

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes** of the meeting held at the Sobell Leisure Centre, The Ynys, Aberdare on Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> November, 2014 at 5 p.m.

**PRESENT**

County Borough Councillor G.R.Davies – in the Chair

**County Borough Councillors**

S Bradwick	S Carter	(Mrs) L De Vet	J Elliott
P Howe	(Mrs) S Pickering	G Smith	M Weaver
(Mrs) T Williams			

**Officers**

Mr.P.Mee – Service Director, Public Health & Protection  
Mr D Batten – Head of Leisure, Parks & Countryside  
Mrs S Davies – Head of Cultural Services  
Mr A Wilkins – Head of Legal Democratic & Corporate  
Mrs C O'Neill – Arts & Creative Industries Manager  
Ms J Jenkins – Entrepreneur

**26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs) J Bonetto, L Langford, S Powderhill, (Mrs) M Tegg and M J Watts.

**27. WELCOME.**

The Vice chairman welcomed the Committee to the Sobell Leisure Centre and the Chairman took the opportunity of thanking the Head of Leisure, Parks & Countryside for the tour of the facilities that the Committee undertook prior to the committee meeting.

**28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, there were no declarations of interest made pertaining to the agenda.

**29. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – to approve the minutes of the Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee held on the 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2014 as an accurate record.

Cllr S carter advised the Committee that a response had still not been received as referenced within minute 23, and the Head of Legal Democratic & Corporate advised that this would be followed up.

**30. LEISURE SERVICES WITHIN RHONDDA CYNON TAF – UPDATE.**

The Head of Leisure, Parks & Countryside provided the Committee with a verbal update on the Leisure Centre facilities within Rhondda Cynon Taf, following the recent public consultation and Cabinet decisions taken regarding their operations. Members were reminded of the Phase 2 proposals, which looked at the County Borough having 3 core Leisure centres with 4 Satellites centres, running at reduced hours. Cabinet deferred their decision in May. with further proposals considered in July, with the retention of all the Leisure Centres with different operating hours to accommodate customer needs. The Head of Leisure, Parks & Countryside commented that this decision was based on the caveat that officers undertook a broader piece of work to establish viability of a trust model for Leisure Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf for future Cabinet consideration.

The Committee were advised that the service had achieved the savings required without having to close any of the centres and explained that operating hours had been reduced in total by 7000 hours, with the centres accommodating the popular usage times. Members were advised that the new operating hours were not appreciated by some users, giving the example of some service users opting to use facilities at quieter periods, although this was not cost effective for the service. The Head of Leisure, Parks & Countryside advised that the new operating hours would be implemented from the 1<sup>st</sup> December and commented that he was confident that the new operating hours would allow the service to maintain customer service needs.

One Member commented on the usage of swimming pools in general and the problems that some service users encounter with designated 'fast' swimming lanes and also queried the future proposals for Hawthorn Swimming Pool. The Head of Leisure, Parks & Countryside advised of discussions being taken forward with Hawthorn School to produce a viable business case for the swimming pool and also confirmed that the condition of the roof of the pool was not made apparent until the initial phase 2 proposals commenced.

Members queried the future proposals for Bronwydd Pool and Llantwit Fardre Leisure Centre and the officer advised that work was being undertaken to see if any interested groups would take over the operation of the facilities.

One member of the committee spoke positively of the work of volunteers within her ward that took forward the operation of the paddling pool during the summer months.

The Chairman concluded the discussions commenting on the positive work by the service and stressed the need to retain the leisure Services rather than demolish them and looked forward to a future report on the impact of the service changes.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the verbal report.

31. **WORKING WITH THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES FOR A MORE PROSPEROUS RHONDDA CYNON TAF.**

Through the aid of a PowerPoint presentation the Head of Cultural Services provided the Committee with an overview of the Creative Industries, both nationally and within Wales and also drew on the experiences of the Arts & Creative Industries Manager and a local entrepreneur to provide Members with further context into the industry within RCT.

