

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale on Thursday, 14th July, 2016 at 5 p.m.

PRESENT

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

County Borough Councillors

H.Boggis	M.Griffiths	B.Stephens
J.Bunnage	P.Jarman	R.K.Turner
S.Carter	(Mrs)S.Jones	L.Walker
(Mrs.)J.Cass	B.Morgan	

Member(s) in Attendance

County Borough Councillor G.Hopkins – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services,
Equalities and the Welsh Language

Co-opted Members

Mr.J.Fish – Voting Elected Parent/Governor Representative
Mr.M.Cleverley – NASUWT and Teachers’ Panel

Officers in Attendance

Mr.G.Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children’s Services
Mr.P.Nicholls – Principal Solicitor, Litigation
Ms.G.Davies – Service Director for Access, Engagement & Inclusion
Ms.S.Walker – Head of Achievement, Primary

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillor S.Evans-Fear and Mrs.S.Jones (co-opted member - Elected Parent/Governor Representative).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on the 21st March, 2016.

4. CHANGE IN ORDER OF THE AGENDA

In view of the late arrival of County Borough Council G.Hopkins, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Equalities and the Welsh Language, which was as a result of traffic congestion, the report of the Director, Legal and Democratic Services in respect of the Director, Social Services Annual Report was brought forward.

REPORTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

5. DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee’s comments were sought on the contents of the Director of Social Services Annual Report 2015/16 which would form part of the formal consultation process.

The Director of Social Services Annual Report provided Members with a summary of the work and achievements of the last twelve months, much of which had been reported to Members through the performance reporting mechanisms and in the preparation for the production of the Council’s Corporate Performance report.

In response to a query raised by one of the Members, the Group Director, Community and Children’s Services reported that the telephone number as published in the report, should individuals wish to report any concerns in relation to Adult Services was in theory, a `24 hour` number as `out of hours` the call would automatically be diverted to an appropriate line.

A Member referred to statement made on page 5 of the report –“*...despite a slight improvement over the last year we still have a comparatively larger number of children who are `looked after` by the Council rather than living with their families*” and he asked whether it was envisaged that there would be a reduction in the number of children looked after during 2016/17. The Group Director stated that whilst a target had been set to reduce the number of children and young people taken into care, it was a `moving feast` as, for example, just recently 15 children were taken into care, six of which were from one family. However, Children’s Services and the Education Directorates were working together on improving early years intervention.

Another Member queried on what could be done to ensure that more children could be kept more safely in their homes rather than be looked after by the

Local Authority. The Group Director indicated that this had, to some extent been achieved, yet again through early intervention and support from the Team Around the Family (TAF) whose assessments and reports had increased helping more families achieve their identified goals.

Whilst, Safeguarding Adults was not within the remit of this Committee but for consideration by Members of the Health and Well-Being Scrutiny Committee, a Member raised concern on the use of Direct Payments as an alternative to a commissioned service (page 11 of the report). The Group Director responded that this was an initiative that had been introduced by the Welsh Government. The Local Authority were trying to be more flexible in its approach to home care arrangements in an attempt to be more outcome focussed. Officers within his Department also work with a company that help people to manage the direct payments.

In respect of carers, including young carers, the Group Director reported that in June of this year the Cabinet were updated on the Carers Measure together with the Annual Report for 2015/16 in relation to the implementation of the Cwm Taf Information and Consultation Strategy. A new Cwm Taf Carers Strategy 2016-19 is to be submitted to Cabinet in the near future, following its consideration by the Social Services and Well-Being Partnership Board incorporated into the final report that would be presented to Cabinet and, if felt appropriate could be reported to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee(s).

Members congratulated the Group Director and his staff on exceeding the target of children who were looked after in foster care that were placed with in-house carers. The Group Director reported that the target of 61% was exceeded, in many respects, due to the Regional Adoption Service, 'Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative', which became operational in June, 2015, its aim being to increase adoptive placements for the four Councils by specialising in recruitment, assessment, 'family finding' and adoption. The Regional Unit is based at Rock Grounds, Aberdare and Members of the Committee were invited to contact the Group Director if they wished to make a visit and to verbally report back on their findings to this Committee.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** – That the Group Director, Community and Children's Services incorporate the comments of the Members in the final report that is to be presented to Cabinet.

6. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR, 2015/16

The Committee received County Borough Councillor G.Hopkins, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Equalities and the Welsh Language and Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board who presented the first Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board for the municipal year 2015/16, which had been presented to Cabinet at its meeting held on the 19th April, 2016.

Following the comments made by Councillor G.Hopkins and his responses to questions made by the Committee, it was **RESOLVED** – To note the work of the Corporate Parenting Board and its future work priorities as outlined in its Annual Report.

7. DRAFTING A SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE 2016/17 MUNICIPAL YEAR

In his report, the Director, Legal and Democratic Services informed Members of the proposed new arrangements for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in respect of the frequency of meetings to reflect the need to apportion equal consideration to the areas of Education and Children's Social Services.

At the meeting, the Head of Democratic Services reported that following the implementation of bringing together the two large service areas of Education and Children's Social Services under the remit of this Committee had been very challenging for Members, and it was therefore felt that separate meetings dedicated to the individual service areas would be the best 'fit' in terms of being able to dedicate more time to properly consider the topics sitting within each area and the best use of Member and Officer time (and that of the Education Co-opted Members).

It was therefore proposed that a revised approach be taken and the meetings of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee be arranged on a three weekly cycle. The topics to be included on the Committee's Work Programme would also need to be appropriately incorporated should the revised approach be agreed.

Following a lengthy discussion ensued, it was **RESOLVED** –

1. To agree that meetings of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee take place on a three weekly cycle (to reflect the need to consider those topics dealt with under the individual Education and Children's Social Services Work Programmes at separate meetings. The meeting on the sixth week is to be a combined meeting to consider those issues which bridge the two service areas:-

Week 1 – Children's Social Services

Week 3 – Education

Week 6 – Combined

2. To agree the dates of meetings for the remainder of this year, as shown below to reflect the new cycle of Scrutiny meetings:-
 - 7th September – Children’s Social Services
 - 29th September – Education
 - 19th October – Combined
 - 8th November – Children’s Social Services
 - 29th November – Education
 - 19th December – Combined
3. To agree that following a period of six months, the revised approach will be reviewed by Members of this Committee to assess the effectiveness of the new arrangements (19th December, 2016).
4. To agree the initial list of work topics for the 2016/17 municipal year, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, as informed by the work of the Committee during 2015/16.

8. **ESTYN REPORT OF THE CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM**

Following its inspection in March, 2016, Members had before them the Estyn report of the Central South Consortium together with a summary table of recommendations, action and impact.

The Head of Achievement (Primary) presented the report of Estyn to the Committee and reported that the inspections of the four Consortia in Wales by Estyn had been at the request of the Welsh Government. Each appropriate Scrutiny Committee within the Consortium is to receive representation of an annual report in the late autumn/early spring term from the Consortium which would also focus on progress against the recommendations.

Members raised concern that the Director of the Consortium was not present at this meeting to answer any questions, when it was indicated by the Head of Achievement that this was the format and process which was to be reported to the five local authorities within the Consortium.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** – to receive the report and that future reports of Estyn and progress updates of the Consortium be presented by the appropriate Directorates at future meetings of this Committee.

**(MRS.)C.LEYSHON
CHAIR**

The meeting closed at 7.35 p.m.

