

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015-16

**FINANCE & PERFORMANCE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

9TH MARCH 2016

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

Agenda Item No. 5

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

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide the Finance & Performance 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 Finance and Performance 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

FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9TH 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

FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

OVERVIEW

Terms of Reference: This committee is responsible for scrutinising financial and operational performance; treasury management arrangements; the annual revenue budget consultation process; statutory performance reporting requirements and monitoring the implementation of medium term financial planning .

Overview from the Chairman



**County Borough Councillor
M A Norris**

Membership of the Committee:

County Borough Councillors

M A Norris and (Mrs) J S Ward (Chairman & Vice Chair respectively)

County Borough Councillors: (Mrs) J Bonetto, S Bradwick, G R Davies, S Evans, P Griffiths, (Mrs) S Jones, (Mrs) C Leyshon, (Mrs) S Rees, G Smith, R W Smith, P Wasley, E Webster, C J Williams, C J Willis and R Yeo.

Ex-officio Member: Mr R Hull, Co-opted member and chairman of the Council's Audit Committee.

This Committee differs from the other scrutiny committees as the membership includes the chairs and vice chairs of the other three themed scrutiny committees. The Chairman and vice chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as well as the Chairman of the Council's Audit Committee also regularly attend which provides the Committee with a good balance of knowledge when reviewing the Council's performance.

The Committee has had a very busy first year and perhaps we were ambitious in the tasks which we set ourselves at the start. However, we have been tasked with monitoring the Council's performance and I believe that we have a duty to do whatever we can to drive improvement and efficiencies. The work which we are unable to complete will carry forward into the new municipal year.

Service Change Evaluation

In terms of the Committee's Work Programme, in addition to its standard tasks the membership agreed that they should evaluate those service changes introduced in 2014 namely, libraries, meals on wheels, day centres and youth/e3 services.

With regard to the library service, the Finance & Scrutiny Committee were made aware of the intentions of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee to review the mobile library service and we therefore requested that they widen their brief to include a review of the financial outcomes arising from the service change.

To date the Committee has reviewed the impact of the changes to the Meals on Wheels Service following the service change introduced from November 2014. As a result of the information considered the Committee advised on a number of issues going forward including improving engagement and consultation with clients and it is the intention that the Committee will receive regular update reports to monitor progress.

Community Infrastructure Levy

Some of the work that I and other scrutiny colleagues have been involved with this year has stemmed from the former Corporate Service Scrutiny Committee and one of these topic areas is the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The CIL Scrutiny Working Group met in May to consider the process for formulating, monitoring and revising the Regulation 123 List and the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed this piece of work in June 2015 following which the recommended process was forwarded to the Cabinet for consideration.

Zero Hours Contracts

Also stemming from the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee, several members of the former committee including myself undertook a review into Zero Hour Contracts. This was an issue which had been referred to scrutiny from Council following a Notice of Motion. This led to the development of an ethical procurement policy which has since been adopted by Cabinet.

Also in June the Committee considered the work undertaken by the scrutiny working groups tasked to assess performance in delivering the Council's 2014/15 priority plans and support the development of the delivery plans for 2015/16 prior to the annual. The Committee considered the draft Corporate Performance Report for 2015/16 alongside the feedback from the scrutiny groups and endorse the report for presentation to Council. Later in the summer the Committee also endorsed the draft summary of the Corporate Performance Report 2015/16.

As a result of a 'call-in' considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in June the Committee formed part of the consultation process in respect of changes to the Council's Home to School Transport policy. An open invitation was also given to all non executive members and co-opted members to attend and present their views, all of which formed part of the information pack considered by Cabinet prior to them making their decision.

One of the fundamental changes to the scrutiny framework has been the move away from each committee receiving its own performance exception report to one committee, namely the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee receiving all information. In July 2015, the Committee considered the Council's year end performance and key exceptions for 2014/15. At the same time Members agreed

a mechanism for the provision of information on performance and key exceptions on a quarterly basis. As a result, Members have received very detailed quarterly performance presentations which provides information on budget and performance variances and exceptions; budget virements and re-profiling, progress against key financial and operational risk, traffic light assessment of performance and lead officer summaries on WPI progress. As a result of this a number of referrals were made to the other themed scrutiny committees, namely;

Children & Young People:

- Estyn school inspection results (officers are now working on a new more meaningful way of presenting this information).
- Initial assessments where evidence that child seen by a social worker (this has been considered in depth by the C&YP Committee)
- Fixed Term Exclusions (added to the C&YP work programme
.....)

