

## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014-15

#### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15<sup>th</sup> October 2014

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR,  
CORPORATE SERVICES

#### AGENDA ITEM 5

ANNUAL DELIVERY REPORT 2013/14 –  
SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP FEEDBACK

Author: Paul Griffiths - Service Director, Performance and Improvement

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with feedback from the Scrutiny Working Group meetings (held between the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014) following their review and challenge of the draft performance evaluations of the Council's 2013/14 priorities.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1. Note the information provided and confirm whether or not they deem, based on the Scrutiny Working Group findings, the eight draft performance evaluations (**Appendices 1b to 5b**) to be fair and balanced assessments of performance for 2013/14;
- 2.2. Endorse that Council officers use the performance evaluations to compile the Council's Annual Delivery Report for presentation to Council on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2014; and
- 2.3. Consider the Scrutiny Working Group arrangements applied throughout September 2014 and provide feedback to officers to help improve and strengthen the process in the future.

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 requires all local authorities in Wales to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. As part of discharging this legal duty, local authorities are required to make public an evaluation of their performance for each financial year.

- 3.2 The Measure does not stipulate how local authorities should publish this information, rather, the publication makes clear that it discharges the legal duty and be in a format that best suits the needs of the audience.
- 3.3 In Rhondda Cynon Taf, this duty is discharged by an 'Annual Delivery Report', published by no later than the 31<sup>st</sup> October each year and containing:
  - Evidence of the processes that the Council has gone through to discharge its general duty to improve;
  - A summary assessment of the Council's view of its success in achieving its improvement priorities for the previous year;
  - Performance as measured by all statutory performance indicators, whether or not these relate directly to improvement priorities;
  - Details of other performance information and its use;
  - Evaluation of the Council's performance over time and against other comparable bodies;
  - Details of the ways in which the Council has exercised its powers of collaboration during the reporting year, including details of whether a collaborative activity has achieved its intended outcomes; and
  - Any statements of activity that the Council has issued as a result of any Section 19 reports issued by the Auditor General to that Council in the reporting year.
- 3.4 To enable the production of an Annual Delivery Report, Council officers draft an evaluation of performance for each priority plan area for the preceding year; each evaluation is then subject to scrutiny by elected Members to determine whether the position reported is fair, balanced and evidenced based.

#### **4.0 SCRUTINY OF PRIORITY PLAN PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS**

- 4.1 As referred to in Section 3 above, each Service Scrutiny Committee has established a Scrutiny Working Group to review and challenge the performance evaluation(s) within their designated sphere of responsibility, for example, the Environmental Services Scrutiny Working Group was allocated responsibility to review the performance evaluations for two priority plan areas: 'Streetcare Services and the natural environment' and 'Public Health and Protection'.
- 4.2 The purpose of the Scrutiny Working Groups was to comment on and challenge the performance evaluation(s), comparative data and the action plan(s) for their assigned areas to test whether they present a fair and balanced picture. Following the Scrutiny Working Group meetings held between 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014, feedback was recorded and is currently being taken account of by officers. For ease of reference, Table 1 below sets out the Appendix References for the 'minutes' of each

Scrutiny Working Group meeting and up dated draft Performance Evaluations, together with the main revisions being made to each evaluation.

Table 1 – Minutes of Scrutiny Working Group meetings and up dated Performance Evaluations

PRIORITY PLAN	MEETING MINUTES	UP DATED PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS	REVISIONS TO PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS
Social regeneration	Appendix 1a	Appendix 1b (i)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include information on the age profile of people receiving services from Citizens Advice Bureau and Job Seekers Allowance (as this requires further gathering of data, this information will be presented to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee)</li> </ul>
Physical regeneration	Appendix 1a	Appendix 1b (ii)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include more emphasis on regional working and the impact of the regional economy on Rhondda Cynon Taf.</li> <li>For clarity, provide a bulleted list of the jobs created through different schemes during 2013/14.</li> <li>Include feedback from business about the town centre regeneration in Pontypridd and Aberdare.</li> <li>Where possible, include comparative data with Wales and the UK.</li> </ul>
Maintaining people's independence	Appendix 2a	Appendix 2b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include more service user feedback to illustrate user views.</li> </ul>

