

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes** of the meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

**Present:**

County Borough Councillor (Mrs) C Leyshon – in the Chair

**County Borough Councillors:**

H Boggis	(Mrs) J Bunnage	S Carter
A L Davies MBE	S Evans-Fear	M Griffiths
P Jarman	(Mrs) S J Jones	B Morgan
B Stephens	(Mrs) M Tegg	G Thomas
R K Turner	L Walker	

**Co-Opted Members:-**

Mr J Fish – Parent Governor  
Mr J Horton – Parent Governor  
Mr C Jones - GMB

**Officers in Attendance:**

Mr G Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children’s Services  
Ms E Thomas – Temporary Director of Education & Lifelong Learning  
Ms A Batley - Acting Service Director, Children’s Services  
Mr J O’Brien, Head of Cwm Taf Youth Offending Services  
Ms A Richards – Head of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools  
Ms N Morgan, Team Leader, Governor Support  
Mr P Nicholls – Principal Solicitor, Litigation  
Ms A Edwards – Scrutiny Support Officer

**In attendance:**

County Borough Councillor (Mrs) J Rosser – Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Libraries and Heritage

**18 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillor r,(Mrs) J Cass and also from co-opted Members Mr M Cleverley NASUWT & Teachers’ Panel and Mr D Price, Unison.

**19. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

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

**20. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2015.

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**21. CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE**

The Head of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service updated the Committee in relation to the continued development of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service, the performance of the service and the potential risks to future service delivery based on financial challenges.

Members were informed on performance and trends in relation to the key performance indicators ie the number of first time entrants into the youth justice system, the use of custody as a sentence and the proven rate of re-offending. They were also informed that it was widely acknowledged that as the number of first time entrants to the Youth Offending Service reduces, those that move into and remain in the Criminal Justice System have more complex needs and are likely to be the most prolific offenders.

The Head of Service also reported on the National Standards for Youth Justice Services which comprise of 10 key standards. He explained that for the last 2 years the Youth Justice Board have requested that that Youth Offending Services carry out a self audit of adherence to selected standards. For 2015, the service was required to carry out a self audit on 'Preventing Offending', 'Out of Court Disposals' and 'Work with Victims of Crime' and the self evaluation was provided at Appendix 1 to the report.

It was explained to the Committee that the financial contribution for the Youth Offending Service is generated from a number of sources. However, 2015/16 had seen a significant reduction in the overall budget and Members were provided with a detailed breakdown of the individual contributions and the reductions. The Head of Service explained that the complexity of funding arrangements and lack of financial security placed limitations on the ability to carry out planning in the medium and long term.

Following the presentation of his report the Head of Service responded to Members' questions.

A Member asked whether data specific to Rhondda Cynon Taf could be made available rather on a regional basis.

The Head of Service explained that data in respect of first time entrants to the service and custodial sentences could be provided at local authority level. However, with regard to the re-offending figures, he explained that these figures came from the Police National Data Base which would be more difficult to obtain. However, he pointed out that performance is broadly similar across the two authority areas. The Group Director, Community &

Children's Services explained that there was a similar situation with regard to the joint Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board with data being provided on a local authority basis and also on a regional basis for the Welsh Government. He reported that if Members required additional data this could be obtained.

A Member suggested that it would be useful to receive more information in relation to the impact of the service on the young people and the support in place to help them move out of the Youth Offending system and in particular what is being done to help those with complex needs.

The Head of Service explained that the support provided depended on where they were in the system and could involve leisure activity as a means of diverting the young person from criminal behaviour. For those with more complex needs, the work tended to be over a longer period of time through a multi agency approach and would include an individual plan for that young person with an exit strategy. He explained that if the intervention was statutory the young person could then feed back into the prevention service if there was a continued identified need or be signposted to mainstream services. If it was non statutory then depending on the individual situation there could be a link with Children's Services. He explained that once a young person reaches eighteen, they would usually move onto the Probation Service which is not a child centred service. These young people are tracked for a period of time to enable a post 18 re-offending picture.

A Member commented that it was good news that the offending figures had reduced but questioned whether the population base had reduced as well and the connection to the funding formula.

The Head of Service explained that the Youth Offending Service covered those aged 10 – 17 with some caveats within that. The funding formula for the local authority contribution was approximately a 75%:25% split between Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil based upon population numbers and defined caseloads at the time of the collaboration and potentially this could change over time. With regard to first time entrants into the Youth Offending Service comparative performance was based on rate per 100,000. He also provided an explanation of the other funding streams including the Youth Justice Grant which is a Home Office grant, the Youth Crime Prevention Fund which is operated by the Welsh Government and funding from the Police via the Police Crime Commissioner which has also reduced for 2015/16.

A co-opted Member referred to paragraph 3.5 of the report which referenced the thematic inspection carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in March 2015 with a report due for publication in March 2016. He asked whether it was usual to have such a lengthy wait. He also referred to the trend in relation to custodial sentences.

The Head of Service reported that it was expected that the results of the inspection which had considered a number of Youth Offending Services was expected to be published in January. However, there had been a post inspection meeting which had been positive and had only pinpointed some

areas of good practice. With regard to custodial sentences he explained that this was a volatile performance measure because of the small numbers involved with only one episode recorded for the first 2 quarters of 2015/16. He reported that an analysis is undertaken of every young person given a custodial sentence to establish what services had been provided for example from Children's Services and to identify whether anything more could have been done to prevent custody. However, sometimes a young person is given a custodial sentence and has had no previous involvement with a service. He explained that custodial figures across the local authority areas could be provided if required. He explained that whilst Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil have been considered 'high custodial' areas in the past there are regular meetings held with magistrates to discuss issues and the Legal Aid and Punishment of Offenders Act has placed limitations on magistrates in relation to sentencing.

