

AGENDA ITEM 3

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

11th FEBRUARY 2016

THE WAY AHEAD THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2016-2020 FOR CONSULTATION

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (COUNCILLOR ANDREW MORGAN)

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to set out a new draft Corporate Plan from 2016/17 – 2019/20. The draft Plan:

- Is informed by the priorities and concerns of residents, identified through the Budget and community consultation undertaken by the Cabinet during 2015 and 2016;
- Provides a vision for the County Borough in 2020, including a set of priorities and measures of success for 2020 which will be used to ensure that services provided to residents are effective and efficient.
- Sets out how we will monitor delivery of the Corporate Plan

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider and challenge the draft Corporate Plan;
- 2.2 Subject to any changes required by Cabinet, present the draft Corporate Plan to Council at its next meeting.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is a key element of effective strategic and financial management for the Council to put in place a Corporate Plan to ensure that it:

- Is well placed to meet future challenges, particularly in the context of cuts to local authority funding, demographic changes in the demand for services and legislation changes;
- Has a clear strategy and set of priorities for future years; and
- Can use this Plan to allocate resources and ensure action plans are in place to deliver the agreed priorities.

4. **CONTEXT**

4.1 The draft Corporate Plan 2016-2020 seeks to set the overall direction for the Council over the coming four years, describing its vision, purpose and ambition as local authority for the County Borough.

4.2 The Council's proposed vision is:

“For a County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all”.

4.3 The Council's proposed purpose and the reason why it exists is: ***“to provide strong community leadership and effective services for the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf to enable them to fulfil their potential and prosper”.***

4.4 It is proposed that the Council is focused on the following three priorities:

1. Economy - Building a strong economy;

2. People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone;

3. Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work.

4.5 The new draft Corporate Plan will be a key part of the Council's budget and business planning process, and therefore it is essential that the draft Corporate Plan takes into account the fact that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and the wider public sector continue to face significant financial challenges. Despite significant reductions to Government spending since 2010 and a return to economic growth, the financial environment for the Council, the wider public sector, and residents continues to be challenging. The position can be summarised as follows:

- Further spending cuts to come: Despite nearly £100 billion of spending cuts since 2010, the UK budget deficit still stands at around £90 billion meaning that austerity will continue.

- Increasing pressure on services: increasing demand on services is driven by a changing population. Rhondda Cynon Taf's population is relatively static but health and social services in particular are facing acute challenges due to the growth in older cohorts, as people live for longer.
- Wider financial pressure on households: from energy bills, housing costs, wage restraint, and benefit reforms.
- Increasing public expectations: with residents expecting better services and more prompt responses. This means that the Council must plan for the fact that spending reductions will affect all parts of the public sector to the end of the decade and that increasing levels of demand will not be met from simply doing more of what it is currently doing.
- The impact on the Council's finances – past and future. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, the impact of austerity has translated to the Council needing to save or generate £76m over the period 2011 – 2015, equivalent to 16% of the Council's budget. Looking ahead, based on assumptions about future public spending and rising demand, the Council is forecasting the need for further savings of £80 million in the latter half of the decade. In real terms, by the end of the decade, the council's total spending power will be nearly half of what it was at the start.

4.6 Knowing that the Council continues to face significant financial challenges in the years ahead, it has a responsibility to develop and agree a plan for meeting the challenge.

4.7 Despite austerity, the economy is now growing, with the Cardiff Capital City Region one of the fastest growing areas outside of London. This creates opportunities for the Council; for residents; and for business. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, the benefits are already being seen through reduced unemployment, falling numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals, with more people on benefits moving into work. Despite, the recession more new homes were built in the County Borough in recent years than in all but two other local authorities across Wales. We are actively working with housing developers in areas such as Llanillid, Robertstown, Hirwaun, Tonyrefail, and Mwyndy to provide new homes and new jobs. Furthermore, the ten local authorities of South East Wales, Welsh Government and the UK Government are exploring the opportunity for a £1.28 billion investment in boosting the local economy in the Cardiff Capital City Region that will benefit residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

5 HOW WILL THE COUNCIL 'MEET THE CHALLENGE'?

5.1 Most people living in Rhondda Cynon Taf use only universal services. For these residents, the Council's role is to 'provide the essential services well' and maintain the environment for a thriving County

Borough - disposing of waste; keeping streets clean; providing excellent customer service; allowing people to transact in more convenient ways; resolving issues promptly and ensuring the County Borough has the infrastructure to continue its success – good schools, education, training, jobs, housing and transport. The Council will work to ensure that all residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf can benefit from the opportunities of growth.

- 5.2 However, some residents will need targeted support to allow them to benefit from this success. As such, the Council will continue to work with other parts of the public sector to identify those residents at risk of missing out and provide the right interventions at the right time. 'Helping people to help themselves' will reduce dependence on services and on the ever diminishing resources available. We want to help communities to do more themselves and give them more control over local services and community facilities. In doing so we recognise that some of our most deprived communities will need additional support, and we will work with Welsh Government to ensure the various poverty programmes are refocused to maximise their impact for those families and individuals that require the greatest support.
- 5.3 Whilst, the Council is in a position of reducing budgets and levels of service provision, it is responsible for planning and providing much of the infrastructure that keeps the County Borough working and moving. The financial climate, and the challenges it presents, mean that we need to find significant savings. We are committed to doing this in a way that avoids creating problems for future generations. We will have a particular focus on supporting initiatives that stimulate economic growth and create jobs in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Regeneration revitalises communities and provides residents and businesses with places to live and work. The Council's focus will be to 'Build a Sustainable County Borough'.
- 5.4 Furthermore, growing the local Council Tax base and generating more income makes the Council less reliant on Government funding and helps to offset the impact of service cuts. Income maximisation through growth and regeneration also generates resources for investment in future infrastructure - roads and transport infrastructure, housing and schools.
- 5.5 Rhondda Cynon Taf's approach to meeting the financial challenge has focused on Members' commitment that the Council 'lives within its means', and that it is wrong to spend more than we can afford, or to pass on financial problems to the next generation. This means we have to make difficult decisions, recognising that levels of some services could reduce or stop, and focus on our priorities and manage our budgets. The majority of savings made to date have been through back office efficiencies. The Council has focused on cutting bureaucracy by

cutting the number of senior managers; cutting Cabinet Member allowances; and cutting spending on the back office costs. This has meant that the Council has avoided budget overspends and in year cuts seen in other local authorities and has created opportunities to reinvest – in infrastructure, regeneration, and school facilities.

5.6 This focus will continue and the Council will seek to:

- Reduce its office accommodation floorspace by 20% by 2020, further reducing back office costs;
- Invest in new IT to enable staff to work more flexibly across a range of locations, allowing them to be closer to the residents they work with;
- Continue to increase energy efficiency measures for the Council, including carbon reduction across services and renewable energy schemes for our own land and property.
- Become a smaller, more efficient organisation, working as one, with a reduced budget, fewer employees and fewer services provided directly by the Council;
- Collaborate more with other public services, the community and voluntary sector and businesses to find common and jointly owned solutions;
- Work with suppliers and contracted service providers to reduce the costs of supplies and service;
- Create a more business-like footing with the community and voluntary sector through better, more coordinated commissioning by the Council.

5.7 As the Council focuses on the challenges ahead, it does so from a firm financial position. Over the coming few years, the Council will redesign services and deliver them differently through a range of models and providers. The Council does not have a rigid view about how services should be designed and delivered – its concern is primarily with service quality and value for money for the taxpayer. The Council will continue to develop a mixed economy of providers from across the public, private and voluntary sectors through a variety of delivery models - in-house, outsourced, Joint Ventures, Social Enterprises, Mutual – that are appropriate to the service.

5.8 The Council's new draft Corporate Plan 2016-2020 sets out the Council's approach to 'meeting the challenge' by:

- Providing essential services well;
- Helping people and communities help themselves;
- Building a Sustainable County Borough;

- Living within our means.
- 5.9 The draft Corporate Plan also includes measures and targets which will be used to monitor the delivery of the Corporate Plan. It is proposed that progress in delivering the Plan is monitored by Cabinet and Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.10 Welsh Government is currently consulting on Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act that focuses on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act will make public bodies, such as the Council, think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach. This will help us to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. To make sure we are all working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place the following seven well-being goals:
1. **A prosperous Wales** - An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.
 2. **A resilient Wales** - A nation which maintains and enhances a bio-diverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).
 3. **A healthier Wales** - A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.
 4. **A more equal Wales** - A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).
 5. **A Wales of cohesive communities** - Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.
 6. **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language** - A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.
 7. **A globally responsible Wales** - A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.

- 5.11 This draft Corporate Plan's vision, priorities and principles support the seven Well-being Goals and the Goals will be incorporated within the Council's action plans that deliver on the Council's three priorities. The Act proposes that the Council, by 31 March 2017, must set well-being objectives that maximise its contribution to achieving the well-being goals. In doing so, the Council will be expected to take all reasonable steps to meet those well-being objectives. The requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act will be incorporated within this draft Corporate Plan when Welsh Government has completed its consultation and set the requirements for local authorities.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Areas of investment identified in the plan, as well as the consideration of tough decisions ahead, will be subject to Equalities Impact Assessments as subsequent budget proposals and other strategic decisions are brought forward during the course of the Plan.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 This draft Corporate Plan has been informed by the extensive budget consultation throughout 2015 and 2016, and has sought to bring together the outcomes from the consultation to shape the Council's vision, purpose and priorities. The draft Corporate Plan has been subject to pre-scrutiny by the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 9th December 2015, and the notes of the meeting are set out in Appendix A.
- 7.2 The draft Corporate Plan was included in the public consultation undertaken as part of the 2016/17 budget proposals consultation. The feedback from the public is set out in Appendix B. Council staff were also encouraged to feedback their thoughts on the draft Corporate Plan via the Council's intranet site and by email to the Chief Executive.
- 7.3 The feedback received from the consultation process was particularly positive with a clear mandate supporting the Council's Vision, the three priorities and the four principles in the way the Council will work. This feedback supports the fact that the prior consultation exercises undertaken have identified the key issues and priorities of the public of Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 7.4 As a result of the feedback received, the draft Corporate Plan has had some drafting changes to incorporate the salient points raised.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 The draft Corporate Plan 2016-2020 will be set within the context of the budget setting process for 2016/17. Any investments set out in the Plan will be considered in the 2016/17 budget proposals to ensure that spending priorities are aligned, where appropriate, with the Plan.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Cabinet has responsibility for the overall strategic direction of the Council and for formulating the Corporate Plan.