PRIORITY PLAN	MEETING MINUTES	UP DATED PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS	REVISIONS TO PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS
Medium term service planning	Appendix 3a	Appendix 3b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include further clarity on the progress being made to deliver the budget savings from phase 1 service changes and make reference to Transitional funding.</li> <li>• Include comparative information that puts the Council's absence data into context.</li> <li>• Include a Case Study to demonstrate impact of Jobs Growth Wales</li> <li>• Include reference to Single Integrated Plan and work with police in relation to Hate Crime.</li> <li>• Include more meaningful information around the impact of energy saving initiatives.</li> </ul>
Education	Appendix 4a	Appendix 4b (i)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include examples of how Education and Lifelong Learning Services and Children's Services work together</li> </ul>

PRIORITY PLAN	MEETING MINUTES	UP DATED PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS	REVISIONS TO PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS
Children's services	Appendix 4a	Appendix 4b (ii)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As for the Education priority plan above.</li> <li>Include information to sets out how the Council is addressing the staffing issues referenced by CSSIW as well as the progress on the longer term Workforce Strategy.</li> </ul>
Streetcare services and the natural environment	Appendix 5a	Appendix 5b (i)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information around the limited power local authorities have to enforce recycling and more clearly set out the financial impact if the Council does not meet national recycling targets.</li> </ul>
Public health and protection	Appendix 5a	Appendix 5b (ii)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include comparative data, where available, on empty properties and emphasise the problem more clearly in the evaluation.</li> <li>Include any further comparison data on substance misuse services.</li> </ul>

- 4.3 Council officers are in the process of making the above amendments to the draft Performance Evaluations to inform and accompany the Council's Annual Delivery report for 2013/14.
- 4.4 To aide the on-going development of the Council's scrutiny arrangements, Members will be requested at the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2014 meeting to share their thoughts on 'what was good' and 'what was not so good' about the approach to the scrutiny of the 2013/14 performance evaluations.

## 5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 It is a legal requirement under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 for all local authorities in Wales to make public an evaluation of their performance for each financial year.
- 5.2 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council discharges this duty through the production of a document called an Annual Delivery Report. To inform the content of this document, the Council drafted performance evaluations for each of its priorities.

- 5.3 To help ensure that the performance evaluations set out a fair and balanced assessment of performance, Scrutiny Working Groups reviewed and challenged each, and revisions are being made in line with the feedback received.
- 5.4 The use of the Council's scrutiny arrangements to review and challenge each performance evaluation is seen as a key tool to help improve the quality of information produced as well as further improve the quality of the Council's scrutiny process.

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**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**REGENERATION SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP**

**Notes** of the meeting of the Scrutiny Working Group held at the Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

**Present:**

County Borough Councillors:

(Mrs) J Cass, M Norris, G Stacey (Chairman), P Wasley, D W Weeks and R K Turner.

Cabinet Member – County Borough Councillor R Bevan

**Officers:**

Ms J Cook, Director of Regeneration and Planning

Mr N Elliott, Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing

Mr P Griffiths, Service Director Performance and Improvement

Ms H Morgan, Public Services Partnership Manager

Mrs A Edwards, Scrutiny Support Officer

Ms E Coates, Scrutiny Support Officer

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs) M Tegg and R Yeo.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**3. INTRODUCTION**

The Service Director, Performance and Improvement explained to Members the purpose of the meeting, namely to review, challenge and propose improvements to the evaluation of performance on the Council's priorities during 2013-14.

The Director of Regeneration & Planning and the Service Director, Direct Services, Business & Housing each provided Members with an overview of the delivery of the 2013/14 action plan. Further to this Members questioned officers having reference to the following criteria:

- How well does the evaluation explain how service users/communities have benefitted as a result of the work?
- Does the evaluation give the reader a sense of how well/not so well the Council has performed?
- To what extent have the findings from the 2013/14 evaluation been used to inform the 2014/15 plan?

4.

## **FEEDBACK**

### **Social Regeneration**

**Outcome 1 – People better understand the financial choices that are available to them through the increased delivery of advice and information, and improved financial capability at earlier stages in their lives**

- Members questioned the potential divisive nature of Communities First and asked whether representation could be made to the Welsh Government. The Service Director explained that the new Communities First Cluster scheme meant that this was much less of an issue. However, there are pockets of deprivation lying within more affluent areas which is an issue. It was considered that more of an issue was the inflexible criteria laid down by the Welsh Government in relation to Flying Start/Families First which are causing divisions within communities.

