



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

9th SEPTEMBER 2020

CONSIDERATION OF THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 – CHILDREN'S SERVICES ELEMENTS - REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members of the Children and Young People's Committee with the opportunity to scrutinise, review and challenge the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the information received from the Director of Children Services.
- 1.2 This meeting continues the discussions of the committee which took place in July, in respect of the education elements of its terms of reference.
- 1.3 Members are asked to considered this report in the context and with the same approach as the first meeting of this scrutiny committee, in respect of the Council's response to Covid-19.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:-

- 2.1 Consider the verbal update from the Director of Children's Services in relation to the Council's response to COVID-19, from a Children's Services prospective.
- 2.2 Acknowledge the contents of the information included and latest verbal information received and determine whether there are any areas in which Members would like to receive further information.
- 2.3 Subject to 2.1 and 2.2 above, request the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications to report any relevant and further information to the next Committee.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Cabinet reports cited within this report, identify the critical actions taken by the Council since the COVID-19 restrictions were imposed by the UK and Welsh Governments and set out the future steps the Council will take in respect of service planning in the next recovery phase.
- 3.2 To support the committee's considerations of the Council's response, from a Children's Services perspective, and to consider the current plans that are in place to help and support the vulnerable children and families of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 On the 23rd March 2020, and in response to measures implemented by the UK and Welsh Governments as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council's committee meetings were temporarily suspended.
- 4.2 Council decisions have continued to be made during this period in accordance with the Council's constitution. However, the Council's Scrutiny Committees have been unable to undertake their role as part of the Council's decision making processes during this time, until the necessary regulations were presented by the Welsh Government.
- 4.3 With the introduction of [the Local Authorities \(Coronavirus\) \(Meetings\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020 in May](#) all local authorities in Wales have been provided with the opportunity to resume their committee processes.
- 4.4 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee met for the first time under these arrangements on 26th June 2020.
- 4.5 Taking an over-arching response to scrutiny in the immediate period, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, determined areas for scrutiny over the extended municipal year up to the Council's Annual General Meeting on 16th September 2020.
- 4.6 Thematic Scrutiny Committees are not being requested to consider or develop specific work programmes for this period. The Children's Services' element of this committee's remit will be considered at its September meeting.

5. SCRUTINISING THE OF THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

- 5.1 The Cabinet has been utilising video conferencing to engage with senior officers around the Council's response to the Coronavirus and the first formal virtual meeting of the Cabinet was held on [Thursday 21st May](#). At that meeting, the attached report was presented by the Chief Executive, outlining the Council's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic to date, and the future

intentions to establish the recovery and resumption of services. Reports emanating from the recommendations agreed at this meeting, were considered by Cabinet on [Thursday 25th June](#). The Chief Executive also provided a detailed summary to members at the first virtual meeting of Council, held on [1st July 2020](#).

- 5.2 The Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee has to-date taken a Council-wide approach to scrutiny, as the Council's over-arching scrutiny committee. The Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee is the first thematic scrutiny committee to take place under the new regulations virtually.
- 5.3 This Committee is being held to provide the opportunity for the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee, to consider the service response of the Council to date. Importantly it provides the first opportunity for members to receive information in respect of these issues relating to the remit of the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee. **Members are asked to consider the reports attached and determine whether there are any issues on which they would like to receive further information or review in greater detail at a future meeting. It is not proposed, at this initial meeting, to facilitate detailed discussions around specific areas.**
- 5.4 Given the fast moving nature of these matters, it is important to acknowledge that information may need to be provided to Scrutiny in different formats, with a focus on a smaller range of issues relating predominantly to the Council's activity around COVID-19.
- 5.5 There will be further reports to Cabinet in the coming weeks which will outline how the Council continues to respond and prepare for the future. The Cabinet considered the Service Recovery Plans of the Council, at its meeting on the [28th July 2020](#). The Overview & Scrutiny Committee, determined at its first meeting, to scrutinise the details of these proposals at its meeting, which took place on [30th July 2020](#) and will continue to monitor progress at future meetings.
- 5.6 **It is important to acknowledge, in the current circumstances, that facilitating the opportunity for Senior Officers to provide up-to-date information directly at the committee meeting provides the most effective way for Scrutiny to be engaged in these matters.** In doing so, the opportunity will continue to be afforded for Scrutiny to be updated with the latest developments as they unfold, providing greater scope to engage in these matters and request information and additional reporting as deemed appropriate by Committee Members.
- 5.7 This Scrutiny committee will receive the latest information and evidence from Director of Children's Services at this meeting.
- 5.8 As part of the review of these matters, it is proposed to receive information and evidence from the Cabinet Members where appropriate.
- 5.9 To support the smooth conduct of this virtual scrutiny meeting, members are encouraged to seek clarification on specific matters, particularly of a ward

nature, outside of the meeting, if these questions do not relate to recommendations set out for Member's considerations.

6. SUPPORTING PAPERS & INFORMATION

6.1 As general information for the committee, the following reports have been considered by the Cabinet:

- Cabinet report titled: ["Update on COVID 19 Position in Rhondda Cynon Taf"](#) considered on the 21st May 2020.
- Cabinet Reports considered on 25th June:
 - ['Council Infrastructure Projects – Supporting the Local economy during CORONAVIRUS'](#)
 - ['Safer Places – Social Distancing in town centres and public spaces during Coronavirus'](#)
 - ['Safer buildings social distancing and other safety measure in Council Offices, schools and other public buildings as lockdown is lifted.'](#)
 - ['The Financial Implications of COVID-19.'](#)
- Urgent Cabinet Member Decision – Child Care & Summer Activities (<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/DelegatedDecisions/RelatedDocuments/Decisions/2019to2020/ChildcareandSummerActivityProgramme2020.pdf>)
- Cabinet Reports considered on the 26th July 2020:
 - [Update on the Covid 19 Position in RCT – Recovery Plan](#)
 - [The Council Corporate Safe guarding Arrangements](#)
 - [The Council Performance Report -31st March 2020\(Year End\)](#)

The Corporate Parenting Board meet on the 30th July 2020 to consider matters relating to its remit.

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

7.1 Engagement has been undertaken with Director for Children's Services in respect of the contents of this report.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not currently required - the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES.

- 11.1 This is an information report presenting the Cabinet report which outlines how the Council is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 Whilst it is proposed that Scrutiny is presented with a regular package of information identifying the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic (pressure points on Council services relating to COVID-19, along with the business of reinstating some services and the recovery and service planning process), Members are asked to acknowledge the fast-moving nature of this situation, which has necessitated the need to provide up-to-date information as part of the meeting, to effectively allow Scrutiny to consider these matters.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE

22nd July 2020

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES &

COMMUNICATION