10 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP.

- 10.1 This report proposes a new set of corporate priorities and performance targets which will drive the work of the Council between 2016/17 and 2020/21.

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The Cabinet are recommended to approve the draft Corporate Plan 2016-2020 and present it to full Council.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer

Chris Bradshaw – 01443 424026

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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11th FEBRUARY 2016

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER
OF THE COUNCIL (COUNCILLOR ANDREW MORGAN)**

**Item: THE WAY AHEAD
THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2016-2020
FOR CONSULTATION**

Background Papers:

Standalone Item

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Appendix 1

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

THE WAY AHEAD

THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN 2016-2020

DRAFT POST CONSULTATION & PRE-SCRUTINY

The Way Ahead for Rhondda Cynon Taf

The Council's Corporate Plan 2016-2020

Introduction by the Leader of the Council

Our 2016-2020 Corporate Plan explains the way ahead for the Council at a time when local government nationally is going through enormous change, with the likelihood of the Council being abolished and a new Council, serving a wider area, being created in 2020, and during this period receiving ever reducing budgets. All parts of the public sector face the same challenge of reduced budgets and increasing demand for services. The scale of this challenge is huge. For Rhondda Cynon Taf, it means that we'll have significantly less spending power at the end of the decade than we had at the beginning. This makes the need for change, in both how the Council operates and how public services are provided, an absolute necessity.

We have done what we can to maintain services up to this point. Without more radical action the rising costs in social care alone, (which is clearly some of our most vital work) mean that we, along with other Councils, will face serious financial challenges.

Change can sometimes be controversial and difficult for people to accept, particularly when it affects things they hold dear. However, there is no alternative but to do things differently and it provides the opportunity for us all to ensure that we are doing the very best that we can for our customers.

With a decreasing budget, we know that the Council will shrink in size, employing fewer people over the coming years. The relationship between the Council, its partners, providers and citizens needs to adapt; but what does this mean? It means we are open to new ways of doing things and we are not fixated by the status quo. By 2020, those public services that people need will continue to be there. What will have changed is whether or not those providing them work for the Council. Public sector; private sector; voluntary sector; a combination: we need to be concerned less about the "who" and the "how" (who provides the service and how it is provided) and concentrate on ensuring that each and every service is necessary; meets the needs of residents and provides value for money. Throughout this journey we will continue to ensure that the people and communities we serve are the central focus of our services by giving them a voice and control in reaching their own outcomes and managing their own well being wherever possible.

In achieving these goals, I must emphasise that our approach is not to outsource services. We want citizens to have control over their own lives wherever this is possible and when we need to we will seek to commission the best possible services whether they are provided "in-house" or by external providers. Our primary focus is to ensure that services are of good quality, represent value for money and achieve the outcomes residents need.

If we don't change our approach then the demand upon local services will continue to rise. Demand is driven by a growing population of younger and older people.

Managing the rising demand for services requires a step change in the Council's approach to early intervention and prevention, working across the public sector and supporting our residents to prevent problems rather than just treating the symptoms.

In some cases, it may be that residents will be required to pay more for certain services as the Council prioritises its resources. The communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf will be invited to become more involved in the design and delivery of those services. Inevitably, with less money, the Council will have to withdraw from some activities but we will work with community groups to encourage more resident participation in local issues to help fill the gap. You may have already heard about "RCT Together" and how communities are already taking the opportunity to maintain local services and facilities.

The emphasis is upon us, the Council, releasing more of the control that we have traditionally held, collaborating increasingly with partners and enabling citizens to be active and to achieve more for themselves. Our role will be to create the environment for a thriving County Borough so that people can get on with their lives, but recognising that a relatively small number of people will need targeted support.

We have to face up to the challenge of changing the way the Council works and have a plan for dealing with it. This will mean taking tough decisions which not everyone will agree with. Done in the right way, change can be positive. It drives innovation; it opens new doors; it connects people; it allows people to embrace new technologies and it can make life simpler and more fulfilling.

Despite, the likelihood of continued public sector austerity until 2020, the Council is looking to the future through the growth and regeneration of the County Borough's infrastructure. Millions of pounds are being invested in schools, new housing, our principal towns and our transport networks. It will also play a lead role in the Capital Region City Deal that has the potential for a £1bn investment that seeks to create thousands of jobs and business opportunities and provide people with the chance to acquire new skills and to secure jobs across the region.

This economic growth will drive prosperity and bring opportunities to residents; businesses; and the Council so that people can live their own lives. A growing economy will also allow the Council to generate more income to fund services; keep Council Tax down; support businesses and invest in the infrastructure needs of the County Borough.

I hope this Council Plan helps you understand how the Council is approaching the challenges and opportunities of the next four years. Most importantly please let us know what matters to you; please tell us about your ideas for the Council and your vision of the future of the County Borough.

Cllr Andrew Morgan

Leader of the Council

Vision

The Council's vision is:

“For a County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all”.

The Council's Purpose and Priorities

The Council's purpose and the reason why it exists is: ***“to provide strong community leadership and effective services for the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf to enable them to fulfil their potential and prosper”.***

The Council is focused on the following three priorities:

- 1. Economy - Building a strong economy;***
- 2. People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone;***
- 3. Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work.***

In order to meet our purpose, to make progress in delivering these priorities and respond to the significant financial challenges we face the Council has to operate in a different way. It has set itself the following four principles which apply to all three priorities and everything we do. The Council will:

- **Provide essential services well** – In the coming years there will be less money available and we will have to make sure we spend it where the need is greatest. Our role is to make sure local people get good outcomes from their services. We understand that it is the quality of the service that matters to local people, not who provides it.
- **Help people and communities help themselves** – The Council is at its most effective when it is helping people to live successful lives as independently as possible and when it is helping communities to help themselves. We believe that if you give power to local people you get better results and achieve better value. We want to help communities to do more themselves and give them more control over local services such as schools, libraries and other cultural and community facilities. We know that RCT's army of volunteers already make a huge difference to thousands of people's everyday lives in their neighbourhoods, towns and villages. We want to work more closely with RCT's voluntary and community sector to stimulate innovation and encourage communities to step forward and take on new roles in providing local services and solutions. In doing so we recognise that some of our most deprived communities will need additional capacity, and we will work with Welsh Government to ensure the various poverty programmes are refocused to maximise their impact for those families and individuals that require the greatest support.

- **Build a Sustainable County Borough** – the Council is responsible for planning and providing much of the infrastructure that keeps the County Borough working and moving. The financial climate, and the challenges it presents, mean that we need to find significant savings. We are committed to doing this in a way that avoids creating problems for future generations. We will have a particular focus on supporting initiatives that stimulate economic growth and create jobs in RCT.
- **Live within our means** – We believe that it is wrong to spend more than we can afford, or to pass on financial problems to the next generation. This means we have to make difficult decisions now and focus on our priorities and manage our budgets. Every pound spent on running the Council is a pound that is not spent on front-line services. There is a cost associated with running any organisation, but we will continue to minimise that cost. We will do everything we can to be as efficient as possible, reduce the Council's running costs and get the best value from our assets.

In preparing this draft Corporate Plan, the Council has taken account of the **Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**. Welsh Government is currently consulting on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. The Act focuses on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It will make public bodies, such as the Council, think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach. This will help us to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. To make sure we are all working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place seven Well-being Goals:

1. **A prosperous Wales**
2. **A resilient Wales**
3. **A healthier Wales**
4. **A more equal Wales**
5. **A Wales of cohesive communities**
6. **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language**
7. **A globally responsible Wales.**

This draft Corporate Plan's vision, priorities and principles support the seven Well-being Goals and the Goals will be incorporated within the Council's action plans that deliver on the Council's three priorities. The Act proposes that the Council, by 31 March 2017, must set well-being objectives that maximise its contribution to achieving the well-being goals. In doing so, the Council will be expected to take all reasonable steps to meet those well-being objectives. The requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act will be incorporated within this draft Corporate Plan when Welsh Government has completed its consultation and set the requirements for local authorities.

The next four years in Rhondda Cynon Taf: challenge and opportunity

Council budgets will undoubtedly face further reductions until the end of the decade:

- Effective forward financial planning has meant that the Council has managed the past three years of budget reductions and sought to reduce the

significance of their impact on the majority of local services, achieving nearly 60% of savings through efficiencies;

- Our approach has benefitted residents through lower than the Welsh average Council Tax bills and the avoidance of short-term, in year, arbitrary cuts across all services;
- However, despite a growing economy, the UK is still running a significant budget deficit which means that public spending will continue to be reduced by the new UK Government.

Demand on local services continues to rise. The demand is driven by a changing profile of the population, with the number of people aged over 65 rising by at least 8% in the past three years.

As a result the Council faces a possible budget gap of £80 million between 2016 and 2020. This is in addition to the £76 million budget gap the Council has dealt with between 2011 and 2016.

At the same time, residents are facing greater financial pressures from increasing energy bills, housing costs, continued wage restraint and benefit reforms.

At the same time expectations of the Council and local services are increasing driven by advances in customer services, including greater flexibility to transact online. People expect better services and more prompt responses from the Council.

However, despite the challenges, there are big opportunities.

The communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf have suffered from the global economic downturn, but the signs are that the UK economic growth in London is now starting to reach the rest of the country. Economic growth is essential to drive prosperity, reduce reliance on the public sector and to bring opportunities to residents; businesses; and the Council, which should include reduced unemployment and an increase in the number of people on benefits moving into work. To support this growth the Council will work with the other local authorities in the Cardiff Capital City Region to provide innovative ways to support businesses; work with the Jobcentre to enable other organisations to implement new skills and employment programmes; and invest in the infrastructure needs of the County Borough.

