents and highlighting that the mobile vehicles are accessible to wheelchair users. I have made reference to conducting further work regarding the mobile library service as part of the section entitled 'future work programme'.

We also received an update on the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) (Dog Controls) since its implementation on the 1st October 2017. We supported the initial proposals and formulated a response which was incorporated into the Council's formal consultation process. We learned that since the implementation of the PSPO there have been a number of fines issued in respect of offences relating to dog fouling and the Council's campaign has managed to send a clear message to the residents of RCT that it will clamp down on irresponsible dog owners. It was pleasing to hear that our comments have assisted in the process of bringing in this PSPO relating to dog fouling which we hope will improve the quality of lives of the residents of RCT.

PRE-SCRUTINY

We have continued to track and monitor the Council's recycling performance to ensure that the overall municipal recycling rate within Rhondda Cynon Taf meets its target set by Welsh Government. Further to a previous review carried out by this Scrutiny Committee, which resulted in the implementation of two recommendations, I was delighted to have been approached by the Leader of the Council requesting that members of my Committee be given the opportunity to challenge the proposals set out in a report in respect of 'improving recycling performance' within Rhondda Cynon Taf and inform a recommended way forward to Cabinet.

Despite a proactive approach undertaken by the Council to address the issue of improved recycling, the possibility of facing significant fines for failure to meet the statutory targets set at 70% by 2024/2025 was ever present and further changes would still be needed. The outcome has been that we commented on and supported the proposed recommendations set out to approve the changes to the Council's residual side waste policy from the 4th June 2018; to include that residents that have their waste collected in black bags, primarily in the Rhondda have the current four black bags allowance per fortnight reduced to two bags; and in the case of those residents that have a bin waste collection, primarily in the Cynon and Taf no side waste per household per fortnight irrespective of the bin size will be permitted;

Our comments were received by Cabinet on 15th February 2018 as a *'vital component of good governance and improves Councils' decision making, service provision and cost effectiveness'*.

We will be taking an active role in monitoring the changes to the Council's residual side waste from the 4th June 2018 and will expect regular progress reports following its implementation.

CONSULTATION

We have been involved with the consultation process of two very important issues this year namely the Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) and the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) (Intoxicating Substances Including Alcohol) within town centres.

The latter was dealt with under the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee held on the 22nd February 2018 at which we received an overview of the key issues relating to anti-social behaviour and intoxicating substance issues within Cwm Taf and the specific proposals under consideration as part of the eight week consultation process, namely to retain the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to control alcohol related anti-social behaviour in Rhondda Cynon Taf and to extend the Order to include 2 defined exclusion zones to control intoxicating substance use in Pontypridd and Aberdare Town Centres. We analysed the maps which highlighted the proposed exclusion zones within Pontypridd and Aberdare town centres for intoxicating substances and responded to the specific questions set by the consultation. We fully supported the proposals for PSPO within our town centres and we have requested an update following the consultation to a future meeting of the Crime and Disorder Committee.

We contributed to the consultation in relation to the Supplementary Planning Guidance – Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) at our Committee on the 22nd March 2018. Cabinet had already approved the Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance, Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) for the purposes of formal consultation following evidence collected from officers that indicated that there is an over concentration of HMOs in specific areas of the County Borough which in turn can lead to a range of issues that can undermine the social cohesion of those communities. Members were advised that supplementary planning guidance is one tool that can be used to assist in the consideration of planning applications both in terms of resisting applications for inappropriate HMOs or HMOs in areas that have high concentrations and also assist in raising the standard of new HMOs and guiding any future HMOs to the most appropriate locations.

Scrutiny reviewed the detailed reports and received a power point presentation which explained the benefits which HMOs can bring in terms of providing affordable accommodation to students or those on low wages as well as the issues associated with high concentrations of HMOs and the effects they can have on the local community. It was reported that 94% of the HMOs within RCT and 32% of all households in Treforest are HMO, (being the highest in Wales) and he outlined the reasons why there is a need for an SPG in Rhondda Cynon Taf, to provide clarity to

all future applicants, to overcome the key concerns of the local residents and for there to be a balanced representation of HMOs in the community.