The Service Director reported that measures could be taken to relay these concerns to the Welsh Government perhaps through the Cabinet Member.

- In terms of improving financial capability Members questioned the level of support in place for those without access to the internet. Members also queried the level of communication between all those providing welfare/debt advice: was the Council getting value for money for the funding it was providing to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector?

The Service Director fed back that the main demand now had shifted from benefits advice to debt advice. He reported on the work of the project 'Get RCT online' which supports digital inclusion and added that an update could be brought to scrutiny. He also reported that communication between agencies was improving and the importance of having proper pathways in place was key. It was acknowledged that the review of welfare rights had not yet been completed and would be carried forward into 2014/15. He also provided feed back on the coverage of CAB services across the County Borough.

**Outcome 2 – Increase opportunities for working age adults to enter employment, education and training**

- Concern was raised that 'in-work' poverty was becoming a big issue with transportation costs and childcare costs acting as a possible disincentive to work. Members questioned whether enough is being done to support those travelling outside RCT for employment.

The Service Director agreed that in work poverty was an issue. He reported on the work being undertaken and needs analysis linked to the Prosperity theme of the Single Integrated Plan and also the work undertaken with Education and Lifelong Learning Services, businesses and also family support services. The Director of Regeneration and Planning reported on the need for affordable travel given that we now had a regional economy. The Service Director added that whilst the transition period from unemployment to employment could be difficult, in the long term employment was still the better outcome.

### **Outcome 3 – Reduce homelessness and provide services that meet the housing and support needs of individuals and families**

- Members questioned the lack of benchmarking across the Regeneration Action Plan and the Service Director explained that with the exception of housing there were no comparable performance indicators. He reported that the performance of the homelessness service compared favourably in comparison with other authorities adding that the homeless situation was better than predicted given welfare reform. He also reported that the service had been audited by the Wales Audit Office and indicated the difficulty in gathering meaningful information and statistics, for example, many statistics are usually more than a year out of date before they are published / become available.
- Members questioned the support provided by social landlords in relation to care leavers and the Service Director explained that certain social landlords had more expertise in some areas than others and that the Council would therefore work with whoever best met ‘identified need’. He reported that there was a good mix of provision across the County Borough.
- In respect of provision for the homeless, the Service Director explained that the delay in the pilot scheme to increase the availability of 1 and 2 bedroom properties was an issue. However, the numbers presenting as homeless were not as high as was expected following changes to housing benefits.
- Members questioned the level of information available to those facing homelessness outside of normal working hours and suggested that if not already available that contact information is provided outside all One4All Centres. The Service Director reported on the routes available to people trying to access the services.

It was agreed to check the current ‘out of hours’ provision of information.

- It was suggested that the key priorities for 2014/15 (set out at page 11) would benefit from being more specific.

### Physical Regeneration

### **Outcome 1 – Encourage and facilitate investment (including European funding) in Rhondda Cynon Taf to strengthen the economy and create jobs**

- Members queried how well the Authority compared with others and the Director of Regeneration and Planning explained that as with social regeneration, there was a lack of performance indicators across Wales which made it difficult to compare.
- Members questioned the failure rate of new businesses as a concern and again suggested that benchmarking might be of use to better compare across authorities and make it clear what the Council is trying to achieve.

- Members questioned what was being done to promote development citing Llanilid and Coed Ely as examples. The Director outlined the work being done to support and encourage businesses, but explained to Members that the Council had limited influence with sites in the ownership of others, other than to work positively with potential developers. In response to a query about the Taff Vale site in Pontypridd, she explained that the head lease is in the hands of the administrator, but the Council continues to work positively with interested parties, and is currently working with the receiver.

## **Outcome 2 – Sustainable town centres with contribute to the economy of the Borough**

- In response to further queries in relation to benchmarking the Director of Regeneration and Planning reported on the difficulties in comparing regeneration schemes, due to the varying nature of such schemes. However, she proposed that in conjunction with the Service Director they could work together to explore the development of a form of benchmarking based on outcomes across Social and Physical Regeneration.
- Members questioned the Director on data collection in relation to jobs created through regeneration projects. The Director pointed out what was possible to collect in terms of jobs directly created by projects, e.g. the public realm or property improvements. However for those created through the wider impacts of regeneration schemes, it was fed back that it was much more difficult to capture meaningful data. The Director also noted that the benefit of further data collection needs to be considered in relation to the resources available.
- The Director reported that as a result of the work carried out in Pontypridd and Aberdare, traders were becoming more engaged and therefore more able and willing to start and implement initiatives themselves, which is a positive, but clearly less measurable outcome.
- It was noted that due to the linkage between both plans there were areas where there may be opportunities to cross reference some data, especially in relation to employment data.