Most residents will benefit from this opportunity without direct intervention from the Council and our role is to maintain the environment for a thriving County Borough so that people can get on with their lives. However, a relatively small number of people will need short-term, targeted help to ensure they can maximise their opportunities. This will include support to develop new skills and help to overcome barriers to employment.

The new £1 billion City Deal for the Cardiff Capital City Region, which includes Rhondda Cynon Taf, will increase economic growth in the County Borough. This new approach to regenerating a regional city and its surrounding area has already seen the various public sector agencies in cities such as Glasgow and Manchester work together to pool resources and expertise to provide more integrated services. This coming together as combined authorities has increased borrowing powers and

investment in local infrastructure which has spanned more than one council area, thereby jointly managing major reform programmes.

Although the Council's budget will reduce further, it will oversee the allocation of around £400 million of taxpayer funding by the end of the decade. The Council will ensure that these resources are prioritised effectively, in accordance with the priorities of residents; that statutory duties are met; and that decision making is transparent and represents value for money.

This Corporate Plan sets out Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's approach to meeting the challenges and maximising the opportunities of the next four years.

In delivering its priorities, how will Rhondda Cynon Taf respond to challenges and opportunities?

Redesigned local services – integrated and efficient

- Local Government and local public services will look very different by 2020. With financial pressures and local government reorganisation, public sector agencies will become more integrated in their approach. They will pool resources, share staff and assets and develop joint solutions to manage demand and thereby provide quality services;
- For residents this approach will mean easier access to support and the services they need without having to negotiate with different agencies;
- For the Council, it will reduce bureaucracy and create efficiencies, with increased collaboration driving innovation in the way services are designed and delivered. We have already done this effectively in a number of areas:
 - through the creation of the Joint Education School Improvement Service. This has brought together educational advisors from across five local authorities to support schools to improve educational outcomes;
 - through the implementation of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to improve child and adult protection and provide a single point for all referrals regarding concerns for a child/young person or adult.

The Council will...

- Oversee a significant change in its approach to early intervention and prevention as a means of managing demand for social care services, with a focus on promoting people's independence;
- Work with Local Service Board partners, which include the NHS and police, to pilot a targeted multi-agency approach towards 'place-based commissioning' and the targeting of resources to areas of greatest need;
- Implement a range of European Social Fund employment programmes across the County Borough in partnership with Job Centre Plus, Careers Wales, Welsh Government, Communities First, and private and voluntary sector organisations.

More involved and resilient communities...

- Greater community participation, engagement and involvement, through the RCT Together Community Participation Programme, will be an essential part of the change the Council will seek to achieve over the next four years. The Council will work with residents to increase self-sufficiency, reduce reliance on statutory services and make the best possible use of community strengths to tailor services to need;
- The Council's vision is to develop a new relationship with residents that enable them to be independent and resilient and to take on greater responsibility for their local communities. This is not about the Council shifting its responsibility – it is about recognising that residents want to be more involved in what happens in their community.

The Council will...

- Implement its RCT Together Community Participation Programme to achieve its vision of greater community collaboration and resilience;
- Build stronger partnerships with community groups;
- Co-ordinate and improve the support it gives to communities.

Health and Social Care services will be personalised and integrated, with more people supported to live longer in their own homes...

- By 2020 social care services for adults will be remodelled to focus on minimising intervention and maximising independence, with a greater emphasis on early intervention. This approach, working with housing, health services and other partners, will enable more people to stay independent and live for longer in their own homes;
- To better manage the huge costs of A&E and hospital admissions, we will work towards social care commissioning becoming fully integrated with health services, such as primary and community care thereby improving the experience of those using health and social care services;
- More young people with complex disabilities will stay in Rhondda Cynon Taf, where they grew up, and live in their own homes, with opportunities to engage in education, training, culture and the arts, helping them to grow in independence;
- People with mental health issues will receive support in the community to help them stay well, re-engage in learning, get a job and remain active, with support focused on helping people with their whole life, not simply providing a diagnosis;
- Rhondda Cynon Taf's residents will be some of the most active and healthy in South Wales, benefitting from improved leisure facilities, visiting our theatres, libraries and heritage sites and making use of the County Borough's parks and open spaces.

The Council will...

- Implement its vision for adult social care, which is focused on providing personalised, integrated care with more residents being supported to live in their own homes;

- Increase the number of social care clients that receive direct payments to enable them to make personal choices to manage their own needs;
- Focus on the provision of effective telecare, housing adaptations and community support to achieve this;
- Prioritise investment in improving the physical fitness facilities at the Council's leisure centres and work with local sports clubs and community groups to increase participation in sport and leisure.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's schools will be amongst the best in the country, and with all children achieving the best they can...

- In 2020, Rhondda Cynon Taf will have primary, middle and secondary schools that are amongst the best in the country, with the quality of education being a reason for many people choosing to live in the County Borough;
- The attainment and progress of children in Rhondda Cynon Taf schools will continue to exceed the Welsh Government benchmarks and the progress of the most disadvantaged pupils will be accelerated.

The Council will...

- Continue to invest in improving school buildings and facilities, to ensure the County Borough's pupils have the learning environment fit for the 21st Century;
- Continue to work in partnership with all schools to raise standards, in particular in literacy and numeracy, and close the achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. The focus will be on improving the quality of leadership and teaching through effective school to school support.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's children and young people will receive a great start in life...

- The Council will continue to ensure a great start in life for every child and that young people are well prepared for adulthood;
- Safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable young people will continue to be effective and robust, with greater interface between statutory services, for example the health service and the police working together to identify and support young people who might be at risk.

The Council will...

- Continue to support families with an improved integrated range of services throughout a child's early years. This will include health, education and social care and focus primarily upon areas of greatest need through the Flying Start Programme and Families First. This will help to ensure that children get the best start to life;
- Where children may be at risk, maintain a multi-agency response that brings together different professionals to share information quickly and effectively, respond appropriately thereby reducing the need for re-referrals;
- Further develop the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and to use the information gathered to identify issues that may impede the development of a

successful childhood. It will realign existing services to promote effective outcomes to unmet need;

- Work with families to intervene early where issues arise and commission effective family support arrangements to keep families together, where it is safe and in the best interests of the children to do.
- Put in place a greater choice of high quality local placements available for children who cannot remain at home, by increasing the number of Rhondda Cynon Taf foster carers.

There will be a broad offer of skills and employment programmes for all ages...

- The Council will appropriately monitor and support the development of the County Borough's young people and, through a range of European Social Fund Programmes work with the Jobcentre, skills providers and other partners to provide a range of programmes aimed at supporting people of all ages into work and enabling them to progress whilst in employment.

The Council will...

- Continue to work with schools to track young people at risk of becoming 'NEET' and work with partners to ensure a broad skills offer for young people, encompassing a range of options including apprenticeships and employment opportunities;
- Work with Jobcentre Plus, Communities First, Welsh Government, careers Wales, Coleg Y Cymoedd and other European Social Fund Programmes operating across the region to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills, reduce unemployment, with a focus on supporting vulnerable and hard to reach people into work; developing career pathways into higher level jobs in the care sector; and maximising retail and construction opportunities that derive from regeneration activity across the region.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's local environment will be clean and attractive, with well-maintained roads and pavements, flowing traffic, increased recycling and less waste sent to landfill...

- Rhondda Cynon Taf's streets will be kept clean and tidy, benefitting from increased enforcement action against littering and dog fouling;
- the County Borough's roads and pavements will be in a good condition, with the Council recognising that this has consistently been the top priority for residents ;
- Residents will recycle more of their household waste, with less waste being sent to landfill.

The Council will...

- Maintain a clean County Borough by improving cleansing routes and ensuring that town centre and residential areas are regularly reviewed to ensure a consistent standard of cleanliness;
- Invest a further £20 million in road, highways infrastructure and pavement networks over the next four years, on top of the £35 million in additional investment since 2011;
- Further remodel its waste and recycling service, making it easier for residents to recycle more which will benefit the environment and save the Council money in collection and disposal costs.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's parks and green spaces will continue to be valued by residents...

- Resident feedback consistently shows that Rhondda Cynon Taf's parks and green spaces are amongst its biggest assets;
- The Council recognises this, and will continue to ensure that the County Borough's parks and green spaces are looked after.

The Council will...

- Develop more innovative ways of maintaining its parks and green spaces, including working in partnership with community groups and focusing on using parks to achieve wider public health priorities for the residents of the County Borough.

Rhondda Cynon Taf will be amongst the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion, and residents feeling safe...

- Rhondda Cynon Taf will continue to be one of Wales's safest areas, with effective working between the Council and police driving further reductions in crime rates;
- Community cohesion in Rhondda Cynon Taf will remain high, with people from different backgrounds getting on well together.

The Council will...

- Work with communities and partners to achieve long-term sustained reductions in crime, building on reductions achieved in recent years. The aim is to further reduce all crimes including the '7 Key Neighbourhood Crime Types' - Burglary, Violence with Injury, Robbery, Theft from Person, Criminal Damage, Theft of Motor Vehicle and Theft From Motor Vehicle;
- Work with Safer Communities partners to implement new 2014 Anti-Social Behaviour legislation to prevent and deter anti-social behaviour and reduce repeat victimisation
- Work in partnership to reduce the under-reporting of hate crime;
- Continue to strengthen the effectiveness of the partnership approach to preventing domestic violence through coordinating service provision to help those at high risk of repeat victimisation.

Residents will see a responsible approach to regeneration, with new homes being built and job opportunities created...

- The new multi million pound Capital Region City Deal for Cardiff and South East Wales creates the opportunity for significant investment across the region, including Rhondda Cynon Taf. Over the next ten years there will be improvements to commercial infrastructure, the transport network, housing, all of which will create employment opportunities;
- Rhondda Cynon Taf will go through a significant period of regeneration over the next decade and beyond, with major housing schemes being planned and implemented in areas such as Llanillid, Robertstown, Hirwaun, Tonyrefail, and Mwyndy, Pontyclun;
- We want our larger town centres to be vibrant and enticing with a strong offer which recognises that they are at the heart of our communities. The town centres will benefit from investment to ensure an attractive environment for local businesses, shoppers and residents.

