

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015-16

**CHILDREN & YOUNG SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

21ST MARCH 2016

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

Agenda Item No. 8

**PREPARATION FOR THE OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT
2015-16**

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Scrutiny Support Officer**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to consider its contribution to the annual Overview & Scrutiny report 2015/16.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Members consider and comment on the proposed content of the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Procedure Rules for Overview & Scrutiny within the Council's Constitution requires that an annual report be submitted to Council on the work carried out during the year.

3.2 The proposed approach to the scrutiny annual report this year is that there should be an overview of the work undertaken by each of the scrutiny committees followed by a section which will set out more clearly the contribution made by scrutiny during the year in a range of areas such as policy review, performance monitoring and in depth review with recommendations and a plan of the report is set out at Appendix 1.

3.3 Appendices 2 & 3 attached attempt to set out in draft form an overview of the work undertaken by the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee since the Council's AGM in May and provides a summary of the ways in which Scrutiny has contributed to the operation of the Council. As scrutiny work is on-going a number of the areas referred to in the draft documents will need to be re-visited in the coming weeks to bring the information up to date and there will be additional information to add.

3.4 Members' views and suggestions on the content of the annual report are welcome and if you so wish these can be sent to the scrutiny support officer in advance of the meeting.

- 3.5 As this is the first year of operation for the new scrutiny arrangements Members' views are particularly welcome in relation to how the operation of the Committee can be improved and what the key priorities should be for the Committee going forward into 2016/17.
- 3.6 It is intended that each of the themed scrutiny committees will undertake this process with a draft complete annual report to be considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 20th April 2016 prior to submission to Council at the AGM in May 2016.
- 3.7 Attached as Appendix 1 is the proposed plan of contents for the Overview and Scrutiny Annual report, Appendix 2 sets out the draft summary of the work undertaken by the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee whilst Appendix 3 attempts to highlight the positive work undertaken by scrutiny as a whole.

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

21ST MARCH 2016

List Of Background Papers

Report of the Director Legal & Democratic Services

Item - Preparation for the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 20015/16

Freestanding Matter

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SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

PLAN

1. Foreword – Cllr Adams
2. What is Scrutiny? Structure
3. Overview from each Chair
 - O&S
 - C&YP
 - F&P
 - H&WB
 - PSD
4. What have we achieved?
 - Policy Development/review
 - Pre-scrutiny
 - Monitoring
 - Inspection/Regulation
 - Recommendations/outcomes
5. Future Challenges – overview

APPENDIX 2 CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference:

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

Overview from the Chairman



**County Borough Councillor
Mrs C Leyshon**

Membership of the Committee:

County Borough Councillors
(Mrs) C Leyshon and C Williams (Chairman & Vice Chair respectively);
County Borough Councillors: H Boggis, J Bunnage, S Carter, (Mrs) J Cass, A L Davies MBE, S Evans-Fear, M Griffiths, P Jarman, B Morgan, (Mrs) S Jones,, B Stephens, (Mrs) M Tegg, G Thomas, R K Turner and L Walker.
Co-opted Members: Reverend E Counsell (voting Diocesan Authorities' Representative); Mr J Fish, Mr J Horton and Mrs S Jones (Voting Elected Parent Governor Representatives); Mrs C Jones (representing the NUT and Teachers' Panel), Mr C Jones (representing GMB), Ms A Jones (representing UNITE); Mr M Cleverley (representing NASUWT and Teachers' Panel; and Mr D Price

The bringing together of Education and Children's Services under the remit of one scrutiny committee brings together all the key elements required to help support and keep the children and young people of Rhondda Cynon Taf safe and able to reach their potential. However, bringing together two large and highly regulated service areas has not been without its challenges for scrutiny members many of whom had more experience of education matters than children's and Members concluded that they needed a better understanding of Children's Services in order to ensure that they targeted the right areas for scrutiny. It was agreed that the Committee should move toward developing a two year work programme and that initial focus should be given to educational attainment and the impact of the Central South Consortium, Governor Support, Looked After Children and Safeguarding. Whilst 2014/15 had seen a slightly improving picture, we concluded that educational attainment and the numbers of children in the looked after system are key issues for the Council and performance needed to improve.

During the year the Committee has questioned the Managing Director of the Central South Consortium and the Chairman of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Committee as well as considering the Consortium's Joint Legal Agreement. The Committee has also considered the educational attainment and

school categorisation data for 2015 and received information on Estyn's inspection outcomes. Continuing on the theme of educational attainment, the Committee received two very interesting presentations one from the Head teacher of Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School and the other from the Headteacher of Maesycoed Primary school which informed us of their improvement journeys from poor performing schools to being amongst the top ranked schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Committee is pleased to acknowledge the continued improvement in standards this year both in examination success and school categorisation. However, there remains a disparity with outcomes for those entitled to free school meals generally being poorer and the Committee is keen to see more done to address this. More also needs to be done to remedy the difference in performance between boys and girls.

As Chair of the Committee during the year I have met with the education scrutiny chairs of the other constituent authorities of the Central South Consortium and was interviewed by Estyn as part of their first review of the consortium. Along with my vice chair and the chair and vice chair of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee I also met with officers from the CSSIW and it is intended that this will be a regular occurrence and should assist with our future work programme preparations.

