

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, on Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2014 at 5 pm.

**Present:**

County Borough Councillor R K Turner – in the Chair

**County Borough Councillors:**

(Mrs) J Cass	G R Davies	P Griffiths
G Stacey	G Thomas	R Wasley

**Officers in Attendance:**

Mr P J Lucas – Director of Legal & Democratic Services  
Mr P Griffiths – Service Director, Performance and Resources  
Mr N Elliott – Service Director, Direct Services, Business & Housing  
Ms A Edwards – Scrutiny Support Officer

**31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors h Boggis, S Bradwick, (Mrs) A Crimmings, (Mrs) M E Davies, (Mrs) S Rees and C J Williams.

**32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**RESOLVED** to note that in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, there were no declarations of interest made in relation to the agenda.

**33. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, CORPORATE SERVICES**

**34. THE OUTCOME AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE WELSH GOVERNMENT AND RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL (2013/14 TO 2015/16)**

The Service Director, Performance & Improvement reported on the Outcome Agreement between the Welsh Government and the Council for the period 2013/14 to 2015/16, which had been agreed by Cabinet on the 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2014.

The Service Director, Performance & Improvement highlighted the main points of the report, in particular that the maximum funding available to the Council through the Welsh Government's Outcome Agreement revenue grant was £2.5m per year explaining that this was based on performance results.

Members were advised that to ensure the effective management of outcome agreement performance, updates would be incorporated into the existing performance reporting arrangements and be subject to review and challenge by the Council's scrutiny committees to help improve outcomes in the five strategic themes selected. It was explained that each of the five outcome themes identified by the Council, would be aligned to the appropriate service scrutiny committee for review with feedback reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee including examination of cross-cutting issues.

A Member referred to Page 54 of the agenda (the strategic theme of Welsh Homes Supporting People) and queried why the targets were less than the baseline target for 2012/13.

The Service Director, Performance & Improvement explained that the service was subject to external funding from the Welsh Government which had been reduced and therefore the targets had been amended accordingly.

Another Member also referred to that theme and questioned the apparently low target set for affordable homes and questioned why in recent times some large developments had no affordable units built into the schemes. The Service Director, Performance & Improvement explained that the Outcome Agreement targets had been set based on what could realistically be achieved over the period of the agreement. He reported that he would obtain a more detailed response in relation to the issue.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED** to:-

- (i) Note the content of the report;
- (ii) Endorse the proposed allocation of the outcome agreement strategic themes across the four service scrutiny committees with feedback to be received by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration (including examination of cross cutting issues.)

## **REPORTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

### **35. PROPOSED SCRUTINY PROCESS OF THE CORPORATE PLAN 2014/15**

The Director of Legal & Democratic Services reported on the proposed scrutiny arrangements for the production of the Council's 2014/15 Corporate Plan.

Members were advised of the duties placed on Local Authorities to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement through the Local

Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and the requirements to publish their improvement objectives annually, in the form of 'Wales Programme for Improvement action plans' which would be incorporated into the Council's Corporate Plan. It was explained that this would need to be published in June and the Annual Delivery Report, assessing progress against improvement objectives, would be published in October of each year.

Members were informed that previously there had only been officer involvement in the development of the action plans. Therefore, to further strengthen existing arrangements, it was proposed that scrutiny working groups be established to scrutinise each of the WPI action plans. It was intended that the findings of these working groups would be reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, before the Corporate Plan is endorsed by Council in June, prior to the statutory deadline of the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014. It was also proposed that the appropriate Cabinet member be invited to attend each of the working group meetings.

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services advised Members of the draft timetable and pointed out the commitment which would be required by the working group members as it was intended for these working groups to follow the process through to assess progress against improvement priorities at the Annual Delivery Report stage in the summer/autumn 2015. He also explained that it was intended to provide Members with an understanding of the target setting process and the Committee agreed that this would be useful in answering some of the questions which had been raised during the discussion in relation to the previous agenda item.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) To approve the proposed process and timescales, as set out in the report;
- (ii) Establish a working group of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to consider the action plan in relation to Medium Term Service Planning.

36. **EXCEPTION REPORT – COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT  
(QUARTER 3)**

The Committee was presented with the Performance Exception Reports for Quarter 3 which had been considered by each of the individual service scrutiny committees. Members had also been provided with the feedback on the discussion points raised at the meetings.

The Chairman referred to the feedback and congratulated the service scrutiny committees in relation to the level of questioning and asked Members whether they had anything further to add. He then invited Members to ask questions in relation to the two improvement action plans within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee namely, Regeneration of Our Communities: Social Regeneration and Medium Term Service Planning.

The Chairman began by asking whether the review of welfare rights advice and information had now been completed.