The Council will...

- By 2020, more than **3,000** new homes will be provided by the private sector through the Local Development Plan, which will also create conditions which will deliver real employment opportunities for residents in Rhondda Cynon Taf;
- Identify a future 'pipeline' of regeneration sites, to build the new homes that residents need. This will include making better use of the Council's entire commercial property and land portfolio to promote coordinated business and housing growth;
- Actively engage with Cardiff County Council and the other south east Wales Council's over the next 10 years to maximise the benefits to the region and the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf of the new Capital Region City Deal for Cardiff and South East Wales;
- Promote key employment sites in the County Borough, such as Treforest Industrial Estate. It will support improvement in the infrastructure and assist current and new employers that wish to expand or relocate to the area;

- The larger town centres of Aberdare, Llantrisant/Talbot Green, Pontypridd, Porth and Treorchy will see significant investment through Welsh Government, private sector and Council funding to improve access infrastructure. We will continue to work with business and local communities to ensure that the town centres benefit from growth, with a tailored package of support to help them adapt successfully to a changing world.

Customer services will be intuitive and flexible, with increased user satisfaction...

- By 2020 the majority of customer interaction with the Council will be via the web and other self-service channels which will be quicker, bilingual and more flexible;
- Customers will experience a consistently high quality personalised service, focussed on achieving the fast and effective resolution of queries and requests. Customer services will be intuitive, recognising the interests of users and sign-posting them to other services they might require;
- The majority of enquiries raised will be resolved at the first point of contact, and customers will be satisfied with the customer service they receive.

The Council will...

- Invest in its website and make it easier for residents to undertake transactions online via a mobile device – such as paying Council Tax, booking a fitness class, ordering a library book, renewing a parking permit, reporting a problem, and finding out what is going on locally;

Work in a way that makes the best and most sustainable use of our limited and decreasing resources, always looking at alternative ways of doing things, to limit the impact on the Council taxpayer

- Rhondda Cynon Taf Council will be competitive with all Welsh councils for expenditure per head of population as it keeps its costs under control;
- Rhondda Cynon Taf Council will continue to be in the lowest 10% of Welsh Councils for administrative expenditure per head as it keeps its administrative costs to a minimum;
- Council Tax increases will be maintained at or below the Welsh average for the next 4 years.

The Council will...

- Reduce its office accommodation floorspace by 20% by 2020, further reducing back office costs;
- Invest in new IT to enable staff to work more flexibly across a range of locations, allowing them to be closer to the residents they work with;
- Continue to increase energy efficiency measures for the Council, including carbon reduction across services and renewable energy schemes for our own land and property.
- Become a smaller, more efficient organisation, working as one, with a reduced budget, fewer employees and fewer services provided directly by the Council;

- Collaborate more with other public services, the community and voluntary sector and businesses to find common and jointly owned solutions
- Work with suppliers and contracted service providers to reduce the costs of supplies and service;
- Create a more business-like footing with the community and voluntary sector through better, more coordinated commissioning by the Council.

Delivering our Vision, Purpose and Priorities – indicators for success

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has set the following three priorities of:

- 1. *Economy - Building a strong economy;***
- 2. *People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone;***
- 3. *Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work.***

A range of indicators will be used to measure progress against these priorities of the Corporate Plan and are set out below. Progress will be reported to the Council's Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee each quarter, providing public challenge and scrutiny.

Detailed management plans will be put into place to translate these priorities and the challenges and opportunities set out in this plan into action. The performance of each service area will be reported on the Council's website each quarter and key service delivery successes and challenges will also be reported to the respective Service Scrutiny Committees.

The Measures of Success in Delivering the Corporate Plan

The Council, working with local, regional and national partners, will strive to deliver the following targets in respect of the measures associated with the Council's three priorities of People, Place and Economy. An additional set of measures that focus on the Council "Living within its means" are also included and will be monitored regularly.

Economy - Building a strong economy

Performance Measure	2014/15 RCT Data	2014/15 Welsh Average	2015/16 RCT Target	2016/17 RCT Target tbc	2020 RCT Target tbc	Comments
% of economically active people, ie 16 and over, who are unemployed	7.2	6.8			Wales Average	
% of people aged 18-24 claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)	4.8	3.4	N/A		Wales Average	Data published monthly (August figure included)
No/% Economically Active people in RCT	109,200 72.1	74.4	N/A		Wales Average	
% of 16 year olds leaving school who are known not to be in education, training or employment	3.9	3.1	3.9		Wales Average	Ambition of at least maintaining improvement of 2014/15
% of 18 year olds leaving school who are known not to be in education, training or employment	5.9	4.9	6		Wales Average	
% of pupils aged 15 at the start of the academic year who achieved L2 threshold including a GCSE grade A*-C in English or Welsh (first language) and Maths	50.5	55.5	55		Above Wales Average	Target calculated by considering an aggregated target agreed by CSC and schools, the B measure of the Family Fischer Trust estimate, and actual RCT past and All Wales performance data.
% of pupils entitled to FSM, aged 16, achieving Level 2 Threshold including a GCSE grade A*-C in English or Welsh (first language) and	25.5	27.8	30		Above Wales	As above

Economy - Building a strong economy

Performance Measure	2014/15 RCT Data	2014/15 Welsh Average	2015/16 RCT Target	2016/17 RCT Target tbc	2020 RCT Target tbc	Comments
Mathematics					Average	
% difference between pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and Non-FSM who were assessed at the end of Foundation Phase, aged 7, who achieved the expected outcome in the FPI	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A	New Indicator 2015/16
% difference between pupils eligible for Free School Meals and Non-FSM who were assessed at the end of Key Stage 2, aged 11, who achieved level 4 or above in the CSI	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A	New Indicator 2015/16
Average capped points score for pupils aged 15 at the preceding 31 August, in schools maintained by the local authority	336.5	N/A	346		N/A	As above
% of pupils in local authority care and in any local authority maintained school aged 15 as at the preceding 31 August who leave compulsory education, training or work based learning without an approved external qualification	0.0	1.2	6.5		Top Quartile	The ability of the current cohort have been evaluated and it is anticipated that 2 out of 31 will not achieve as they refuse to engage
% of young people formerly looked after with whom the authority is in contact, who are known to be engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19	69.6	59.5	75.0		Top Quartile	

Economy - Building a strong economy

Performance Measure	2014/15 RCT Data	2014/15 Welsh Average	2015/16 RCT Target	2016/17 RCT Target tbc	2020 RCT Target tbc	Comments
The stock of registered enterprises/businesses in the Borough	5,210	N/A	N/A			
The rate of registered enterprise/business births (start ups)	15.1 785	12.6	Comparison to previous year's data will be made available, and an increase year on year would reflect positive performance.			
The rate of registered enterprise/business deaths (closures)	9.2 480	9.1	N/A Comparison to previous years data will be made available, and a decrease year on year would reflect positive performance			
Footfall - Average weekly number of visitors to Pontypridd (Calendar Year)	63,909	N/A	N/A Comparison to previous years data will be made available, and an increase year on year would reflect positive performance			
Footfall - Average weekly number of visitors to Aberdare (Calendar Year)	20,609	N/A				
Footfall - Average weekly number of visitors to Porth (Calendar Year)	17,510	N/A				
Vacancy Rates in Pontypridd	9.0%	14.1%	N/A			
Vacancy Rates in Aberdare	9.0%		Comparison to previous years data will be made available, and a decrease year on year would reflect positive performance			
Vacancy Rates in Porth	14.0%					
No of additional housing units provided during the year	386	N/A			NCA	Two different parts of the numerator
No. of new affordable homes delivered	127	N/A	100		NCA	Reported in Quarter 4

People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone

Performance Measure	2014/15 RCT Data	2014/15 Welsh Average	2015/16 RCT Target	2016/17 RCT Target tbc	2020 RCT Target tbc	Comments
Number of Children & Young People requiring intervention from statutory services	N/A	N/A	N/A	Reduce	Reduce	This is a new indicator. The indicator has been taken from the Children's Transformational Plan and is a key measure to monitor performance at a strategic level
Number of Looked After Children	621	N/A	Reduce	Reduce	Reduce	The indicator has been taken from the Children's Transformational Plan and is a key measure to monitor performance at a strategic level
% of re-registrations of children on local authority CPR	N/A	N/A	N/A	Reduce	Reduce	This is a new indicator. The indicator has been taken from the Children's Transformational Plan and is a key measure to monitor performance at a strategic level
The length of time that children & young people remain within the LAC system	N/A	N/A	N/A	Reduce	Reduce	This is a new indicator. The indicator has been taken from the Children's Transformational Plan and is a key measure to monitor performance at a strategic level
% of clients choosing their own service providers through Direct Payments	13.02	N/A	13.5	Increase	Increase	Target has been set based on trend data since 2013. The indicator has been taken from the Children's Transformational Plan and is a key measure to monitor performance at a strategic level
Number of adults referred to the statutory service for assessment	N/A	N/A	N/A	Reduce	Reduce	This is a new indicator. The indicator has been taken from the Adults Transformational Plan and is a key measure to monitor performance at a strategic level
Number of people requiring a long term intervention from statutory services	N/A	N/A	N/A	Reduce	Reduce	This is a new indicator. The indicator has been taken from the Adults Transformational Plan and is a key measure to monitor performance at a strategic level

Performance Measure	2014/15 RCT Data	2014/15 Welsh Average	2015/16 RCT Target	2016/17 RCT Target tbc	2020 RCT Target tbc	Comments
Number of people who no longer need a long term service following a period of reablement	N/A	N/A	N/A	Increase	Increase	This is a new indicator. The indicator has been taken from the Adults Transformational Plan and is a key measure to monitor performance at a strategic level
Number of people admitted to residential or nursing care	N/A	N/A	N/A	Reduce	Reduce	This is a new indicator. The indicator has been taken from the Adults Transformational Plan and is a key measure to monitor performance at a strategic level

