

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/2020

HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28TH JANUARY 2020

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & THE
WELSH LANGUAGE**

Author: Paul Mee, Director – Public Health, Protection & Community Services

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the progress made in advancing the portfolio responsibilities of the Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture & the Welsh Language.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- I. Scrutinise and comment the content of the report, and
- II. Consider if there are any matters arising from the report to which Members wish to give further scrutiny.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To allow Members to scrutinise and challenge the progress being made in respect of the Cabinet Member portfolio responsibilities.

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 At its meeting on 22nd January 2019, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered a report regarding the engagement of the Executive at future Scrutiny Committees. Members agreed to receive Cabinet Members, with the relevant Director, at future Scrutiny meetings on a quarterly basis to present information relating to their portfolio responsibilities.
- 4.2 The Cabinet Member will provide details (both written and verbal) relating to service delivery, challenges and opportunities/policy changes being considered. Members of the committee will be able to challenge the Executive and explore in greater detail the performance and delivery of the services under consideration.

5 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no equality or diversity issues arising from this report.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 There are no consultation implications arising from this report.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

9 LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

9.1 The services described in the report at Appendix I contribute to achieving the Council's corporate priorities in relation to People, Place and Economy.

9.2 The services, many of which are concerned with the health & well-being of our communities, make a direct contribution toward the achievement of many of the well-being goals described in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, including a prosperous Wales, a Wales of cohesive communities, a healthier Wales, a resilient Wales, a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language and a globally responsible Wales.

10 CONCLUSIONS

10.1 The report presented at Appendix I describes the range of services within the Cabinet Member portfolio, highlights some key achievements from 2019/20 and identifies service priorities for 2020/21. This will provide Scrutiny Members with the opportunity to challenge service delivery and performance and explore the challenges for the year ahead. In addition Members deliberations may inform the Scrutiny work plan going forward.

PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

The Council's Public Health, Protection & Community Services cover a diverse range of functional responsibilities, many of which fall within the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture & the Welsh Language.

The services are organised across four functional areas, each led by a Service Director or Head of Service under the Director for Public Health, Protection & Community Services. Although it may appear that the many functions are diverse, fundamentally they are all concerned with the health & well-being of our communities either by directly protecting people from harm or by contributing to tackling the wider determinants of health or tackling inequality and poverty.

This report will provide an overview of what we do; how well we do it and identify any challenges and opportunities facing the services.

PUBLIC PROTECTION

What do we do?

The service, led by Louise Davies, includes the following functional areas all of which fall within the Cabinet Members portfolio:

- Community Safety & Strategic Partnerships;
- Environmental Protection & Housing Standards;
- Food Safety & Licensing;
- Trading Standards & Registration Services;
- Supporting People & Housing Options.

The Community Safety team supports the Cwm Taf Community Safety Partnership, the statutory partnership responsible for crime and disorder reduction and the Substance Misuse Area Planning Board, the strategic commissioning body for substance misuse services across the region. In addition to this vital strategic role the team also provides a number of direct services, including public space surveillance and guarding through the CCTV unit; services to support victims of domestic abuse through the Oasis Centre and the Health & Well-being Improvement Manager and Officer who work closely with the UHB to improve our collaborative approach to tackling the wider determinants of health.

The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards team is predominantly a regulatory service delivering a range of Environmental Health functions concerning local air quality management, environmental permitting, statutory nuisance and respond to general public health and environmental complaints. The team is responsible for the Council's regulatory responsibilities in the private rented sector, including houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). Pest and animal control functions,

together with our relationship with Hope Rescue who provide the animal shelter are managed here.

Food Safety & Licensing are regulatory functions concerned with protecting public health and public safety. The team are responsible for ensuring food premises meet food hygiene and health & safety standards through a proactive risk based inspection programme. Incidents and outbreaks of notifiable infectious diseases are investigated and controlled; complaints about food safety and workplace accidents at local authority regulated premises are investigated. The Licensing team supports the Council's Licensing Committee in respect of alcohol, taxi and a range of other miscellaneous licensing activities.