Scrutiny wholeheartedly support the proposal to agree the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance – Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in RCT and further that the comments of scrutiny would be incorporated into a report which would inform a recommended way forward and feedback to Cabinet. Once again we have requested that we receive an update on progress with this matter.

MONITORING PERFORMANCE REPORTS

As with previous years we have continued to receive regular updates in respect of recycling data and targets to ensure we maintain our role of monitoring the Council's overall municipal recycling rate. Of course, we played an important role in the pre scrutiny of 'improving recycling performance' and will actively monitor the changes to the Council's residual waste policy in June 2018. We will expect to play our part in overseeing the campaign that will inform residents of the changes and have requested regular updates following the implementation of the new recycling process. We are committed to improving the overall recycling rates in RCT and meet our target set by Welsh Government crucially to avoid significant financial penalties.

In order that newly Elected Members have every opportunity to understand our recycling monitoring role we arranged for one of our meetings to coincide with a tour of the integrated waste management facility in Bryn Pica, Aberdare and for a tour of the facilities at Viridor in Cardiff (the largest Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) in Wales). As Chair, I have previously undertaken tours of both facilities and found them to be insightful and helpful in gaining an understanding of the services that directly affect the residents of RCT.

Our tour of Bryn Pica precluded a report on the future of the facility to include an Eco Park which would accommodate, amongst other things, a revolutionary mattress recycling unit, AD Plant which serves 3 councils at present, a transfer station for residual waste and an education centre. The tour enabled us as a Committee to envisage the projects and future proposals which we will look forward to reviewing next year.

At one of our first meetings of this municipal year we received an update of the Taff Vale redevelopment project which has continued to make significant progress and had, at that time, achieved a number of further milestones since Cabinet last considered the scheme in March 2017. We learned that there had been a two day public exhibition hosted by the Council in March 2017, providing an opportunity for local residents and businesses to view the latest plans and meet the project team. Likewise in March 2017 Welsh Government announced that the new headquarters for Transport for Wales, the next rail franchise and the Metro Operator would be at the redeveloped Taff Vale site. We have requested further progress reports at key stages of the redevelopment.

Further to the inclement weather we experienced at the beginning of March, the subsequent handling of and maintaining essential services, both Community and Adult Services as well as salting and gritting our main roads and highways to keep blood banks and hospital routes open, we wanted to hear firsthand from the Director, Highways and Streetcare Services how this was achieved. We invited him to our meeting in March to outline how the hard work and commitment shown by frontline staff had kept the residents of RCT on the move during the snowfall. We agreed that a letter be sent to the Director on behalf of the Committee to extend our thanks to all the frontline and support staff across the County Borough.

Throughout the year Scrutiny has also received monitoring reports on:-

- * Highways Capital Programme
- * Complaints of Maladministration made to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales 2016/17
- * RCT's Welsh Public Library Standards Assessment 2016/17
- * Impact of Resident Parking Schemes in Pontypridd, Aberdare & Rhondda
- * The Environment Act (Wales) 2015 Biodiversity Duty and the Example of Pollinators
- * Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf

CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE

At the beginning of the year we felt that further scrutiny of the Strategic Assessment of Crime & Disorder in Cwm Taf, to inform the priorities and action plan for the community safety partnership, would provide scrutiny with the opportunity to challenge and influence how the Cwm Taf resources are being deployed.

As the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee (under sections 19 & 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006) we are required to hold at least one meeting per year. However, we felt that in order to properly examine the issues that affect our communities and residents we agreed that the Crime & Disorder Committee should meet more frequently. Therefore it was agreed that two meetings would be arranged for the municipal year with a view to arranging further meetings should Members feel this necessary. As Chair I considered this an important step in assisting scrutiny to actively challenge the crime and disorder issues across the County Borough.