DRAFT POST CONSULTATION & PRE-SCRIPTING

Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work

Performance Measure	2014/15 RCT Data	2014/15 Welsh Average	2015/16 RCT Target	2016/17 RCT Target tbc	2020 RCT Target tbc	Comments
% of residents satisfied with the County Borough as a place to live	NCA	N/A	NCA		90	Data not currently available - to be developed from future Residents Surveys
% of residents satisfied with our parks and open spaces for leisure, enjoyment & sport	NCA	N/A	NCA		75	Data not currently available - to be developed from future Residents Surveys
Police Recorded incidents of antisocial behaviour	7,238	N/A	NCA	NCA	NCA	Data currently included for indicative purposes only. If this measure is to be considered for inclusion, data would require more work to clarify the definition, source and integrity
% [& No.] of vulnerable/repeat victims of anti-social behaviour that feel safer as a result of intervention	82.0 [49]	N/A	80		N/A	This target is already challenging and actions aim to maintain good performance rather than seek improvement
% of highways inspected of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness	99.7	96.9	95		Top Quartile	
% of reported fly tipping incidents on relevant land cleared within 5 working days	97.72	93.05	95		Top Quartile	
% of municipal waste collected by local authorities and prepared for reuse and/ or recycling, including source segregated biowastes that are composted or treated biologically in another way	53.82	56.24	58		64% by 2019/20	National target set to achieve 58% recycling by the end of 2015/16
% of residents satisfied with the condition of roads and pavements	NCA	N/A	NCA			Data not currently available - to be developed from future Residents Surveys

Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work

Performance Measure	2014/15 RCT Data	2014/15 Welsh Average	2015/16 RCT Target	2016/17 RCT Target tbc	2020 RCT Target tbc	Comments
% of principal (A) roads, non-principal (B) roads and non-principal (C) roads that are in overall poor condition	9.3	11.9	10		Above Wales Average	This means that we are aiming for the data to be lower than the Wales average
% of adults who reported meeting physical activity guidelines in the past week	27	30			?	Welsh Health Survey
% of Year 3-11 juniors participating in physical activity at least 3 times a week	44	48				Sports Wales School Sport Survey (biennial)
A measure that captures comprehensive volunteering data is being investigated	NCA	N/A	NCA			Future Generation Act measures currently being considered as part of consultation
% of successful homeless prevention applications	N/A	N/A	N/A			This is a new indicator for 2015/16, and baseline data will inform future targets

Living within our means – where services are delivered efficiently to achieve value for money for the taxpayer

Performance Measure	2014/15 RCT Data	2014/15 Welsh Average	2015/16 RCT Target	2016/17 RCT Target tbc	2020 RCT Target tbc	Comments
Gross expenditure on Council Tax Benefit and Administration per head of population	9	12			lowest 10% in Wales	
Level of Council Tax increase	4.50	4.23		Below Wales Average aggregated over 4 years	Below Wales Average aggregated over 4 years	
% of customer interaction via the web and mobile devices	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	New local PI for 2016/17. Targets to be set once baseline established.
% of payments receipted via Customer Care that are self served via website and/or touchtone or kiosks	70	N/A	70			
% enquiries resolved at first point of contact based on customer view - One4aLL centres	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	New local PIs for 2016/17. Targets to be set once baseline established.
% of enquiries resolved at first point of contact based on customer view - telephone, daytime service	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
% enquiries resolved at first point of contact based on customer view - website/e-access	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Reduce the occupied office accommodation floor space across the Council					20% reduction	

APPENDIX A**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale on Wednesday, 9th December, 2015 at 5 pm.

Present:

County Borough Councillor M A Norris – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

(Mrs) J Bonetto	G R Davies	S Evans
P Griffiths	(Mrs) S J Jones	G Smith
(Mrs) J S Ward	P Wasley	E Webster
C Willis	R Yeo	

In Attendance

Mr R Hull – Chair of the Audit Committee

County Borough Councillor J Watts – Vice Chair, Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Officers in Attendance

Mr C Bradshaw – Chief Executive

Mr P Griffiths – Service Director, Performance & Improvement

Mr A Wilkins – Head of Legal, Corporate & Democratic Services

Mrs A Edwards – Scrutiny Support Officer

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors S Bradwick, (Mrs) S Rees and R W Smith. An apology was also received from County Borough Councillor M Adams, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

38. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Alison Lewis of the Wales Audit Office to the meeting.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, there were no declarations of interests made, pertaining to the agenda.

40. MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee held on the 4th November 2015, subject to noting that Councillor G Davies and P Wasley were waiting feedback to local issues raised during the discussion in respect of the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy (Minute 33).

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

41. THE WAY AHEAD: THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2016-2020 FOR CONSULTATION

The Head of Legal, Corporate & Democratic Services introduced the report explaining that Cabinet had agreed to the request of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that the preparation of the Corporate Plan should be subject to pre-scrutiny. As a result, the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee was being asked for its comments in relation to the draft Corporate Plan, prior to Cabinet proceeding to the public consultation phase.

The Chief Executive reported that on taking up his position he had met with his management team and Cabinet members to set out what the 'vision' for the authority should be. He explained that despite the economic challenges the Council is and will continue to be a significant business with many opportunities to further improve services and not just focus on managing decline as a result of reducing budgets. The Chief Executive provided context to the preparation of the draft plan and explained that he welcomed the assistance of scrutiny in challenging the principles that the plan is based upon and this feedback would be included in an updated report to Cabinet on the Corporate Plan. In particular, he would value the views of the Committee in relation to the proposed vision and purpose of the Plan; the proposed principles, proposed priorities and the proposed measures to monitor the progress of these priorities.

The Chief Executive asked Members to form a view on the extent to which the proposed Vision and Purpose of the Plan is consistent with the proposed priorities and measures set.

A Member welcomed the positivity of the Chief Executive in his address. He also asked how the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) fitted with the vision of the Corporate Plan.

The Chief Executive reported that the LDP is a land use document which will be due for a 'light touch' review shortly. He explained that this would provide an opportunity to challenge the land use in this document to determine whether changes are required to better reflect current needs such as housing and also the priorities in the Corporate Plan. The Chief Executive added that the introduction of the City Deal will also provide an opportunity to open up other sites for development.

A Member agreed that it was right for the plan to be ambitious but suggested that the message being conveyed was ambition for the Authority rather than the community; the ambition had to be for the community to prosper. He suggested that the purpose of the plan needed to be about creating a more sustainable community and rather than sustain and regenerate the economy.

A Member commented that the Council needed to get the message across to its residents that whilst the Council was there to provide help and support they also had to do things for themselves.

Another Member added that there was a need to understand how the Council's services and the role of the local authority will change over a period of time. He commented that there will be a need to look at services and offer different solutions and that the Council's role will be to provide sustainable, effective and efficient services involving community groups more. He suggested that the Corporate Plan would assist this transition.

A Member questioned how the Corporate Plan would fit into the Single Integrated Plan (SIP) and also pointed out that the SIP acknowledged the North/South socio economic divides and felt that addressing this issue should be incorporated into the Corporate Plan.

The Chief Executive explained that the North/South divide was a factor in the determination of the Community Infrastructure Levy rather than the SIP. The Chief Executive indicated that the principles within the Corporate Plan should apply across the County Borough and what the Council does should be consistent and done well regardless of area. He also suggested that it would be difficult to decide where the separation line would be drawn and pointed out that there was already a significant number of funding streams aimed at targeting deprivation; the key issue being to ensure that this resource is used well.

The Member responded that he felt that the issue should be acknowledged in the plan.

A Member pointed to the decline in manufacturing jobs within the area with the local economy now depending more on the service industries. She suggested that more needed to be done to encourage manufacturing back to the area.

The Chief Executive reported that whilst it was unlikely that the high volume low skilled manufacturing jobs would return he explained that the area has become a centre of excellence for many highly skilled manufacturing businesses, a number of which were supported by apprenticeship schemes in conjunction with Coleg y Cymoedd. The Chief Executive added that a Baseline Economic Analysis report had been prepared and was scheduled to be reported to Cabinet on 15th December 2015.

A Member suggested that the Council is being hindered in its services to the public by too much regulation and bureaucracy.

The Chief Executive reported on the proposed principles of the draft Corporate Plan, namely:

- *“Provide essential services well”*
- *“Help people and communities to help themselves”*
- *“Building a sustainable County Borough”*
- *“Live within our means”*

He asked Members for their views on the extent to which these principles will help the Council deliver the proposed priorities set?

The Chairman suggested that the principles were such that no-one could really disagree with them.

A Member pointed out that the mindset of the public would need to change.

The Chief Executive also explained that the principles were in line with those of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

A Member commented that whilst he had no issue with most of them, he pointed out the ‘living within our means’ was a legal necessity rather than a moral choice. He felt that it gave the wrong impression pointing out that there was a place for long term borrowing for the right reasons.

A Member pointed out that some community groups operate very well and cited an example in his area which was making a substantial contribution to the local economy.

The Chief Executive reported on the proposed priorities: People, Place and the Economy, and commented that he would be happy to change the order of the priorities and place Economy first if Members preferred. He asked for Members’ views as to the extent to which the proposed priorities are informed by the Council’s current performance and challenges, and needs of local communities.

A Member suggested that changes needed to be made in Education so that young people understood that they needed to take more responsibility for themselves.

Another Member agreed with these sentiments and pointed to work she had undertaken involving her local school through her Tourist Ambassador role. She spoke of the benefits of this for everyone and pointed out that by involving children when they are young they are then able to take over and run these community groups when they are older.

Members agreed with these sentiments and the Chairman commented that Education is the cornerstone of everything.