The Head of Cultural Services commenced her presentation explaining the term creative industries, advising that the term referred to 'those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property, providing examples such as video gaming. The Officer further proceeded to advise of Creative Industries within a UK context, within Wales and finally within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

In respect of RCT, the Committee were advised that the County Borough were 'lagging behind' in this area compared to the rest of Wales, in relation to the number of SMEs (Small and Medium Sizes Enterprises). The Officer commented on the potential reasons for this situation including high levels of deprivation, aging population, accessibility and the large geographical area. It was also highlighted that another potential reason could be individuals commuting out of the area to creative industry hubs in Cardiff, Newport or Swansea.

The Committee were advised of the work of Cultural Services within RCTCBC, which consists of the RCT theatres, along with the Arts development Team. The Head of Cultural Service spoke of the strategic role the service has in advocating for the value and benefits of the arts and creative industries, advising other services on using the arts and creative industries and strategically informing policies and plans where they can contribute. It was advised that working in partnership with others, the service signpost and encourage young people in particular to take up pathways into employment or self employment with creative industries, raising their aspirations and in turn reducing poverty within communities. Members were advised that RCT was the 1<sup>st</sup> in Wales to have a creative Industries apprentice, advising that the individual had also secured employment as a house technician within the theatre.

With the assistance of the Arts & Creative Industries Manager members were advised of the projects taken forward by the service including specific case studies. Members were advised of the Young Promoters Network, Make IT Media Project, TakepaRT, Made in Wales – It's my Shout(Artsconnect) and the Commissioned Community Dance pathways Programme. Members were provided with quotes from young people who had accessed the service during

the case studies, demonstrating the value that young people have for the service.

To highlight the experiences and opportunities that the cultural services provide to the people of RCT, Ms J Jenkins a young entrepreneur provided the committee with her positive experiences and the opportunities that had arisen for her following access to the service and the programmes that it delivered.

The chairman thanked the officers and Ms Jenkins for the detailed presentation and the insight into the creative industries and the role of cultural services within Rhondda Cynon Taf, commenting on its importance both to individuals and economically to the County Borough, and opened the item up for Members questions.

Members commented on the importance of the service and the opportunities that it could provide to individuals and spoke of the support that needs to be provided to the group, and members commented on the increasing importance of educating residents of the County Borough about the opportunities available to them through Cultural Services with a clear focus on promoting and educating through schools.

Ms Jenkins commented on her experience of how she was introduced to the programmes and agreed with members comments that further promotion needed to be taken within schools of the opportunities available, commenting that she was lucky due to her strong family support in taking the opportunities available, and due to her own enthusiasm.

The Head of Cultural Services commented on the difficulties with marketing of the service, and agreed that further needed to be done in this area with marketing, not simply focussing on music and theatrics but areas such as web design and gaming, and the need to inspire confidence in the young people to take their aspirations forward. The Officer advised of the mapping exercise being undertaken by Welsh Government across Wales, which may indicate the reasons why RCT is lagging behind.

One Member commented on the 'Hubs' within larger neighbouring Authorities, as a potential factor for RCT lagging behind and he commented on the travelling problems that young people could face in reaching these services, and commented on the need for a local 'Hub' and reinforced the message about supporting the service.

The Service Director, Public Health and Protection agreed with the Committee that the aspirations of the people of the County Borough needed to be supported, and agreed that more needed to be done to maximise the potential within RCT.

Following discussions on the presentation the group discussed the potential of taking forward a working group to scrutinise the matter further. Members commented on the need to scrutinise the pathways signposting and how to

maximise this to its full potential, whilst also maximising the networks available. Members reiterated the importance of promoting the service within schools to illustrate how the opportunities can enlighten both individual lives and the economy within the County Borough.

Before committing whether to take forward a working group on the matter the chairman reminded members of the Empty Properties working group going forward and referred the committee to minute 25, from the previous Committee meeting, whereby members resolved to set up a working group to consider Community Recycling Centres. The Chairman suggested that to ensure productivity a report on Community Recycling Centres be presented to the Committee at its next meeting for consideration of the issues.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to:-

- a) Note the content of the report
- b) Create a working group to scrutinise the creative industries within Rhondda Cynon Taf, to consider how to maximise the benefits of the creative industries within RCT across a range of Council services, and with key partners.
- c) That a report on community Recycling centres be presented to the Committee at its next meeting.

**G.R.DAVIES  
CHAIRMAN**

**The meeting closed at 6.20 p.m.**