At our meeting we challenged the draft Cwm Taf Community Safety Needs Assessment 2017 which had been undertaken in order to inform the development of the Cwm Taf Community Safety Strategic Assessment. We were informed that the Assessment reviewed trends in recorded crime data for the region as well as considering the experience of victims and witnesses in the Criminal Justice System. It considered the characteristics of the population such as deprivation levels, ethnicity, age and other demographics to identify other vulnerable groups and areas where interventions may be required as well as from many other sources. With this

in mind we determined from the key findings of the Community Safety Needs Assessment that the six strategic priorities were suitable to form the basis of the Cwm Taf Community Safety Delivery Action Plan 2018-21. This will now be taken forward, to include the comments of the Scrutiny Committee which will be completed by the end of March 2018. Committee has requested regular updates on progress to develop the plan and beyond.

We will act as a consultee to the review to assess the relevance of the Partnerships and Communities Together (PACT) meetings. The Chief Superintendent and Divisional Commander at the time, committed to undertaking the review to consider whether the PACT meetings are still meeting the needs of its communities and requested that Members share their own experiences and provide feedback and comments via the Cwm Taf Portal which will facilitate the responses to the consultation effectively. The review was welcomed by the Deputy Leader of the Council, in attendance, who reminded Members that PACT meetings are based on the electoral boundaries set for each ward and will continue to work under the Terms of Reference set out under this Council. We anticipate forming part of the consultation process within the next few months and playing our part to monitor the effects and impact of the changes made to these community meetings.

FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Through the course of our one to one engagement sessions with my Vice Chair and the respective Cabinet Members we have discussed topics to include on our forward work programme for 2018/19. We have identified several areas for consideration through these discussions, received suggestions from individual councillors and referrals from other sources such as Council. We will continue to receive briefing reports and monitor the progress of consultation proposals in which we have previously engaged and will endeavour to scrutinise topics of local public concern and where possible, those linked to the Council's corporate priorities. We will also continue to receive our respective Cabinet Members (whose portfolios cover the wide remit of the Committee) on a quarterly basis to answer our questions. With the additional Crime and Disorder Committees that we intend to hold during the next municipal year we will monitor the Cwm Taf Community Safety Delivery Action Plan 2018-21 and identify other strategic projects and priorities of the Cwm Taf Community Safety Partnership to challenge and scrutinise.

In the forthcoming weeks this scrutiny committee will form part of an eight week consultation to consider the proposals to improve the quality and range of services provided by Rhondda Cynon Taf's mobile library service to the same standard as static libraries whilst ensuring the accessibility of the service to the residents of RCT. We will feed into the Council's formal consultation process and should the proposals be approved by Cabinet we could suggest appropriate areas for 48 longer mobile library stops.

In order to keep the work of scrutiny relevant and topical we will retain an element of flexibility to our work programme so we are able to scrutinise new/urgent issues.

The following list is not exhaustive and will change and develop over the course of the next municipal year as outstanding projects are completed and new ones arise:-

- * As a result of a Notice of Motion referred to this Committee from Council, a Working Group will be established to consider the development of plans to support Local Carbon Vehicle (LCV) infrastructure in Rhondda Cynon Taf;
- * Town Centre Management (to consider street cleansing, street furniture and recycling strategy to maintain our town centres);
- * Bryn Pica (Eco Park) & The Cynon Gateway;
- * Taff Vale Precinct Redevelopment Project update;
- * Review the Partnerships and Communities Together (PACT) meetings;
- * Monitor the Cwm Taf Community Safety Delivery Action Plan 2018-21;
- * Pre scrutinise 'Out & About – Rights of Way Improvement Plan';
- * Review the improving recycling performance;

CONCLUSION

I feel that this Scrutiny Committee is well regarded and greatly contributes to the work of the Local Authority and as we enter into our second year I am eager to challenge some of the Council's most important public facing issues. I look forward to building on the relationship between Executive and non Executive Members and I feel confident that learning from our experiences this year we will further improve scrutiny's effectiveness during 2018/19. I would like to extend my thanks to my Vice Chair, County Borough Councillor Tina Williams and to all the scrutiny members, officers, partners, stakeholders and special thanks to Julia Nicholls within Democratic Services who has assisted us with our work.

FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP



M.J.Powell
Chair



G.Holmes
Vice-Chair



S.Bradwick



J.Cullwick



G.R.Davies



J.Elliott



W.Lewis



S.Rees-Owen



T.Williams



C.J.Willis



R.Yeo

As from the Council's Annual Meeting held on the 17th May, 2017, County Borough Councillor G.R.Davies was the Chair of this Committee up to the 29th November, 2017 when changes in the Political Balance were made as a result of the formation of a new Political Group and he was replaced by Councillor M.J.Powell who become the new Chair.

FINANCE AND 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 Chair



M.J.Powell

THANKS

Before presenting the work of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2017/18, I would like to place on record my thanks to County Borough Councillor G.R.Davies for Chairing the meetings of this Committee as from the Council's Annual Meeting in May, 2017 to the 29th November, 2017 which was as a result of the formation of the Alliance Group which changed the Council's political balance.

Councillor Davies Chaired the first three meetings out of the seven meetings held during 2017/18 and he also attended and participated in meetings of the Scrutiny Chairs/Vice Chairs, therefore his contribution and support to Scrutiny Members has been invaluable and I am pleased that he continued to be a Member of the Committee.

TRAINING

As mentioned earlier in the Foreword presented by Councillor L.M.Adams the first year following an election should be about sowing the seeds for the future, building on the skills of returning Members and providing new Members with the training and support that they need to enable them to take on the challenges of office. With this in mind, Members of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee at the initial meetings of the Committee received training in the following areas which gave them a better understanding and a good balance of knowledge when, for example, undertaking their role in monitoring the Treasury Management arrangements:-

- Local Government Finance
- Budget Control

- Treasury Management

In addition to the training that is pertinent to Members of this Committee, all Members were given the opportunity to attend the all day Scrutiny training event titled "Making a Difference" on the 5th June, 2017 which was facilitated by an external provider and covered key areas such as Listening Skills, Effective Questioning, Carrying out In-depth Reviews and Challenging Others. This scrutiny training during the induction period was fundamental to the role of a "Scrutineer" especially for newly elected Members. As part of continued development, Members will receive specific training, as and when emerging issues arise.

MEMBERSHIP

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 Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as well as the Chair of the Audit Committee regularly attend meetings of this Committee, which brings additional experience and expertise to the proceedings.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

As can be seen from the Committee's terms of reference, Members are tasked with monitoring the Council's performance and receiving quarterly performance presentations which also provides information on revenue and capital budgets. At its first meeting on the 24th July, 2017, Members considered the Council's year end performance and key exceptions for 2016/17.

There were two meetings of the Committee held during the month of October and at the meeting on the 23rd October, in addition to the scrutiny of the Council Performance report for the first Quarter, Members also reviewed the 2017/18 Performance Indicator Targets. This was a busy and constructive meeting as Members were also assigned to deal with the Notice of Motion in respect of Bereavement Fees and Charges for War Veterans and Service Men and Women which was considered by Council on the 30th November 2016 and was subsequently agreed to refer the matter to the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee by Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 10th July 2017.

BEREAVEMENT FEES AND CHARGES FOR WAR VETERANS AND SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN

As mentioned in the earlier paragraph, Members of this Committee were charged with dealing with the Notice of Motion as presented to Council on the 30th November, 2016 and at the meeting on the 23rd October, consideration was given to the report of the Service Director - Public Health & Protection asked Committee, where a number of key points were put forward, such as the criteria applied when identifying war veterans within RCT, whether to waiver all or some of the fees and charges and whether the proposal should apply to residents only or include non residents. The

Service Director - Public Health & Protection also asked Committee to consider whether a pilot approach, which would be County wide, set for a limited timescale and reviewed after twelve months, would be the way forward.