The Chief Executive reported that a range of indicators are proposed to be used to measure progress against the priorities of the Corporate Plan and he

set out his ambition for the next four years which in summary was where performance is currently better than the Welsh average, that this position be maintained or be top quartile through to 2020 and where performance is currently worse than the Welsh average, to achieve Welsh average or better by 2020. The Chief Executive added that the aim is in four years time for services in priority areas to be delivering above Welsh average performance or be amongst the best in Wales.

Members were asked for their thoughts in relation to the extent to which the measures of success will provide a meaningful picture of the progress the Council is making against its proposed priorities and whether they were ambitious or not.

A Member referred to the performance measures sitting under Place – ‘Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work’ and pointed out that cycle tracks were not mentioned. He felt that they should be included especially as it linked to the health and wellbeing agenda.

The Chief Executive responded by explaining that he would need to investigate whether suitable information in relation to cycle tracks is collected and whilst important, the consultation would test whether it represented one of the highest priorities for the County Borough.

A Member pointed out that there are already a large number of performance indicators in use and questioned whether the Corporate Plan suite of indicators would sit on top of current indicators or whether there would be a rationalisation of indicators.

The Chief Executive explained that as part of the Council reviewing its performance management arrangements, the intention is to create a smaller and more meaningful suite of indicators, supplemented by other qualitative information. The Chief Executive added that the outcome of this work would aim to enable Members and stakeholders to more clearly understand and scrutinise the performance of Council services and gauge the extent of progress / impact being made.

A Member commented that throughout the report mention was given to the grass roots of the community and he asked whether the Chief Executive could foresee a position where community councils could be of more benefit to the Authority in areas such as local grounds maintenance.

The Chief Executive agreed that there could be some opportunities, for example, in relation to community centres, and the views of community councils as a consultee in the production of the Corporate Plan would be welcome.

Another Member pointed out that the level of precept of community councils was small and this restricted what they were able to do. A Member also pointed out that there were no community councils in the Rhondda area should a move to more community council involvement be pursued.

A Member also cautioned against placing too much of a burden on the voluntary sector.

In conclusion, Members were asked for their thoughts in relation to endorsing the draft plan; or endorsing in principle or in part subject to the comments made; or whether they did not support the draft plan and wished to make alternative recommendations.

A Member commented that the draft plan was rightly a positive document; however, he suggested that there needed to be an acknowledgement that life is going to get harder in view of the likely on-going reductions in funding. He pointed out that even if the Council does everything well, services will need to change and people's expectations of what the Council can provide will need to be managed.

The Chief Executive explained that this was linked to the principle of 'Living within our means' and whilst the report is a positive report it focuses on providing essential services well. The Chief Executive added that there is a need to emphasise that the Council cannot do everything.

A Member pointed out that the earlier suggestion of removing the 'Living within our means' principle in some ways worked against this message.

In conclusion, the Chief Executive reported that following the consultation period, it was his intention to report the draft Corporate Plan to Council alongside the 2016/17 budget proposals in March 2016 for consideration and if deemed appropriate, approval.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED**:

- (i) to agree the principles of the draft Plan subject to suggested amendments;
- (ii) that further pre-scrutiny is undertaken at the appropriate stage in relation to the detailed action plans for each priority.

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, CORPORATE & FRONTLINE SERVICES

42. COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE – QUARTER 2 (30TH SEPTEMBER 2015)

With the aid of PowerPoint presentation slides, the Service Director, Performance and Improvement provided Members with details of the Council's performance for the period 1 April 2015 – 30th September 2015 in relation to the Revenue and Capital Budgets, Treasury and Prudential Indicators, WPI Action Plans and Performance Indicator information. In particular he drew Members' attention to the projected full year revenue budget under spend of £2.352M and explained that this was in the main due

to preventative strategies that are resulting in cost savings within Adult Locality Services and Short Term Intervention Services.

A Member questioned the over spend in relation to Special Educational Needs and asked whether there were plans in place to reduce this.

The Chief Executive explained that in part this over spend was attributable to the costs involved when parents take the Council to tribunal and it was not uncommon for a tribunal to find in favour of the parents in the majority of cases. The Chief Executive added that it is the Council's aim, as far as is reasonable, to work with parents to avoid such scenarios occurring.

A Member referred to the revenue budget under spend in relation to the Catering service and questioned how any loss or saving was apportioned between schools and the local authority.

The Chief Executive explained that there was a profit sharing scheme in place for secondary schools to, amongst other things, encourage buy-in to the service. With regard to primary schools he explained that no scheme is in place for this sector; profits or losses being the responsibility of the Council. Members considered operational performance in relation to the WPI Action Plans.

In relation to Public Health & Protection, a Member asked for further information to be provided in respect of the Homestep Plus scheme which was not on target.

The Service Director, Performance and Improvement reported that he would request this information and provide it directly to the Councillor. He also informed Members that in relation to Estyn School Inspection results an up date would be reported to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee in the New Year.

A Member referred to the Council's poor performance in relation to Delayed Transfers of Care which was the worst in Wales for 2014/15. He noted that whilst the figures were still high there was some improvement.

The Service Director, Performance & Improvement reported that this was an area of work being considered by the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee through their work in relation to Supporting People at Home.

Having discussed the WPI performance exceptions, the Chairman assured Members that areas of underperformance would either be monitored by the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee or referred to one of the other designated Scrutiny Committees.

A Member referred to the Tackling Poverty Advisory Group and Strategy and hoped that a review of Community First would be carried out. The Chairman explained that whilst he accepted his concerns he pointed out that the funding

for deprived areas was determined by Welsh Government criteria over which the Council had no control.

A Member referred to the performance pie charts and in particular the number of targets not being met within the remit of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.

In relation to the Education & Lifelong Learning targets, the Chief Executive explained that targets could be set to represent a lower level of ambition with the likelihood that these then be categorised as 'green' within the pie chart. The Chief Executive added that it was important to set ambitious targets to drive improvement and support services to achieve them, but to also have regard to the overall direction of travel of performance to accurately gauge the extent of progress Council services are making.

The Chairman also pointed out that the Committee would be reviewing target setting as part of its work in the New Year.

With regard to the Library Service, the Chief Executive explained that there is a need to reconsider some of the performance indicators following service changes to ensure a meaningful and full picture of performance is reported. The Chief Executive provided examples in terms of the Library Service: 'the % of library material requests supplied with 7 and 15 days' where due to the mobile library service being resourced to deliver a 2 weekly rota to local communities, requests made by users via this means will not hit the aforementioned targets. The Chief Executive added that within this context it was more important the Council continues to provide a valuable service to local communities particularly where residents cannot or cannot always visit a static library.

A Member referred to the rise in the number of fixed term school exclusions.

The Chief Executive informed Members that officers are supporting schools to improve the current levels of performance and as part of this adopt a more restorative approach. The Chief Executive added that the ultimate decision rests with the Headteacher of each school and highlighted that periods of exclusion were usually quite short but nonetheless there were too many.

A Member referred to the Contact Centre Service and the average queue time which was still below target. He appreciated that there were staff shortages but hoped that the situation would have improved.

The Service Director for Performance & Improvement suggested that the Committee should pay particular attention to this at quarter 3.

With regard to Children's Services, a Member referred to the performance indicators in relation to those children looked after who were not allocated to a social worker. The Member added that he was aware of some of the issues as to why this indicator was not being met in certain cases and suggested that if this indicator is not meaningful to manage service delivery then the Council

should review whether or not it should remain part of the suite of performance indicators collected and reported.

The Committee was informed that a report in relation to this area was being prepared for the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee for more in depth consideration.

Having considered all the information the Chairman asked whether the Committee wished to take any areas forward for further scrutiny.

Following discussion it was agreed that a referral be made to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to consider the issues in relation to the increase in fixed term exclusions.

The Chief Executive agreed that it would be prudent to look at this work and informed Members that the Welsh Government had recently published exclusion data.

In conclusion the Service Director, Performance & Improvement reminded Members of the key performance exceptions that had been highlighted as part of the quarter 1 reporting process and confirmed that the outcomes of the referrals to the themed scrutiny committees will be reported back to the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED**:

- (i) to refer the rise in fixed term school exclusions to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee for review; and
- (ii) that the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee be provided with progress in relation to those issues referred to other scrutiny committees as a result of the quarterly reporting process.

M A Norris
Chairman

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm.

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APPENDIX B

The Council's Corporate Plan 2016-2020 – Consultation

1. Methodology

- The online Budget Simulator used for the Budget Consultation 2016/17 was used to gather views, with an online questionnaire on the Corporate Plan linked to the simulator.
- The Council's budget consultation ran from 16th December 2015 to 18th January 2016.
- 213 responses were received with submitted budgets in the simulator, with 93 people answering at least 1 of the corporate plan questions.

2. Vision

The Council's Vision – *What do we want Rhondda Cynon Taf to be*

The Corporate Plan contains a '**Vision**'. This is one sentence that describes what the Council wants Rhondda Cynon Taf to be, which is "**a County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all**".

Do you think the Vision is the right for Rhondda Cynon Taf? %	
No	29.5
Yes	70.5

- **70.5% of respondents thought the vision was the right one.**
- The following are a selection of comments received on the vision (All comments are found in the Appendix);

Agree with the Vision

"The vision is right as long as the plan can evidence how it will achieve this, with quantitative information"

"Seems a very clear simple plan that will deliver for the residents of RCT"

"The vision keeps the situation on a positive note. Instead of dwelling on the reductions we are making now, we should look to the improvements and opportunities we will have when things improve in the coming years."

“Yes I support this”

“This comprehensive and inclusive vision is appropriate and should reflect the diverse socio-economic nature of RCT as a unitary authority.”

Disagree/Negative Comment

“Just as vague as promising 'Truth, Freedom and Justice' - words which are not easy to quantify and provide solid evidence of positive outcome”

“Sounds like a statement written by a marketing person, and says nothing of any value or consequence. Simply 'Jargon speak'.”

Difficult in the current economic climate

“Whilst I see RCTs as a good statement the current economic climate will of necessity mean that essentials have to be provided rather than desirable services. To that end there is bound to be an element of compromise.”