Our Trading Standards service is concerned with ensuring that consumers in Rhondda Cynon Taf are protected from unfair trading practices and supports legitimate business interests. The team responds to complaints and information received concerning illegal and undesirable trading activity; ensures a fair trading environment by ensuring traders comply with relevant regulations to ensure consumers are not misled; the team ensures that consumers receive the correct amount of product they buy through enforcing weights & measures legislation; ensures food products are properly labelled to inform consumer choice and prevents underage sales of age restricted products such as alcohol and knives. The Registration service is responsible for registering births, deaths and marriages and for providing a range of celebratory ceremonies.

Supporting People commission a range of housing related support and accommodation for vulnerable people in our communities. This includes projects to help prevent homelessness, to help people to live independently and to help people live in their own home, hostel or sheltered accommodation. The Council also provides housing advice and support to those seeking accommodation or at risk of homelessness.

What have we achieved in 2019/20 and how well did we do it?

Agile Working – the service was the first area of the Council to fully embrace agile working during 2019, with the introduction of the Total Mobile system and new ways of working. Impact on productivity and staff will be monitored in 2020.

Wales Audit Office - in 2019 the WAO undertook a review of Environmental Health Services as a follow up to their previous “delivering with less” study from 2015. The report was positive about how the Council had delivered the service in challenging financial circumstances.

EU settlement scheme – In September the Registration Service introduced the identity verification scheme to support EU and non EU nationals to stay in the UK following Brexit.

CCTV and community Wi-Fi – The Council has invested in upgrading its public space surveillance infrastructure, which has released revenue savings and supported the introduction of community Wi-Fi.

Buy with Confidence Scheme – This scheme was launched by Trading Standards in 2019 to help consumers make informed choices about reputable traders by offering traders a validation service and “logo” they can use.

Food Hygiene – At the end of 2018/19, 93.95% of food business were broadly compliant with food hygiene law, an improvement on the previous year. Interventions (inspections) delivered on time achieved 100% compliance which is in the top quartile for Wales.

Licensing – at quarter 2 of 2019/20, 90.25% of our licensed premises were compliant with licensing conditions, the highest level of compliance since the measure was introduced in 2016/17.

Public Spaces Protection Order – the restrictions on public consumption of alcohol have been in place for 12 months and are now being evaluated. Indications are that the measure has been successful.

Integrated Substance Misuse Service – following a review of service provision and tendering exercise, the new integrated substance misuse service for Cwm Taf was commissioned from April 2019. The service will be the subject of a report to this committee in March 2020.

Supported Housing & Homelessness – The new floating support service was successfully launched in April 2019. The first agreement with a private landlord to use a managed shared house for emergency accommodation for young people was made in 2019, which is delivering successful outcomes for some of our most vulnerable clients.

Housing First – the Council has been a pilot area for “Housing First”, initially aimed at prison leavers and now being expanded to provide enhanced support for homeless people with complex needs.

What are the service priorities for 2020/21?

Brexit – leaving the EU has some significant implications for the service. Much of the legislation we enforce is derived from the EU and there are risks around regulatory divergence. There will be immediate practical implications for those businesses that trade with the EU in respect of food safety, consumer safety and trading implications. In addition, additional staff have been appointed to support community cohesion across the region.

Registration Service – the service remains amongst the highest performing within its region. However there is a need to modernise the management information systems to improve data collation and audit.

County Lines & Knife Crime – although the impact of County Lines and knife crime in RCT is currently low, it will be necessary to ensure the Community Safety Partnership, through its serious organised crime board, has put in place the necessary measures to prevent this serious risk, particularly the exploitation of vulnerable children and young people, is prevented.

Air Quality – overall air quality in RCT is good but there are 16 local air quality management areas (AQMAs) where the air quality standard for Nitrogen Dioxide has been exceeded. Work is ongoing with partners, particularly in Highways & Transportation, to identify measures that can improve air quality in these areas. This will be considered by the Council's Climate Change Cabinet sub-committee in January this year.