The Committee acknowledged that the report had raised many difficult questions but Members felt that it required further research, in particular, with regard to identifying the war veterans within RCT. Members of the Committee provided suggestions of organisations which may prove supportive when seeking to identify war veterans within RCT such as the MOD, the Association of Funeral Directors, Veteran Record Card, Office for National Statistics and the Royal British Legion (RBL) (the HR Advisor, Equality & Diversity Team reported that there is information that can be obtained from the RBL – Veterans Wales, through its networks but added that information would not be available for those veterans who served in the 1960's and 1970's in Northern Ireland).

It was therefore resolved that the Service Director - Public Health & Protection make further enquiries, report back to the next meeting of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee with a proposal for Members of the Committee to consider, if appropriate, and for the Service Director - Public Health & Protection to then report the recommendations of the Committee to Cabinet.

In accordance with Members' wishes, the Service Director – Public Health & Protection brought forward a further report to the meeting held on the 18th December, 2017 which listed the agencies that had been approached and invited to comment on the Council's proposals together with details of the draft policy. Members made amendments to the draft policy and also agreed that the Council should apply a reduction of 25% in the total costs of all bereavement services provided. Members also suggested that the policy be applied as a pilot and reviewed after 12 months. The Committee's recommendations were duly reported to the Cabinet, in order that they could form part of the wider considerations around fees and charges.

CONSULTATION AND PRE SCRUTINY

In December, the Committee took part in the consultation process for the 2018/19 Revenue Budget Strategy following the provisional local government settlement, which was announced in October, 2017 which brought about further significant financial challenges for the Council. However, as indicated by the Service Director for Performance & Improvement at an earlier meeting of the Committee there were solid foundations in place to meet future challenges, which had been confirmed by the Wales Audit Office in their latest report which stated "*The Council has a largely effective and improving savings planning approach, which supports future financial resilience*". He further stated that the Council has a consistent track record of delivering balanced budgets.

However, these statements did not detract Members in formulating their views in the January meeting when undergoing pre-scrutiny of the draft 2018/19 Revenue Budget

Strategy and the feedback from this meeting was reported to Cabinet and later on to the Council Meeting in March.

COMMUNITY MEALS SERVICE

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the meeting of the Committee in March, and my Vice-Chair, Councillor G.Holmes quite fittingly took the Chair and has well informed me that the information received by way of a Presentation made by the Head of 21st Century Schools in respect of the Community Meals Service was dutifully challenged. The Committee were pleased to hear that the operational changes as approved by the Cabinet reflected the need for an extensive staff consultation as there was to be a rationalisation of kitchens from three to one, which would result in a saving of at least £258,000 per annum. Members were also updated on the frozen meals trials that commenced a few weeks prior to the Committee meeting. Whilst the Committee was disappointed to hear that two day centres were to close, the economic case put forward could not be argued with.

CABINET AND SCRUTINY ENGAGEMENT SESSION

This year has seen the re-introduction of one-to-one engagement sessions between Cabinet Members, responsible Officers and the relevant Scrutiny Chairs/Vice Chairs and within a few days of me taking up the role as Chair of the Committee, I met with Councillor M.Norris, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, where we discussed the respective Work Programmes of both Cabinet and the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee.

Therefore, at the last meeting of the Committee for this municipal year, which was held on the 23rd April, I was delighted to welcome Councillor Norris, who gave an overview of the work conducted within his portfolio and which was well received.

CONCLUSION

This is a brief snap shot of the work undertaken by the Committee and I would like to thank all Members for their valued contributions during the year. I am very grateful to my Vice-Chair, Councillor G.Holmes for his support to both myself and the previous Chair, Councillor G.R.Davies.