When the Committee received a detailed report in relation to the Governor Support Service, it became clear that scrutiny could play an important role in supporting the key challenges face by the service such as the development of a new Service Level Agreement between schools and the Governor Support Service; exploring further development of federated governor boards; and considering the issue of recruitment and retention of governors in light of the growing shortage of people prepared to undertake the role. It was therefore decided to form a scrutiny working group to review these issues. The working group has not yet published its final report. However, to date the Working Group has played an important part in developing the detail of the Service Level Agreement which is now in place.....

At the December meeting, the Committee was pleased to welcome the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children's Services who reported on the Cabinet's response to the recommendations put forward by the two scrutiny working groups which had considered issues in relation to children looked after by the Council. One had focussed on educational attainment whilst the other had explored the issues around placement mix and the cost of 'out of county' placements. In total, 15 recommendations had been put to the Cabinet, all of which were accepted and the Cabinet Member presented the Committee with a proposed action plan and progress against this will now be monitored by the Committee in the coming months.

Continuing on the theme of reducing the Looked After Children numbers, the Council had been one of the most successful in Wales in terms of placing children for adoption. The Committee was therefore anxious that the Welsh Government's introduction of a National Adoption Service with Regional Adoption Collaboratives would not lead to a decrease in the numbers of children finding suitable homes. The Committee received representatives from the Vale, Valleys

and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative to its December meeting to present their progress report. The Committee welcomed the greater level of choice the new collaborative should offer children in care and acknowledged the difficulties it faced in the first year of operation. However, Members will be expecting evidence of further progress when future reports are presented.

For some time, scrutiny Members had expressed concern regarding what appeared to be the Council's consistently poor performance in respect of a suite of performance indicators relating to children looked after and those on the child protection register. The CSSIW had also raised the issue of the Council's use of "unqualified workers" in comparison to other local authorities and this was one of the issues which was discussed when myself and the vice chairman, along the Chair and Vice of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee met with them to discuss the findings of their annual performance evaluation report of the Council's Social Services functions. Whilst the CSSIW did not suggest that the Council's way of managing its child care caseloads is inappropriate they highlighted that Rhondda Cynon Taf's position differs from other authorities in Wales and in their 2014/15 Annual Evaluation report pointed out that "While virtually all (95%) looked after children in Wales have a qualified social worker, 63% of looked after children in Rhondda Cynon Taff do so". This issue had also been raised at the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee and it was therefore felt important that the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee should have the opportunity to consider the arguments and form a judgement. As a result the Committee received a detailed report from the Service Director for Children's Services which set out the rationale of the use of appropriately qualified (Assessor Care Manager posts) but not social work qualified staff. Having considered the report and officers' responses to their questioning the Committee concluded that it was satisfied that the current use of Assessor Care Managers did not raise any specific areas of concern.

During 2014 the Wales Audit Office undertook a review of the assurance and accountability arrangements of the Council for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and being adhered to. As a result of the review the WAO made a number of proposals for improvement. In July 2015, these proposals were further reinforced by a national Wales Audit Office report on Safeguarding Arrangements across Wales. In response to this the Council drafted an action plan which was reviewed by the scrutiny committee and the Committee will continue to monitor

The Committee has considered school attendance performance and

Following consideration of Quarter 2 performance, a referral was made from the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee which had concerns at the increase in the number of fixed term exclusions, in February, the Committee received the school exclusion data for 2014/15. The Committee was pleased to see that the more recent datasets had demonstrated that there had been a decrease on all three measures. The Committee agreed that future reports should include additional information in relation to repeat exclusions and national benchmarking

and any additional information to should be included in future reports to provide context.

In addition, during the year the Committee has considered the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service, the Director of Social Services Annual Report, the Social Services Representations & Complaints Report 2014/15 , the CSSIW Annual Council Performance Evaluation Report for 2014/15 and the Cwm Taf Children's Safeguarding Board's Annual Report for 2014/15.

As mentioned earlier, Members of the Committee 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. In addition, Members also felt that for scrutiny to move forward, the type information they received needed to change as well.

As a result, a workshop was organised which was facilitated by Mr Tony Garthwaite, who is a former Director of Social Services and Corporate Director who currently acts as an independent consultant 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.

The workshop also provided Members with the opportunity to discuss with officers the type of information which they felt they needed (in addition to standard data/performance reports) to enable them to move toward more outcome based scrutiny.

As a result of the workshop it was agreed that the membership should form small groups to each receive more detailed information on the four key themes with a view to reporting back to the Committee on specific areas to progress in the future:

- Early intervention/prevention;
- Looked After Children;
- Safeguarding;
- Workforce.

The workshop was well received by Members and it is the intention to meet again with Mr Garthwaite later in the year.

It has been a challenging year for the Committee and no doubt next year will be the same but I have every confidence in the membership all of whom are dedicated to improving the life chances of our children. I would like to thank all Members and the co-opted members of the committee who have once again supported me and worked so tirelessly throughout the year. I would, however, like to make special mention of one of our co-opted members, Mr Jeremy Horton, who has sadly come to the end of his term of office. Mr Horton has been a great

contributor to this Committee and the former Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for the last four years and will be missed.

