

Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee



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Foreword



It is with great pleasure that I present to you the Cwm Taf Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report for the Municipal Year 2019/20.

I am grateful to everyone who has helped contribute to our efforts in shaping the results outlined in this report.

Particular thanks must go to my Vice Chair, **Councillor T. Skinner**, who has supported me throughout a very busy year.

It has been an extraordinary time in which our Forward Work Programme has been suspended by the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. This report therefore considers our progress up until the end of February 2020. Our two Councils have faced unprecedented challenges in maintaining vital public services during this period. It is testament to the dedication, professionalism and bravery of staff from both Councils that we have continued to support our most vulnerable residents and deliver key public services in these difficult circumstances. We hope to carry over and continue our Forward Work Programme in the next municipal year and we will continue to build upon the success that we have seen to date.

I would also like to express my gratitude to **Dr Dave McKenna** for his valued guidance and input in delivering joint scrutiny training to our Committee Members during this period. Dr McKenna's session reminded us of the important role our Committee plays in providing effective challenge, constructive feedback, novel ideas and key recommendations to the **Cwm Taf Public Service Board (PSB)**.

Effective scrutiny seeks to review key areas of performance, improve outcomes and to ultimately add value to the work of the PSB. The outcomes set out in this report demonstrate how these principles are integral to the work undertaken by this Joint Scrutiny Committee.

Aligning with recommendations of the **Wales Audit Office 'Fit for the Future'** Scrutiny review, we streamlined our **Forward Work Programme** for the 2019/20 Municipal Year, developing a more efficient and focused approach to the joint scrutiny process.

Consequently, the Committee decided to focus our efforts on Objective One of the **Cwm Taf Well-Being Plan: Thriving Communities**. In line with the Committee's **Terms of Reference**, Members agreed to undertake detailed scrutiny of the PSB's decisions and actions regarding this particular objective and our recommendations are clearly set out within this report.

In late 2019, Members had the pleasure of visiting 'Yr Hwb' in Ferndale. It was clear from our visit that the hub is playing a key role in connecting our communities with improved public services that are joined up and accessible. This holistic approach is both engaging and forward thinking and will unlock benefits for the most vulnerable members of our communities and for future generations.

This year, we also welcomed the Chair of the PSB, **Professor Marcus Longley**, to our Scrutiny Committee. Alongside the PSB Support Officers, the Chair provided the Committee with an update on the progress of the PSB, its associated work programme and future direction. Open communication between the Chairs has strengthened our scrutiny process through early identification of pre-scrutiny opportunities. We look forward to continuing this close working relationship with the Chair of the PSB in the forthcoming year.

We were joined at our February 2020 meeting by **Professor Kelechi Nnoaham**, Director of Public Health at Cwm Taf University Health Board. As Chair, I was particularly pleased to see how the work of the Board has contributed to the reduction of social isolation and loneliness in our communities, and improved our residents' emotional and physical wellbeing. I would like to extend my thanks to the Director of Public Health Wales for his continued hard work and commitment to tackling these key social issues.

Going forward, we will continue to produce valuable and outcome focused recommendations and ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of our communities. I would like to thank all the Members, Co-opted Members and Citizen Representatives of the Committee for their continued dedication and professionalism throughout the Municipal Year 2019/20, they have laid a solid foundation for the future and I am confident that we can carry this momentum into next year and beyond.

Councillor J. Bonetto (Chair)

Membership of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Members



Cllr J Bonetto
(Chairperson)

Cllr G Caple

Cllr A Cox

Cllr W Jones

Cllr M Powell

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Members



Cllr T Skinner
(Vice Chair)

Cllr K Gibbs

Cllr J Davies

Cllr D Isaac

Cllr D Sammon

Co-opted Members

Mr Melvin Jehu - Local Health Board

Mr John Jenkins - Community Health Council

Ms Anita Lewis - RCT Citizen Representative

Mr Michael J Maguire - MT Citizen Representative



Training

Members of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook a joint scrutiny training session in July 2019 with **Dr Dave McKenna**. The session was designed to equip Members with the skills, knowledge and confidence to carry out their role in effectively scrutinising and challenging the decisions and actions of the PSB. Members were referred to the **‘Guidance for Local Authority on the scrutiny of Public Service Boards’** for further reference.

During the training session, Members discussed developing a more streamlined Forward Work Programme so that the Committee could ensure an outcome focused approach was taken forward, with clear goals and milestones identified as part of the scrutiny process.