“Sadly there are not opportunities for all within RCT due to budget cuts from central government. I think there are high aspirations within RCT but the opportunities for all simply isn't true and could get ridiculed.”

3. Priorities

The Council’s Priorities – How we will prioritise what needs to be done

The Corporate Plan also sets out what the Vision means for people in three **Priorities**. These priorities have been put together from information that residents have already told us about their needs and will help to focus on what needs to be done first.

Economy - Building a strong economy

People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone

Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work

Do you think that these Priorities are right for Rhondda Cynon Taf? %	
No	13.6
Yes	86.4

- **The vast majority agreed with the priorities (86.4%)**
- Some of the comments received can be summarised under the following headings;

Agreement

“Think so yes”

“This is fair but needs to be endorsed by funding, valuing and sustaining each of the priorities. RCT must lobby the WG to support these priorities by creating employment opportunities, policing, health, education etc..... The people of RCT will give RCT’s vision and priorities their full blessing if this translates into action”

“This would be great and again as long as it is promoted across the board and not just for Taf and Cynon.”

Education

“We need strong generations rising up from education, people with aspirations, not people who will drain us.”

“So long as a positive focus on education is included within this as well, in that educational opportunities should be made available to all and seen in a positive light. All education, access to libraries, museums, and cultural experiences should be valued and promoted. Posters talking about the negative effect of non-attendance send out the wrong message and smack of big brother and the nanny state watching you...”

“You can't build an economy where over half the people in the Rhondda are unable to read and write how is the economy going to grow when the lack of education in rct is so poor that people are unable to work because they haven't got an education and there are no facilities available for them to get an education”

Economy

“Promoting a strong economy is key.”

“You can't build an economy without investment in the infrastructure and the links with business and the workforce.”

“A strong economy should be the main priority.”

“You don't have enough levers to affect the economy. You need to focus on people and places same as above”.

Voluntary/3rd Sector

“Greater outsourcing of core services to the third sector, particularly in community care will realise further savings across the sector”

4. **The Way Forward – What we will do**

To deliver these priorities the Council has to take advantage of opportunities as well as tackle the difficulties it faces. The plan sets out in more detail a **Way Forward**, as set out below.

1. **Redesigned local services – integrated and efficient** - by joining with other public sector organisations where we can i.e. WG, Health, Police and Third sector and target the areas of greatest need;
2. **More involved and resilient communities** – greater community participation, engagement and involvement through the RCT Together Community Participation Programme;
3. **Health and Social Care services will be personalised and integrated, with more people supported to live longer in their own homes** – working with health, housing and other partners to improve the experience of those using health and social care services;
4. **Rhondda Cynon Taf’s schools will be amongst the best in the country, with all children achieving the best they can;**
5. **Make sure that children and young people get a great start in life** by helping families and keeping children and young people safe
6. **Make sure there is a broad offer of skills and employment programmes in place for all ages** - by using European Social Fund monies where we can.
7. **Rhondda Cynon Taf’s local environment will be clean and attractive, with well-maintained roads and pavements, flowing traffic, increased recycling and less waste sent to landfill** – with further investment in highways and pavements;
8. **Rhondda Cynon Taf’s parks and green spaces will continue to be valued by residents** – by ensuring they are well maintained and looked after;
9. **Rhondda Cynon Taf will be amongst the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion, and residents feeling safe** – with effective working between the Council and the Police further reducing crime rates;
10. **Residents will see a responsible approach to regeneration, with new homes being built and job opportunities created** – this approach will include investments in town centres and the commercial infrastructure such as Treforest Industrial Estate;
11. **Make it easier and quicker for residents to contact and do business with the majority of Council services.**
12. **Provide the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf with the assurance that the Council is doing everything it can to keep Council Tax increases among the lowest in Wales.**
Reducing our office space for work that is not directly affecting residents and investing in IT so staff are able to work in places nearer to residents

Does this Way Forward address the opportunities and difficulties you see in Rhondda Cynon Taf? %	
No	15.7
Yes	84.3

- **84.3% of respondents agree that the way forward proposed will address the opportunities and difficulties.**

- Opportunities

“Support these 12 points but RCT need to make these happen now”

“Would like to see closer working with the 3rd sector. Conversations need to be had about duplication of work that front line services are providing that are similar to the 3rd sector provision. For example the housing advice centre and possibly shelter or CAB. The welfare rights service the council provides and the one for all etc”

“Local economy and local employment could be boosted by enhanced assistance given to businesses to enable them to procure contracts from local authorities”

“More work is needed with other public sector organisations (neighbouring Councils, Police, Fire, etc) to centralise some support service functions e.g. payroll”

“Progress the inevitable merger with Merthyr and Bridgend as soon as practicable to explore any potential savings and service improvements/benefits”

“Recycling is very positive in RCT.”

“The majority of services should be offered 'on-line' so customers can use them 24 hrs a day”

- Difficulties

“This is not ambitious enough, why should schools only be the best in the country? Why cannot they be the best in the UK? Why can they not be the best in Europe? This comment is equally applicable to many other of The Council's aspirations. The Council's approach to its tasks is simply not good enough”

“While they are all good aims, many of them seem unrealistic given the extent of the cuts faced.”

“There is poverty and it is not addressed. The highest poverty is within the middle class working home. Yet you choose to help the people on Benefits and penalise those that choose to work”

5. Principles

The Principles – *How we will work to deliver everything that we do*

The Council has to work in a different way it is to deliver what residents have told us they need in our priorities and in everything we do. The way the Council will do this is by applying four **principles**.

- **As can be seen below the vast majority respondents agreed with each of the 4 principles outlined.**

Provide essential services well – In the coming years there will be less money available and we will have to make sure we spend it where the need is greatest. Our role is to make sure local people get good outcomes from their services. We understand that it is the quality of the service that matters to local people, not who provides it.

Do you agree with this principle? Provide essential services %	
No	9.2
Yes	90.8

- Comments included;

“What is the point in saying yea our council isn't in any debt, but when you look around the community it hasn't got anything, facilities have been taken away, and children's education has suffered. Money is just a number but taking vital facilities away from people is changing lives and effecting actual people.”

“While I have disagreed with the "Provide Essential Services Well" principle this is because it does not mention value for money. This wording could be read to imply a move towards privatisation of services which I do not agree with.”

“The council must invest in these principles and should canvass the WG to reward the planning and vision and sound financial management by further investment and protection. A key issue of course will be the sustainability of this IF reorganisation is allowed to proceed.”

Help people and communities help themselves – What this means is helping communities to do more for themselves and give them more control over local services such as schools, libraries and other community facilities. Recognising the huge difference RCT’s army of volunteers already make to thousands of people’s everyday lives in their neighbourhoods, towns and villages. We want to work more closely with RCT’s voluntary and community sectors to stimulate innovation and encourage communities to step forward and take on new roles in providing local services and solutions.

Do you agree with this principle? Help people and communities help themselves	
%	
No	12.8
Yes	87.2

- Comments included;

“I have concerns that "Helping people and communities help themselves" could lead to job losses and this should be minimised, but I realise that cuts have to be made and if a cut is essential it may be better to promote self help in order to retain some service provision”

"Help people and communities help themselves" - I think first and foremost, people help themselves and this is not likely to change.”

“Give a sense of owner ship back into the communities. With volunteering work and youth schemes people will find new hobbies and can look after public places for the council.”

Build a sustainable County Borough – the Council is responsible for planning and providing much of the infrastructure that keeps the County Borough working and moving. The financial climate, and the challenges it presents, mean that we need to find significant savings. We are committed to doing this in a way that avoids creating problems for future generations. We will have a particular focus on supporting initiatives that stimulate economic growth and create jobs in RCT.

Do you agree with this principle? Build a sustainable County Borough %	
No	7.1
Yes	92.9

- Comments included;

“The sustainable County Borough is something that I believe can be picked up in a few years time when other more pressing items have been resolved and the financial climate is stronger. Again essentials now before desirables later.”

Live within our means - We believe that it is wrong to spend more than we can afford, or to pass on financial problems to the next generation. This means we have to make difficult decisions now and focus on our priorities and manage our budgets. Every pound spent on running the Council is a pound that is not spent on front-line services. There is a cost associated with running any organisation, but we will continue to minimise that cost. We will do everything we can to be as efficient as possible, reduce the Council’s running costs and get the best value from our assets.

Do you agree with this principle? Live within our means %	
No	9.2
Yes	90.8

- Comments included;

“The 'Live within our means' tract reads like something you have cut and pasted from a Tory manifesto.”

Appendix 1 – All Corporate Plan Comments

VISION

Please provide any comments or ideas about our Vision

A Vision is always a commendable aspirational statement.

Whilst I see RCTs as a good statement the current economic climate will of necessity mean that essentials have to be provided rather than desirable services.

To that end there is bound to be an element of compromise.

Not sure what 'confident' entails, need to ensure health/wellbeing is central

Just as vague as promising 'Truth, Freedom and Justice' - words which are not easy to quantify and provide solid evidence of positive outcome.

Supporting elderly and infirm to live in their own homes

The vision is right as long as the plan can evidence how it will achieve this, with quantitative information

It should be a County Borough that acts in the interests of its constituents rather than torn apart by partizan politics

Seems a very clear simple plan that will deliver for the residents of RCT

The vision keep the situation on a positive note. Instead of dwelling on the reductions we are making now, we should look to the improvements and opportunities we will have when things improve in the coming years.

Yes i support this

Sadly there are not opportunities for all within RCT due to budget cuts from central government. I think there are high aspirations within RCT but the opportunities for all simply isn't true and could get ridiculed.

Saying that the council has a vision is not saying there going to do anything, having opportunities for all means ensuring that everyone's needs are meet, I don't now anyone who's living in rct at the moment that are having there needs meet. The council are taking away the things that people need to have there needs met.

Your vision appears to be very limited - and lacking 'teeth'. You appear to be implementing all the cuts that the Tory government would wish. To bring about real 'opportunities for all' you will need to bring the majority of the borough's residents around to your way of thinking. You are a long way away from doing that because you are failing to inspire us.