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Appendix 3

WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

The following information is intended to provide a summary of the contributions to the Council's policy development and governance arrangements made by the Council's Scrutiny Committees between May 2015 and April 2016

Policy development/review -

Considering draft policy/impact of policy change/providing Cabinet with the views of scrutiny members.

- Consultation on Home to School Transport – new policy
- Consultation on Revenue budget strategy
- Welsh Government Consultation – Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill
- Impact of service change – Meals on Wheels Service
- Library service
- The draft Corporate Performance Report for 2015/16?
-

Pre-decision scrutiny –

Where scrutiny has commented on policy proposals prior to Cabinet's consideration providing an opportunity to influence Cabinet's decision making:

- Draft Corporate Plan for 2016-2000
- 2016/17 Revenue Budget Proposals
- Draft Medium Term Strategic Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf Leisure Services 2015-2020
- 2016/17 action plans to deliver priorities

Monitoring performance/progress

Monitoring the Council's performance or monitoring the implementing actions previously agreed:

- Director of Social Services Annual Report
- Social Services Annual Representation & Complaints Report 2014/15
- Cwm Taf Carers Information & Strategy Annual Report 2014/15
- Cwm Taf Safeguarding Adults' Board Annual Report 2014/15
- Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report 2014/15
- School Attendance Performance
- Educational attainment at Foundation and Key Stages along with School categorisation;
- ESYTN Inspection Outcomes
- Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative

- Quarterly budget & performance monitoring;
- Monitoring of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy
- Rhondda Cynon Taf's Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Assessment Report 2014-2015

Inspection/regulation

- CSSIW Annual Council Performance Evaluation Report 2014/15
- Estyn Inspection Outcomes
- WAO review - Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children

Call-in

- Home to School Transport: Maintaining the Existing Service but Reducing the Subsidy for Discretionary Travel – a Public Consultation on a Proposed New Policy. The Call-in was unsuccessful. However, as a result of the debate it was agreed that Scrutiny should play a role in the consultation process on the proposed new policy.

Scrutiny Reviews

- 'Zero Hours' contracts - completed
- Governor Support - ongoing
- Maesyffynnon Residential Care Home – ongoing (should conclude by May?)
- Council Accommodation – ongoing
- Fuel Poverty – ongoing (should conclude by May?)
- Participation rates in recycling across the County Borough
- Mobile Library Service
- The number of bids and tenders submitted for Council contracts by local businesses

Outcomes

In total Scrutiny has sent ??? recommendations/requests to the Cabinet during 2014/15

Empty Properties

The Empty Properties Scrutiny Review led by Councillor Geraint Davies considered not only the current work of the Council in tackling the issue but also considered the external factors that can influence the numbers of empty properties and the extent to which these can be address. As well as visiting those parts of the County Borough particularly affected by the blight of empty properties Members met with renowned architect Jonathan Adams who contributed to the BBC Wales programme ' How Green is my Valley: a Future for the Valleys'. In total **9 recommendations** were

identified which it is believed will further strengthen the services available to bring back into use empty properties. The Cabinet responded positively to these recommendations accepting them all in principal and the Cabinet Member in conjunction with officers presented their action plan to the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee setting out how they aimed to implement these recommendations. Amongst this work will be the launch of a specific and targeted campaign to raise awareness of the issues caused by empty properties and the benefits of bringing them back into use to include: -development of a brand; use of various media eg website, radio, posters; improvements to the Council's website and reporting mechanisms and to improve and update the Council's empty property pack.

Carers

The percentage of carers of adult services users who were offered an assessment in their own right during the year improved from a bottom quartile position in 2014/15 to

Looked After Children

The findings and recommendations of the two scrutiny working groups in relation to children looked after by the Council were presented to Cabinet on 24th November 2015. The working group focusing on educational attainment was led by Councillor Christina Leyshon whilst the working group which focussed on placements costs was led by Councillor Margaret Davies. As part of these reviews Members visited schools and met with the Regional Commissioning Manager for the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru and Dr Claire Ball the Clinical Director for Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services. In total, 15 recommendations were made which were all accepted and an action plan put in place which includes reviewing the current Pupil Education Plan system, developing a training programme for designated teachers for LAC, education staff and foster carers on the needs of LAC, improve the collation and interrogation of data to track and monitor outcomes of LAC (education) and Children's Services will produce a LAC Reduction Strategy as part of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014.

Educational attainment

Our work on governor support should help develop the leadership of schools therefore driving improvement???

Aim to close the Gap on the performance of FSM children – challenge??

Community Infrastructure Levy

Scrutiny recommended a **6 point process** to Cabinet for the formulating, monitoring and revising the Regulation 123 List and these were considered and accepted by Cabinet on the 23rd July 2015.

'Zero Hour' Contracts

This Scrutiny Working Group made 3 recommendations to Cabinet which were accepted. Principally the working group developed and recommended the introduction of a policy which commits contractors to ethical practices and supports the ethical management of 'zero hours' contracts.

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