Homelessness – the demand on homelessness services has increased significantly in recent years, partly due to the impact of welfare reform and the increasingly complex needs of homeless people. There is a need to review our service model to introduce more enhanced services for people with complex needs such as the "Housing First"; to reduce our reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation and to reconfigure our existing services, particularly those in Pontypridd town centre.

Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence – this remains the most significant volume violent crime in RCT. There are excellent services in RCT, provided by both the Council and third sector; however there remains significant unmet need and the current service model is predominantly concerned with responding to high risk rather than prevention. In 2020, there is a need to take forward a new commissioning strategy for these services.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

What do we do?

Community Services, led by Wendy Edwards, consists of the following service areas:

- Adult Education;
- Arts;
- Community Development;
- Employment Programmes;
- Libraries;
- Welsh Language Services.

Adult Education sits within the portfolio responsibilities of Councillor J Rosser so will not be covered in this report. A detailed report on Adult Education was reported to

cabinet on 19th March 2019 and can be accessed at the following link: [Cabinet Report 19th March 2019 - Item 6 Adult Community Learning](#)

The Arts service consists of the Coliseum Theatre in Aberdare, the Park & Dare Theatre in Treorchy and an Arts & Creative Industries Team. The Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and the Welsh Language is the Chair of the Strategic Culture & Arts Steering Group.

The Community Development team deliver the Council's approach to community asset transfers, "RCT Together", and are responsible for rolling out the Council's three year programme of developing Community Hubs across the County Borough.

The Employment Programmes Team has developed an integrated employment pathway and provides a comprehensive employment support programme, closely aligned with adult education, providing support to those seeking employment. This includes Communities for Work, Communities for Work Plus, Inspire 2 Work and a range of provision to support digital skills, essential skills and independent learning.

The Library Service has 13 static libraries located across the County Borough, provides a mobile library service, the school library service and the @homelibrary service.

The Welsh Language Service provides document and simultaneous translation as well as compliance monitoring against the Welsh Language Standards set by the Commissioner. The service also manages and arranges welsh language training for Council staff. In addition the team works with internal services and external partners to implement the Council's strategy and action plan for the promotion and facilitation of the Welsh Language.

What have we achieved in 2019/20 and how well did we do it?

Attendance at targeted events has increased at both theatres with nearly 10,000 attendances at the Coliseum and nearly 6,000 at the Park & Dare during 2018/19 for 22 productions and 55 presentations. RCT theatres are one of only three local authority run theatres in Wales recognised as an Arts Council of Wales Portfolio client and receive funding as a venue and production house. The Council has invested in both theatres replacing carpets, improving dressing rooms and toilets and creating a new studio space in the Park & Dare theatre.

The Arts service is also commissioned to provide a range of project to support creative learning and vulnerable children and young people, for example through the Arts & Creative Industries team Youth Arts and SONIG Youth Music Industry programmes. A detailed report was presented to Cabinet on 17th October showing the range of provision and investment in the arts in Rhondda Cynon Taf; [Cabinet Report 17th October 2019 - Arts Council of Wales Investment in the Arts](#)

In 2019, two new Community Hubs were opened. In June 2019, the first Community Hub developed by the Council was opened in Mountain Ash, Canolfan Pennar. In July 2019 a second Community Hub, Yr Hwb, was opened in Ferndale in partnership with a third sector organisation, Fern Partnership. These facilities include a range of community services provided by the Council and third sector, including a library, access to employment support, community rooms, and a community cafe at Canolfan Pennar and childcare provision at Yr Hwb. Since opening, both facilities have been embraced by their local communities. Canolfan Pennar has had 85,217 visitors to the end of December 2019, whilst visitors to the library have almost doubled compared with the same period in the previous year.

In Ferndale, visitors to the library have increased by approximately 30%. Both hubs are now attracting a range of provision from partner organisations and each has its own Community Co-ordinator in post to support a growing neighbourhood network of provision. Work has commenced on Porth Plaza to reconfigure the building into a Community Hub and the Hub at Llys Cadwyn in Pontypridd will open in March 2020. A detailed progress report was presented to the Cwm Taf Public Services Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 27th September 2019:

[Cwm Taf PSB JOSC 27th September 2019 - Community Zones](#)

Since commencing in 2015, "RCT Together" has received 258 enquiries about community asset transfers; 165 expressions of interest and 64 business plans. These have led to 18 leases being granted and 12 licences/tenancies at will being made for a range of community assets. It is estimated that this has levered in approximately £9million of investment by the third sector.