A Member asked whether any data was available with regard to the number of Looked After Children involved with the Youth Offending Service.

The Head of Service reported that he would obtain the figures but was aware that they mirrored other youth offending services.

In response to queries, the Head of Service explained that for first time offenders, there is a Bureau process to consider the appropriate outcome eg youth caution. He also explained that when the Cwm Taf service was established, Merthyr Tydfil staff were transferred across to Rhondda Cynon Taf on TUPE arrangements. He further explained that it is a multiagency team and that members of staff from other agencies such as the police remain on their own terms and conditions.

With reference to the audit submission to the Youth Justice Board, a Member asked that the Youth Justice Board's findings be brought back to the Committee when available.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) to acknowledge the performance of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service in relation to key performance indicators and adherence to National Standards;
- (ii) that a future report be brought back to the Committee to include:
  - Feedback from the audit submission to the Youth Justice Board;
  - An understanding of the service provided to those young people with complex needs and its impact.

## **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING**

### **22. THE GOVERNOR SUPPORT SERVICE IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

The Head of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools reported on the services provided to schools by the Governor Support Service of the Education Directorate.

The Committee was advised of the services offered to all Primary and Special schools under the terms of the Service Level Agreement and informed that secondary schools are able to purchase a 'helpline and advice service', which includes the provision of documentation for use for governors meetings and training for staff in the clerking of their governing bodies. It was reported that the current service level agreement is due for renewal in April 2016 and it was suggested that this was an area in which scrutiny could assist.

The Committee was also informed of the training opportunities provided to governors including the introduction of online training for the mandatory elements. However, the Head of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools explained that the number of governor vacancies had reached worrying levels and there is a need to consider how to actively recruit governors with the appropriate skills to provide the challenge element that Estyn requires

Members were also informed that it has been decided to reconvene the Rhondda Cynon Taf Governors Association due to the fact that Rhondda Cynon Taf is the only authority in the Central South Consortium (CSC) without an active governors' association.

The Council's Team Leader for Governor Support spoke on her part time secondment role to the CSC as lead officer for Governors' Services and the objectives of this role. She also reported on the appointment of 12 Consultant Governors who may be deployed to schools across the region where governance has been identified as needing improvement either by the challenge advisors, officers from the local authorities or by Estyn during the course of a visit.

The Head of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools reported on the work being undertaken to reduce the back office costs of the Governor Support service in order to protect front line services, including school budgets. She explained that work is underway to reduce the amount of paperwork produced with more efficient and cost effective electronic communication. As part of this work a pilot project has been established with 8 governing bodies across the county borough, utilising the Welsh Government's Hwb Portal, which is available at all of the Council's schools. Members were also informed that within Rhondda Cynon Taf there are 3 federated governing bodies which each support two associated or linked schools and here is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of these three federations to consider whether more of these types of governing bodies should be encouraged.

In conclusion the Head of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools summarised the key priorities for the Governor Support Service, namely

- To focus more on supporting schools and their governors through the Estyn inspection process,
- To provide more tailored training to support governors in their role in the inspection process,
- To further develop a training programme for governors with the aim of providing them with the right skills to offer challenge,
- To revise the SLA in light of the above points,
- To look at ways to actively promote the recruitment of governors and fill the unacceptable number of vacancies and encourage the appointment of governors to these vacancies who have the appropriate skills to benefit schools, such as from the local business sector and higher education;
- To improve the induction pack for newly appointed governors,
- To improve the webpage for school governors,
- To improve communication with governors and reduce costs,
- To monitor service provision and provide quality assurance.

Following presentation of the report and at the request of the Chair, Mr Fish, co-opted Member spoke on his role as a member of the Central South Consortium's Governors' Steering Group. He also explained that whilst initially he had concerns that a scrutiny working group would be a duplication of work already underway he now felt that there were a number of issues which a scrutiny working group could assist with.

The Temporary Director of Education spoke on the importance placed on the leadership and management of schools by the Council and pointed out that approximately 85% of councillors sat on governing bodies and she would therefore welcome the introduction of a scrutiny working group to assist in improving the Governor Support Service.

The Committee discussed the issues within the report and a Member commented that in addition to the key challenges highlighted, there were a number of other issues to consider such as the quality assurance of governor training, the reluctance of some schools to work with governors and the need to promote the role of governors to employers who may be reluctant to allow staff time to undertake their governor role. There also appeared to be no clear definition of the role of a governor and the skills required.

The Temporary Director of Education spoke on the quality assurance processes in place with regard to governor training and also pointed out that a Training Needs Analysis consultation was carried out but unfortunately there were only 8 responses. She also explained that where a Consultant Governor is deployed, at the end of the period there will be a review to evaluate the effectiveness of the deployment. She also reported that it was part of Education law that governors could have time off for their duties. The aim is to get businesses involved and highlight the different skills which are developed through undertaking a school governor role.

The Team Leader for Governor Support also explained that quality assurance is undertaken in a number of ways for example, by sampling the minutes of

Governing bodies and challenging these against actions, the part played by the School Challenge Advisor in her part time secondment role and in addition templates are sent out to schools to support head teachers.

In relation to information sharing and reducing the amount of paperwork sent through to governors, Members pointed out that computer systems need to be accessible for governors, secure and reliable.

In response to a query, the Temporary Director of Education and Lifelong Learning explained that the shortage of governors is a problem nationally.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to establish a working group to consider the issue of Governor Support in more detail and to include:

- The development of a new Service Level Agreement between Schools and the Governor Support Service;
- Explore the further development of federated governor boards; and
- The issues in relation to recruitment and retention of governors in light of the growing shortage of people prepared to undertake the role.

(Mrs) C Leyshon  
Chairman

The meeting closed at 6.45 pm.