Make a stand. There must be some amongst you who are at least a little uncomfortable with the reality of day-to-day life that you see on the borough's streets.

a County Borough that is forwards thinking, seeking ways to improve the quality of life for all.

Sounds like a statement written by a marketing person, and says nothing of any value or consequence. Simply 'Jargonspeak'.

It means nothing. define high aspirations? define confident? what opportunities are you talking about?

please look at the social services and wellbeing act 2014 and

It may be your vision but is never looked on for the Rhondda. Cynon and Taf get all the new and trail things where as Rhondda gets left behind and is stuck in the dark ages.

This comprehensive and inclusive vision is appropriate and should reflect the diverse socio-economic nature of RCT as a unitary authority.

You need to implement and act on the opportunities for people. Not just promote them.

They need to be achievable aspirations and we need to see that the money invested in these schemes go to good use. Not just schemes to give aspirations but there is no opportunity to carry on with work after these courses end.

Support this

Whilst the vision is appropriate for the area, it is difficult to realise these with the inoact of the reduction on funding.

PRIORITIES

Please provide any comments or ideas about the Priorities

Similar comments here to those for the Vision.

Commendable but the current economic climate will of necessity mean that essentials have to be provided rather than desirable services.

To that end there is bound to be an element of compromise.

So long as a positive focus on education is included within this as well, in that educational opportunities should be made available to all and seen in a positive light. All education, access to libraries, museums, cultural experiences should be valued and promoted. Posters talking about the negative effect of non-attendance send out the wrong message and smack of big brother and the nanny state watching you...

Think so yes

but it depends how it is done. We should seek to reduce wasted expenditure in our local government services.

You don't have enough levers to affect the economy. You need to focus on people and places same as above

With the exception of "Place". I think "Valleys people" of which I am one of are proud people no matter what, so spending unnecessarily on improving neighbourhoods to me is not need in the current climate. Other areas such as crime and schooling should be prioritised first.

You can't build an economy where over half the people in the Rhondda are unable to read and write how is the economy going to grow when the lack of education in rct is so poor that people are unable to work because they haven't got an education and there are no facilities available for them to get an education

You can't build an economy without investment in the infrastructure and the links with business and the workforce.

Unless the local residents start to take some responsibility for their own community th neighborhood will not improve.

A strong economy should be the main priority.

However The Council fails these aspirations at all levels

please tell me what you are actually doing to build a strong economy?

This would be great and again as long as it is promoted across the board and not just for Taf and Cynon.

This is fair but needs to be endorsed by funding, valuing and sustaining each of the priorities. RCT must lobby the WG to support these priorities by creating employment opportunities, policing, health, education etc. We have existed under too many national governments who court the media and issue attractive soundbites which translate into nothing. The people of RCT will give RCT's vision and priorities their full blessing if this translates into action.

Promoting a strong economy is key.

We need strong generations rising up from education, people with aspirations, not people who will drain us.

We need strong ambassadors to do this, big figures in the community. I don't see RCT working with any.

Whilst the vision is appropriate for the area, it is difficult to realise these with the inaction of the reduction on funding.

Greater outsourcing of core services to the third sector, particularly in community care will realise further savings across the sector.

Way forward

Please provide any comments or ideas about the opportunities and difficulties facing the Council and how they should be tackled

I doubt it can all be done - why are you asking us to choose between services if you really plan to do it all?

This should be an 'or' list rather than an 'and' list in my opinion.

The majority of services should be offered 'on-line' so customers can use them 24 hrs a day

Yes, it does, in the main, but, as discussed above, I would change the focus on education to promote all forms of education, and, Council Tax, with regret, given the current economic circumstances will need to go up - thus, this aspiration needs to change; 'RCT will provide the best most efficient services for its residents with the money which those residents help to provide so that RCT's residents will help to make RCT the best county in Wales for all.'

A big push should be made in relation to benefits, there are thousands of people on benefits that shouldn't be on them, it needs to have a drastic change and monitoring as it is too easy for people to go onto DLA and other benefits and continue to stay on it. I think it is safe to say the majority of people on benefits in RCT is phenomenal and is costing us working people far too much, same with the housing why should they be able to buy their houses that most are paid for by benefits at a reduced rate where the rest of us hard working people have to struggle to get on the ladder and maintain a household etc.

I also think the blue badge scheme is far too easy to get and there should be a more substantial cost which again if the people are that disabled and REALLY need it rather than for convenience then they can again pay it out of the benefits which again that is what it is supposed to be for.

Local economy and local employment could be boosted by enhanced assistance given to businesses to enable them to procure contracts from local authorities.

I personally have always had a bee in my bonnet around point 7 regarding the cleanliness of the county since cuts have been made.

I always see "street cleansing staff" around towns in the borough power washing pavements?? I am more than sure that if this was not done for at least a few years that people's health will not be at risk. I know it makes it look fresh and clean, but when budget cuts are at such a low I think that things like this are what should be pulled back and put on the shelf in the short term at least to save money.

Note: When I see these street cleaners there is always one person using the power washer and one person watching??? Why are there two of them if only one is working???

Very clear to understand

Would like to see closer working with the 3rd sector. Conversations need to be had about duplication of work that front line services are providing that are similar to the 3rd sector provision. For example the housing advice centre and possibly shelter or CAB. The welfare rights service the council provides and the one for all etc

Education isn't about ensuring children have the best grades it's about ensure that all children no matter what there strengths are, are catered for. Having the best grades doesn't mean the schools are working for all children, grades doesn't matter when there are children that are missing out on opportunities to do things that they can strive in

While they are all good aims, many of them seem unrealistic given the extent of the cuts faced.

the other local authorities need to be in agreeance with the current council polisiees or this will again fracture the union of the local authoirties. A clear defined policy with the full agrement by all involved must be a proirity.

More work is needed with other public sector organisations (neighbouring Councils, Police, Fire, etc) to centralise some support service functions eg payroll

Progress the inevitable merger with Merthyr and Bridgend as soon as practicable to explore any potential savings and service improvements/benefits

Make more use of the 3rd sector and volunteers.

This is not ambitious enough, why should schools only be the best in the country? Why cannot they be the best in the UK? Why can they not be the best in Europe? This comment is equally applicable to many other of The Council's aspirations. The Council's approach to its tasks is simply not good enough

Fully support these

Recycling is very positive in RCT.

More money is needed for the roads though to deal with repairs.

Also we must keep improving the standards in school

There is poverty and it is not addressed. The highest poverty is within the middle class working home. Yet you choose to help the people on Benifits and penalise those that choose to work.

I applaud RCT's objectives. Again this depends on funding, political agreement and unity and by ensuring that diverse needs are met.

Are the people of RCT aware of these objectives?

Need to cut education & social services budgets also.

Support these 12 points but RCT need to make these happen now

Need to make the most of what funding the council has. Maybe do less but do it well

Principles

Please provide any comments or ideas about our principles;

The sustainable County Borough is something that I believe can be picked up in a few years time when other more pressing items have been resolved and the financial climate is stronger.

Again essentials now before desirables later.

What about getting rid of overzealous beauracracy?!

These are very long statements - hard to answer with a simple 'Yes/No'.

Voluntary groups can only succeed where there is the willingness and capacity for them to succeed, they will not work everywhere and for every community, especially in the short term and should not be seen as a stop-gap just because the council can't fund something any more.

Offer staff the option of Job Share less hours etc. Alter current staffs hours to ensure better services by having longer hours in call centres etc.

Offer staff more than 1 role.

If there are things that are lacking in our community it doesn't matter if the council is in debt.

What is the point in saying yea our council isn't in any debt, but when you look around the community it hasn't got anything, facilities have been taken away, childrens education has suffered. Money is just a number but taking vital facilities away from people is changing lives and effecting actual people.

While I have disagreed with the "Provide Essential Services Well" principle this is because it does not mention value for money. This wording could be read to imply a move towards privatisation of services which I do not agree with.

I have concerns that "Helping people and communities help themselves" could lead to job losses and this should be minimised, but I realise that cuts have to be made and if a cut is essential it may be better to promote self help in order to retain some service provision

Reduce the number of local councillors and the remuneration they are given.

But it is important to recognise that use of your reserves is an important tool during this financial climate.

"Help people and communities help themselves" - I think first and foremost, people help themselves and this is not likely to change.

It does matter to local people who provide their services.

The 'Live within our means' tract reads like something you have cut and pasted from a Tory manifesto.

All laudable aspirations, but why has it taken so long even to recognise a way forward?

Our means are set by WAG, not by US. Fight for some more.

The council must invest in these principles and should canvass the WG to reward the planning and vision and sound financial management by further investment and protection. A key issue of course will be the sustainability of this IF reorganisation is allowed to proceed.

Financially (and due no doubt to political expediency) there will be further cuts which will undermine this vision.

There must be a commitment to protecting and rewarding those in front line services and not expecting something for nothing. Education is a case in point. Real term wage cuts, the failure of some schools to promote pay progression, significantly increased pressures on teachers will in the long term impact on morale and will drive teachers out. I am sure that the same argument can be applied to other public service employees as well. The something for nothing and out sourcing mentality which characterises national government's vision for the public sector must not be allowed to become the driver in RCT.

Give a sense of ownership back into the communities. With volunteering work and youth schemes people will find new hobbies and can look after public places for the council.

Reduce council running costs not by cutting more staff but drastically reducing number of councillors and listen to staff to reduce costs.

Must make every penny count in future

Can only spend what you have but need to explain that more to the public

I agree with the principles, but find it hard to believe you will follow them

Especially as you are such a corrupt council

Anything else on Corporate Plan?

If there is anything else you would like to add about the Corporate Plan, please let us know here:

Thank you for providing the opportunity for people to comment. I look forward to seeing the report which shows the number of people and how people have commented.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Much that I have read above seems to have been written by someone with little knowledge or expertise in anything other than selling a story.

If you plan on using volunteers then reward them. You may not be able to give them money but what about discounted Leisure card or % off council tax. Depending on hours put in. It seems to me that you just want free help without helping those that give up their time and energy.

Seems a clear plan

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