Health & Wellbeing:

- Homelessness - Average no. of days homeless households spent in B&B accommodation (this has been considered by the H& WB Committee, performance currently on track)

Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity:

- Bids / tenders submitted by local businesses for Council contracts (the PSD, C & P Committee has undertaken a short review of this issue).

During the year we have also fulfilled our responsibilities to monitor the Treasury Management arrangements by considering the Treasury Management Strategy and mid and end year reviews.

During the autumn the Committee received some baseline information in relation to performance indicator targets and it was agreed that a working group be formed to review the extent of the Council's ambition in driving improved performance through stretching targets. Due to heavy member workload, this group has not yet met and it may be that much of its work has been subsumed by work of the scrutiny groups set up to from a view on the impact made by delivering the six agreed priorities for 2015/16 and the adequacy of the actions that are proposed to deliver the Council's priorities for 2016/17. If not the working group will need to pursue this work during 2016/17.

In October, the Committee received a report from the Director of Regeneration & Planning in relation to the delivery of the European Union Funding Programmes in Wales for 2014-2020. The Committee formed a view that local authorities should have a key role in planning and delivering these programmes and Members were extremely concerned that the guiding principles of the new programme of European Funding provides fewer opportunities to local government to lead on the delivery of projects. At the request of the Committee, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development and Planning wrote to the Minister for Finance and Government Business expressing the Committee's concerns. We await a response.....

In line with the agreed work programme, the Committee received a report in relation to the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy. Following consideration

of this it was agreed to form way a small working group to identify opportunities for more effective and efficient use of Council Accommodation to provide cost saving. To date the group has met on ?? occasions and will continue its work into the new municipal year.

Early in December the Committee took part in the consultation process in respect of service change proposals in relation to the library service, youth engagement, supported bus routes and day nurseries

Again in December, the Committee had the opportunity to undertake pre-scrutiny of the Council's Draft Corporate Plan 2016-2020. The Committee generally accepted the proposed principles of the Plan put forward by the Chief Executive and the Senior Leadership Team and following input from the scrutiny committee the draft plan was put out to public consultation. One of the key points made by Members was that scrutiny should help form the development of the detailed action plans for each priority. This work has recently been undertaken by a series of cross cutting scrutiny working groups comprised of members from all the Council's scrutiny committees who initially reviewed progress against delivery of 2015/16 priorities and then undertook pre-scrutiny of the proposed priority actions for 2016/17.

Following a busy December early in January, the Committee took part in the consultation process for the 2016/17 draft Revenue Budget. The meeting was open to all non executive and co-opted members. Arising from this, the Committee requested that it should have an opportunity to undertake pre-scrutiny of the 2016/17 Revenue Budget Strategy. As a result later in the month the Committee received the proposals of the Council's Senior Leadership Team for scrutiny prior to their presentation to Cabinet.

During the year Cabinet Members and officers at various levels in the organisation undertook a corporate and also individual service self evaluations to inform the improvement planning processes and to improve the quality of the services provided by the Council. The results of the corporate self evaluation were reported to Cabinet in January 2016 and this report was then passed to the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee to form a judgement as to whether it provided an accurate and robust reflection of the position of the Council's services.

In order for Members to undertake their roles competently the Committee has received training sessions in relation to the Council's budgets and also specialist training from the Council's Treasury Management Advisors.

It has been a very busy first year for the Committee but I would like to think that we have been effective in our role and I am sure that as we progress into 2016/17 we will begin to see results and through the hard work of both members and officers performance will improve across all service areas.

In conclusion I would like to thank my vice chair for her support and the members of the Committee, including Mr Roger Hull, who have attended diligently through the year.

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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

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 shortly)
- Council Accommodation – ongoing
- Fuel Poverty – ongoing (should conclude shortly)

Outcomes

In total Scrutiny has sent ??? recommendations/requests to the Cabinet during 2015/16

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 has improved from a bottom quartile position in 2014/15

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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