

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015/16**

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL  
AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**18<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2016**

**AGENDA ITEM +**

**DEVELOPING SCRUTINY OF THE  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES  
FUNCTIONS**

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To inform the Committee of the outcome of the scrutiny workshop held on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 The Committee is asked to consider whether it wishes to progress the work as suggested at paragraph 3.8.

**3. WORKSHOP**

3.1 A workshop was organised for Members of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2016 at 3 pm. The workshop was organised as Members had expressed some concern that as a result of the changes to the scrutiny framework they were now being asked to form judgements on the Children's Services functions which some had little background knowledge of. Secondly, officers were keen to have an understanding of the type of information which Members felt they needed (in addition to standard data/performance reports) to enable them to carry out their scrutiny functions effectively.

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

- Develop a better understanding of the key issues facing Children's Services in the next year and beyond;
  - Explore best practice in the Scrutiny of Children's Services;
  - Identify priorities for the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.3 The workshop included a presentation from the Service Director, Children's Services which set out the key priorities and challenges for Children's Services within the framework of four headings:
- Early intervention/prevention;
  - Looked After Children;
  - Safeguarding;
  - Workforce.
- 3.4 The facilitation enabled a very interesting discussion to develop between everyone present which included discussion on the implications of the new Social Services and Wellbeing Act, the need to consider the wider wellbeing of the child not only the social services functions, moving toward outcome based scrutiny and being able to gain a perspective of the views of the young people themselves.
- 3.5 Members expressed the view that whilst the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee is very adept at questioning officers, they felt that often reports do not provide enough information for them to determine whether the services are resulting in better outcomes for children and young people.
- 3.6 Those Members present were of the opinion that the workshop had been very interesting and provided the time for discussion not always possible in a Committee setting. Members agreed that in taking forward the Committee's work programme in relation to the Children's Services element, the four key challenge areas as set out above needed to be the cornerstone.
- 3.7 However, Members agreed that they would need more information in relation to these key areas and given the already heavy workload of the Committee, it would not be possible to have the necessary in-depth discussion with officers in a committee setting.
- 3.8 It is therefore proposed that the Committee should form small groups of interested Members, each group taking one of the key issues ie, Early Intervention & Prevention, Looked After Children, Safeguarding and Workforce to meet on an informal basis with the appropriate officers to receive more detailed briefings on these topic areas. These groups, would then when ready, report back to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee enabling a better insight on where the Committee should spend its time.
- 3.9 Should the Committee agree to the proposals set out above it is suggested that these briefings are treated as 'investing in the future' and that for the present the work of the Committee carries on broadly as planned, albeit acknowledging

that there are often small changes to the work programme in relation to the timings of reports.

3.10 Members also expressed a wish to invite Mr Garthwaite to hold a further workshop with members at a suitable time in the future to analyse progress.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**18 JANUARY 2016**

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**Item 6: Future Development of the Committee's Work Programme**

**Background Papers**

**Freestanding Matter**

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