Consequently, Members agreed that fewer items should be included on the Forward Work Programme and it was anticipated that the JOSOC would measure progress against the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan’s objective of ‘Thriving Communities (developing Community Zones in RCT and Merthyr Tydfil)’. Members found the training session to be “very useful” and commented that it helped improve the Joint Scrutiny Process by allowing Members:-

- ⊙ To come together as a Committee;
- ⊙ To develop an effective team working strategy;
- ⊙ To effectively scrutinise the PSB;
- ⊙ To get a clear sense of how the Committee will operate during the 2019/20 Municipal Year;
- ⊙ To gain a clear sense of the role and purpose of the Committee; and,
- ⊙ To understand how the JOSOC can really make a difference to the community.

It is anticipated that this training will mean that Members are better placed and suitably skilled to assess the social, economic, environmental and cultural impacts of the PSB’s actions on the communities of Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Function of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The aim of the JOSC is to scrutinise the overall effectiveness of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The core statutory functions of the JOSC are:

- ⊙ To review or scrutinise the decisions made or actions taken by Board;
- ⊙ To review or scrutinise the Board's governance arrangements;
- ⊙ To make reports or recommendations to the Board regarding its functions or governance arrangements;
- ⊙ To consider matters relating to the Board as the Welsh Ministers may refer to it and report to the Welsh Ministers accordingly; and
- ⊙ To carry out other functions in relation to the Board that are imposed on it by the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

In addition to these functions, the JOSC's Lines of Inquiry can also include:

- ⊙ The effectiveness of the Wellbeing Assessment;
- ⊙ The effectiveness of the Wellbeing Plan;
- ⊙ The effectiveness of performance measurement arrangements;
- ⊙ The level of commitment from individual partners to the work of the Public Services Board;
- ⊙ The effectiveness of the Public Services Board in communicating its work, objectives and outcomes to its stakeholders; and,
- ⊙ The effectiveness of the Public Services Board in addressing the issue of pooled funding to tackle priorities.



Wellbeing Objectives: Thriving Communities

“Promote safe, confident, strong and thriving communities improving the wellbeing of residents and visitors and building on our community assets.”

This year the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to scrutinise the development of one strand from the **Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan**. The agreed objective for scrutiny was “Thriving Communities”. Limiting the focus to only one objective gave Members the opportunity and time to conduct a thorough, detailed and informed review to produce a meaningful outcome at the end of the year.

Members of the JOSC decided to pursue this strand of the Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan due to its cross cutting themes of sustainability, integration, partnership and evaluation, which Members agreed were key issues in measuring progress of the objective:-

- ⊙ **Sustainability:**
To consider how we ensure the long term viability of the ‘Community Zones’;
- ⊙ **Integration:**
To consider how this approach is integrated with the other wellbeing objectives;
- ⊙ **Partnership:**
To consider what other public services might be able to contribute to further the development of this approach; and,
- ⊙ **Evaluation:**
To consider how we evaluate the impact and outcomes of this approach.

Members of the JOSC evaluated the PSB’s decisions and actions against the desired outcomes set out within the objective criteria, to ensure the PSB was taking all reasonable steps to meet its objectives; to accurately monitor progress made and to consider the extent to which these decisions were making a positive difference to the communities of Cwm Taf and contributing to the improvement of the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the area.



Wellbeing Objectives: Thriving Communities

“Promote safe, confident, strong and thriving communities improving the wellbeing of residents and visitors and building on our community assets.”

On the **27th September 2019**, the Committee welcomed the Director Public Health, Protection and Community Services (RCT); the Head of Community Wellbeing & Prevention (Merthyr Tydfil CBC); and the Service Director, Community Services (RCT) to a meeting of the JOSC to present their joint report on the implementation of the delivery plan for the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan's Objective One (Thriving Communities).

Members heard about the development of the new Community Hubs, which had been born out of the realisation that a novel and innovative approach was needed to tackle the entrenched social problems of the most disadvantaged communities. The location of the two Community Hubs had been identified based on need, community size and the provision of existing support services. Consequently, two Community Hubs had been established in Ferndale in the Rhondda Fach (RCT) and the Gurnos (Merthyr Tydfil).

In line with the decision of the JOSC to focus on one strand of the Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan Thriving Communities', Members agreed to hold future site meetings at the two Community Hubs; Ferndale and the Gurnos respectively.

Members of the JOSC commended the progress of the Community Hubs in their first year and concluded that case studies of service users would be key to evaluating the success of the initiative. Members accepted an invitation to visit the Ferndale project, which would provide an opportunity to meet with service users and partnership organisations working from the Hubs.