The Council has a comprehensive employment programme and employment pathway to support people into work across the County Borough. Communities for Work Plus is funded by the Welsh Government and the programme is the best performing in Wales both in respect of the number of engagements and job entries. The job entry conversion rate is just over 37% and an event was held at the Lido on 14th October 2019 to celebrate the programme's 2000th job entry. The programme is on target to meet its performance targets for this year. Communities for Work is a Welsh Government partnership programme between the Council and DWP supported by ESF funding to deliver employment support to adults and young people. This Council compares favourably across the region with performance for both adult and young people in line with the all Wales average.

The recent Welsh Public Library Assessment for 2018/19 confirms that the library service meets all twelve core entitlements specified in the Welsh Public Library Standards. The service meets 6 of the quality indicators in full; 2 quality indicators are met in part and 2 quality indicators are not met. The two quality indicators that are not met concern acquisitions per capita or material spend per capita (essentially how much we spend on books) and opening hours per capita. Improvements in these areas

are constrained by available budgets. In 2018/19 the libraries received 727,922 visits and issued 439,094 library materials. The trend in visit numbers since 2013/14 has been downwards, however recent investment in several libraries such as Tonypany, Rhydfelin and Llantrisant and the developments at the Community Hubs in Ferndale and Mountain Ash may arrest this trend. In 2019 the mobile library service was reorganised to provide fewer, longer stops alongside investment in two new vehicles, however attracting service users remains a challenge. The eligibility criteria for the @homelibrary service were extended and are working well with an increase of 129 in membership.

The progress made by this Council in respect of compliance with the Welsh Language Standards is significant, some aspects of which have been recognised by the Welsh Language Commissioner as an example of best practice. Demand for document translation continues to increase with requests for written translation in September 2019 increasing by 19% compared with the same period in 2018. The service includes a role for compliance monitoring against the standards and this has allowed us to undertake our own “mystery shopping” exercise to ensure compliance across Council services. Over 200 members of staff have attended level 1 Welsh language training in 2019/20 so far with further sessions planned.

What are the priorities for 2020/21?

Arts – strengthen our public value offer following completion of our participation in the designing public value programme with Arts Council for Wales, piloting an inter-generational project in Treorchy. Develop a vision for the new Studio at the Park & Dare Theatre. Develop a business plan for the next 5 years.

Community Development – complete the development of the next three Community Hubs (Porth, Llys Cadwyn and Treorchy) and work with Awen Cultural Trust to implement a plan of the reopening and restoration of the Muni Arts Centre in Pontypridd.

Employment Programmes – enhance the in-work offer available through Communities for Work/Plus when clients enter the workplace and ensure there is a range of provision to support people with disabilities and work limiting health conditions into work.

Libraries – increase visitor numbers at static libraries and usage of the new mobile library service.

Welsh Language Service – meet the ever increasing demand for translation services and expand in house training provision and continue to monitor compliance.

The National Eisteddfod – this important event will be coming to Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2022. A post has been created to support engaging schools and the community to secure necessary funding in partnership with the National Eisteddfod.

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING & RESILIENCE

What do we do?

The service, led by Zoe Lancelott, consists of five sections with responsibilities across Public Health, Protection & Community Services and Children's Services:

- Children & Young People;
- Resilient Families Service;
- Programme Flexibilities Service;
- Early Intervention & Prevention Commissioning Team;
- Service Planning & Transformation Team.

Those elements of this service that Children fall within the portfolio of Cllr C Leyshon and the Leader are not covered by this report.

The Early Intervention and Prevention Commissioning Team is responsible for commissioning internal and external services funded through the Children & Communities Grant (previously seven grants, including families first, flying start and communities first legacy funding) and ensuring that these services are complying with their contracts and delivering agreed outcomes. The team are also responsible for the collation of information and submission of all Families First, Flying Start and CCG claims.