The Service Director, Direct Services, Business & Housing reported that completion had been delayed due to the need to focus on other priority areas. However, he explained that the mapping exercise had been completed and the next stage would be to meet with the key stakeholders such as Citizens Advice, the Social Registered Landlords as well as the in house welfare advisors to move forward in a co-ordinated way. He added that this work would be carried forward as a priority into 2014/15.

In response to a further question the Service Director reported that once the work in relation to assessing the impact of welfare reform on Rhondda Cynon Taf had been completed, the information would be reported back to the Committee.

A Member referred to the provision of traineeships for school leavers with special educational needs by Vision Products and asked whether this initiative was progressing well and whether there would be long term prospects for the trainees.

The Service Director reported that the scheme which had been in operation for 2 years and provided 6 placements each year was proving very successful. Of the 6 allocated in 2012/13, 2 young people had moved into permanent posts in mainstream employment; 3 had continued in part time employment with Vision Products; and 1 had been unable to finish the course due to personal issues. He explained that the Council had built a successful partnership with an employment agency and it was hoped for similar outcomes for those completing their traineeships in 2013/14. He reported that the scheme had received national recognition of its best practice and it was intended to roll out the same model at the Vision Products site at Newport. It was also intended to submit a bid to the next round of European Funding in order to expand the programme.

A Member commented that he was pleased to see that local employers were prepared to get involved in training schemes and asked how these opportunities to increase workplace training had been identified. He also pointed out that whilst there was a difference between apprenticeships and traineeships, he acknowledged that often people used the same word for both.

The Service Director agreed that in some instances people did use the same terminology and suggested that further information be provided to Members in respect of this issue. He explained that there was a dedicated Officer within the Council's Human Resources Department whose role was to seek employment opportunities within both the public and private sector. This Officer also links with the Business Support Team within the Regeneration Department who in turn were able to use the Business Club to target businesses. He reported that by communicating and explaining the process directly to the businesses they had a better understanding and were more

likely to support the initiative. He added that this method was also proving successful in increasing the availability of school placements.

The Member welcomed this information commenting on the benefits to young people as a result of these opportunities. The Service Director agreed, commenting that positive reports had been received from Jobs Growth Wales in relation to the benefits of work schemes in terms of changing the attitudes and outlook of the young people taking part.

A Member commended the Housing Advice service for the way in which they dealt with a sensitive situation in his locality. He commented on the positive performance in relation to the indicator monitoring the placement of families in bed and breakfast accommodation and asked how ambitious the target was in the first place and how the Authority performed in comparison with others.

The Service Director explained that in setting the target, consideration had been given to the existing data and also the anticipated impact of other considerations such as welfare reform which was difficult to assess. He reported that the actual performance last year was around 25 days and was based on 2 families which had presented. He added that last year's performance would have seen the Authority in the bottom quartile when comparing across Wales whilst this year if the same level is maintained it should be near the top. He also reported that the Council was performing well in relation to the other 'housing' performance indicators adding that the planned scrutiny of the Council's improvement priority plans would ensure the service is challenged.

The Service Director, Performance and Resources endorsed this message commenting that whilst national indicators were collected across Wales, the information in relation to local performance indicators might not be collected by all, or may be collected in a different way which could make comparison difficult. However, many service areas had their own benchmarking groups in place to share information and best practice.

A Member queried the planned provision of supported accommodation in Mountain Ash and asked whether this was dependent on the proposals for the property known as The Grange in Pontypridd.

The Service Director, Direct Services, Business & Housing explained that work was underway to convert The Grange into a 10 bed supported emergency accommodation unit for young people and once completed would be used to provide the emergency accommodation currently provided at the Mountain Ash YMCA. Remodelling of the accommodation at the YMCA and at the Old Bakery in Aberdare would then be undertaken to meet identified need. In response to a query he confirmed that records would be maintained in respect of those residing at The Grange as would be the case in any other establishment. He also explained that nominations for these placements would be via the Housing Advice Centre.

A Member explained that a query had been raised at the meeting of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee in relation to the % reduction in carbon dioxide emissions and asked whether officers were now able to provide an explanation.

The Service Director, Performance and Resources reported that he had received a response to the query from colleagues in Corporate Estates. He explained that a UK wide system had been developed by a company which attempted to allow comparisons across the UK taking account of different weather conditions, for example comparing a site in Cornwall with one in Inverness. He added that for the most part, 2013/14 had been warmer than the previous few years. It was agreed that a written explanation would be provided to Members.

A Member questioned whether the installation of the first phase of Smart metres had been completed. The Service Director, Performance and Resources reported that there were 4 outstanding, 3 of which were scheduled to be installed the next day i.e. 29<sup>th</sup> April and the remaining 1 on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

**RESOLVED** to note the information provided.

R K Turner  
Chairman

The meeting closed at 5.48 pm.