Community Hubs

Appropriate locations for the two new Community Hubs had been identified based on need, community size and existing service provision in the locality. Two community hubs were established in Ferndale in the Rhondda Fach (RCT) and the Gurnos (Merthyr Tydfil).

Progress in the first year saw the opening of **'Hwb Glynrhedynog'** at Ferndale in July 2019 and **'Calon Lâs'** in the Gurnos in September 2019, both of which have been led by anchor organisations and have made significant progress in delivering outcomes for their respective communities.

A number of important services are co-located within the respective hubs, such as the library service, which shares the Hwb space in Ferndale; and health visitors and employment support in the Gurnos community hub. The co-location of the library has had a positive impact on staff feeling more valued within their community: whereas staff working in standalone library buildings had previously felt isolated and disconnected from the local community, integrating with other services had allowed for closer working relationships with colleagues from other service areas, fostering a feeling of being valued and part of a larger whole.

Members of the JOSC discussed and commended the progress of the community hubs in their first year and concluded that examining case studies of the service users would be key to evaluating the success of the initiative.





Social Prescribing

On the **7th February 2020**, Members of the JOSC were given the opportunity to consider the work undertaken by the PSB on 'Social Prescribing'. Social prescribing, sometimes referred to as 'community referral', is a means of enabling GPs, nurses and other primary care professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services. Social prescribing aims to contribute towards the reduction of social isolation and loneliness, improve individual emotional and physical wellbeing and reduce the demand on statutory health services.

It challenges the commonly held perception that GPs and hospitals are the only sources of medical support and treatment, empowering residents to seek out alternative and appropriate methods of looking after their health and wellbeing. Referring a patient to a community gym was cited as an example of how social prescribing can contribute to the community staying healthy, prevent illness and improve emotional wellbeing.

Members challenged the PSB to ensure that community gyms were sufficiently resourced and funded so that this service was available to all residents of Cwm Taf, and not those with private gym membership or access to services out of the area.

Members agreed to continue to support social prescribing initiatives and encourage the expansion of available services in the health care sector.

“a means of enabling GPs, nurses and other primary care professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services”



ACEs Live Lab

On the **7th February 2020**, Members were informed of the role and work undertaken by the PSB in relation to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in the Cwm Taf area. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have a significant negative impact on health and wellbeing later in life and the effects can be felt for several generations.

Members of the JOSC were informed that the PSB had established a Task & Finish Group with the objective of identifying community development opportunities to prevent and limit the impact of ACEs.

Following a lengthy discussion, Members of the JOSC praised the work of the Board in this area and agreed that Cwm Taf was proactive and progressive in recognising ACEs and mitigating their effects.

Some of the comments made by Members of the Committee include:-

- ⊙ In the Treherbert ward they have a "create your space project" working in partnership with the community and they have become part of the voluntary hub;
- ⊙ There is a need to ensure that gyms and playing fields are available and accessible to those that need them; and,
- ⊙ The public sector is adverse to change and ...[there is a need]... for local organisations to work together in partnership.

Going forward, Members of the JOSC will continue to monitor the implementation of this Strategy and monitor feedback on an on-going basis.



Visit to the Ferndale Hub

Community Hubs bring together a range of key services from across the public sector, private/voluntary organisations and community groups, providing a safe environment for people to access the support and advice they need both quickly and conveniently.

A number of benefits can be derived from Community Hubs, including:

- ⊙ Helping to build more cohesive and resilient communities;
- ⊙ Closely aligning and integrating services;
- ⊙ Transforming existing unused buildings; and,
- ⊙ Providing a focus for community-led regeneration.



On the 22nd November 2019, Members of the Cwm Taf Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee had the opportunity to visit **'Yr Hwb' in Ferndale**.

The visit had been arranged following discussions at our **September 2019** meeting on the delivery plan for Objective 1 of the Cwm Taf Well-Being Plan - Thriving Communities.

Yr Hwb at Ferndale opened in July 2019. It is operated by the **Fern Partnership** and is home to a number of key facilities and services, such as:

- ⊙ Little Ferns - registered childcare provision;
- ⊙ Library services with an ICT suite and meeting room;
- ⊙ Sensory Room,
- ⊙ Adult Learning Classes; and
- ⊙ Community Gardening Project

It was clear from our visit that the hub is well established and on its way to achieving its key outcome of developing a connected community that offers its residents improved public services that are joined up and accessible.