The Service Planning and Transformation team supports the whole Community Well-being & Resilience Service with responsibility for the management systems, business support, service planning and development, partnerships and vulnerability profiling. It also links with and supports the work being undertaken in the Community Zones/Hubs, Communities & Children Grant and Early Years Co-construction work with Welsh Government.

What have we achieved in 2019/20 and how well did we do it?

The service has managed the transition from seven separate grants to a single Communities & Children Grant (CCG) from April 2019. This has required a review of activity across the grants and ensuring service providers were aware of the changes and revised guidance.

In 2019, the Early Years Co-construction project with Welsh Government has seen the development of a proposal to transform the way the early years system is delivered through a move to needs based provision. Final proposals are currently with Welsh Government pending ministerial approval. A detailed report was presented to Cabinet on 18th July 2019 setting out these proposals: [Cabinet Report 18th July 2019 - Transformation of the Early Years System in RCT](#)

In 2019, the commissioning team went out to tender for the provision of an RCT wide independent school based counselling service for children and young people aged

between 7-25 years of age. The contract was reconfigured to close a gap in provision for children aged 7 to 10 years who had experienced a loss or trauma.

In 2018/19, Families First worked with 4243 participants of which 2937 achieved a successful outcome against one of the 14 national performance measures.

In 2018/19, 3353 children received a Flying Start service, including enhanced health visiting, childcare and parenting support.

What are the priorities for 2020/21?

To further build a presence of all Community Well-being and Resilience services within the Community Hubs to raise awareness of service on offer for and deliver support to activities within localities.

Review commissioning activities in light of the further developments around the CCG and funding flexibilities/alignment.

Secure ministerial approval for the Early Years transformation proposals and the implementation of a universal needs based approach for Early Years services across RCT.

LEISURE, PARKS, COUNTRYSIDE AND BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

What do we do?

The service, led by Dave Batten, is responsible for the following functions areas:

- Leisure Services;
- Strategic Facility & Service Development;
- Bereavement Services;
- Parks, Countryside & Community Centres;
- Heritage & Visitor Attractions.

The majority of this service area falls within the portfolio of Councillor A Crimmings so will not be covered in this report. However, Councillor R Lewis is responsible for Bereavement Services and there is a strong link between the practical management of Community Centres and Paddling Pools in this service with the Community Development team within Community Services.

Bereavement Services are responsible for the dignified, proper and legal burial and cremation of the deceased. The service has responsibility for fourteen cemeteries located across the County Borough and the management of two crematoria; Glyntaff Crematorium in Pontypridd and LLwydcoed Crematorium near Aberdare, which is managed under the oversight of the Joint Management Committee with Members from both Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

The service supports the management of many of the community centres and three larger community recreation centres located across the County Borough.

What have we achieved in 2019/20 and how well did we do it?

In 2018/19 the Bereavement Services provided 2590 cremations across both Crematoria and 450 full interments at our cemeteries.

The service has committed to the ICCM metal recycling schemes and this has so far raised £32k in 2019 for local charities in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil.

An additional £400k of capital investment has been made to improve the infrastructure of the cemeteries and crematoria, including replacing, repairing and refurbishing public areas and painting/replacing fencing, upgrading drainage and resurfacing pathways.

Both crematoria now benefit from the best available technology following significant investment to replace and improve the cremators and install abatement equipment. This means that the Council and Llwydcoed Joint Management Committee both participate in the CAMEO burden sharing scheme as fully abated facilities and draw an income from the scheme.

In 2019 both crematoria received an inspection by the Federation of Burial & Cremation Authorities. The Crematoria were found to be in full compliance with all the areas inspected, including administration, ceremony facilities, crematorium grounds and memorialisation, staff, premises and facilities. The only recommendation arising from the inspection was the provision of a defibrillator at Llwydcoed which has since been addressed.

What are the priorities for 2020/21?

Although there is sufficient burial capacity at the majority of our cemeteries for the foreseeable future, there is a need to identify potential sites for new cemeteries to secure additional capacity in key locations in the longer term. The service is working together with Corporate Estates and Prosperity and Development to identify options for future consideration.