During the tour, we had the opportunity to sit and chat with service users, whose praise for the project was clear evidence that the Hub was successfully providing opportunities for communities to access key information and advice.

We spoke with members of the Creative Writing and Gardening Group, as well as service providers such as the **Resilient Families Service** and **Communities for Work**. This gave us an insight into the collaboration opportunities provided by the hub and the way in which this allows partner organisations and the voluntary sector to pool resources, work in parallel with each other and avoid any unnecessary overlap in service provision.



A key aim of this initiative is to provide services to the most vulnerable groups in our communities and to encourage investment in the local economy. During our visit, we met with a young business person who rents a desk space at Yr Hwb from where she runs her debt management business. Her aim was to expand her business and to provide employment opportunities for local people. Highlights of the discussion included the benefits of working within her own community and with local providers.



As Chair, I would like to thank this inspirational young woman for sharing her story with the group and to congratulate her on her achievements. It was a privilege to hear her story and Members found it to be both inspiring and further confirmation that the Hub is having a tangible impact on the lives of our residents.



It was also evident that local schools have also tapped into the hub's central provision within the wider network of the Ferndale community, where they can access local resources and signpost families to services such as job clubs, speech therapy and **Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS)**.



From our insightful visit, we learned that Yr Hwb is a space where people can meet, share interests and talk to each other; an enormous step forward in tackling the growing issue of loneliness and social isolation. It showcased the real value of the facility to the local community and gave us an insight into the potential opportunities that exist for the future.

It is evident that the Ferndale Hub is providing many opportunities for communities to access key information and advice. It is both a safety net for vulnerable persons to access support services and a spring board for aspiring and determined people to contribute to the social well-being of their community and the local economy. It is clear that Community Hubs will benefit future generations in our communities, a fundamental principle of the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**



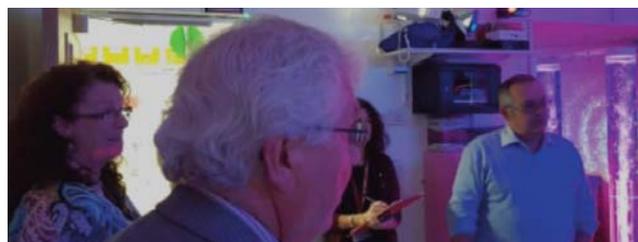
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As Chair, I would like to thank the staff at Yr Hwb for organising the visit, which enabled us to understand the importance of their role in bringing all the services together under one space and how they are fundamental to the Hub's success. I also want to extend my thanks to the service users and community groups who willingly engaged with visiting Members; their words were vindication of the hard work that has gone into making Yr Hwb an important community space and one that we can be proud of.



Visit to Yr Hwb, Ferndale: Capturing the Day

The following
photographs were
taken throughout
the day:



Moving Forward



As I reflect on the hard work undertaken by the Cwm Taf Joint Scrutiny Committee this municipal year, I take enormous pride in the valuable contribution we have made to improving our communities and the well-being of our residents. We play a key role the decision making process and I am grateful to everyone who has helped contribute to the work and results outlined in this report.

I think it is important to recognise the great strides we have made in the short time since the formation of this Joint Committee, and we should rightly view our contribution as a success. We have grown in both confidence and ability over this last year and I am certain that we will continue to maintain this high standard into the next municipal year and beyond, paving the way for future generations to build upon the foundations that we have laid.

As enjoyable as it is to look back on another successful year, we must turn our attention to the opportunities before us as we continue to strive to achieve for the best for our residents.

Going forward, we hope to visit to the Calon Lâs Hub in Merthyr Tydfil as we continue our focus on the 'Thriving Communities' objective set out in the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan. Our recent visit to Hwb Glynrhedynog in Ferndale highlighted the social and economic benefits of the new community hubs. We must exploit this momentum and will continue to monitor feedback from the Ferndale hub to refine the services it delivers and support its continued success.

A flexible work programme will be designed in order to react to any number of referrals which we will need to address on behalf of our residents.

We will also continue to monitor the key performance areas of the PSB with robust oversight and scrutiny. I would like to thank all the Members, Co-Opted Members and Citizen Representatives of the Cwm Taf Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee who have been involved with our work over the past year; their dedication, professionalism and commitment have helped contribute to our success.

Next year will bring opportunities and challenges in equal measure, but I feel confident and reassured that we are well placed to tackle difficult issues and maximise the opportunities for our Cwm Taf community.

Councillor J. Bonetto (Chair)