G Stacey  
Chairman

The meeting closed at 11.33 am.

## Appendix 1b(i)

### Performance Evaluation - Social Regeneration

Levels of poverty are predicted to rise over the next few years due to the current economic climate and the predicted impact of welfare reform. We are committed to preventing and tackling children growing up in poverty today so that they do not become the parents of children in poverty tomorrow. We know that the perpetuating cycle of poverty (including in work poverty) is not just damaging for individual families but also for the regeneration of our local communities as a whole.

The outcome of '**Social Regeneration**' is aimed at ensuring that our residents have access to income maximisation initiatives, and are supported to gain employment through employability and skills training, that will, in turn, reduce the high levels of unemployment and dependency on benefits in Rhondda Cynon Taf. We also need to ensure that people remain in their existing homes or find suitable alternative housing, eliminating the risk of becoming homeless and help improve their quality of life.

To achieve this, in 2013/14 we planned

**To improve financial capability of individuals and families and ensure that they have access to financial support services that help them make full use of their financial entitlements** – the entitlement to national welfare benefits will be affected for a significant number of residents as a result of the Coalition Government's welfare reform agenda. The changes not only affect claimants but also reduce how much people spend in the area. In addition, research conducted in 2011 shows that 72,438 people in Rhondda Cynon Taf are digitally excluded, which is around 39% of the population, meaning that there is an heightened risk of these people becoming increasingly excluded both economically and socially.

**To increase opportunities for working age adults to enter employment, education and training** - there are 150,100 people of working age living in Rhondda Cynon Taf. In 2010, 62.3% of these were employed – 94,700 people. This figure is lower than the rate for Wales, 66.4% and also for Great Britain at 70.3%. The number of people employed in Rhondda Cynon Taf has fallen since 2005 by a rate of 3.9%. This is faster than the rate for Wales (2.6%) and Great Britain (2.3%).

**To reduce homelessness and provide services that meet the housing needs of individuals and families** - there continues to be high numbers of people presenting themselves as homeless. This is impacting on how timely homeless presentations are decided and the length of time families are required to spend in bed and breakfast accommodation. Further work is needed to realign and target resources to support interventions and alternative accommodation models

**We have provided opportunities for people to better understand the financial choices that are available to them through the increased delivery of advice and information and improved financial capability at earlier stages in their lives**

We have made some positive progress in this area to achieve the overall outcome for this priority.

We have ensured that our residents can access good quality debt, money advice and welfare rights services and information by allocating additional Council funding to maintain existing Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) support following budget cuts by Welsh Government in 2013/14. As a result of CAB's continuing work we helped over 2,800 residents to maximise their financial entitlements, 199 more than the previous year. This means that over £1.338 million additional income was gained in some of our poorest households. These services have also been made available to vulnerable residents across Communities First clusters in RCT ie Rhondda Fach, Lower and Upper Cynon, Mid Rhondda, Taf, Pontypridd, Upper Fawr and Porth, as a result of the implementation of a new CAB 'Engagement and Outreach Service'.

Owing to the size, scope and changing environment, we have not yet completed our planned review of available welfare rights advice and information or a directory of advice and information services. These remain priorities for us and have been included in the 2014/15 Priority Plan with a revised deadline of 31 October. This work will form part of a broader review of information and advice services to the 2014/15 plan. In the interim, we have produced dedicated web pages on the Council's website, 'Your Benefits are Changing' that provide an overview of the welfare reforms where staff residents can download leaflets or factsheets and link to key agencies who also provide information on the effects of welfare reform and may be able to provide support that the Council is unable to [www.rctcbc.gov.uk/benefitchanges](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/benefitchanges),

To better understand the impact of Welfare Reform on the residents and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf, we have worked with partners to geographically map those areas most affected by the changes. This has helped us establish the best way of organising and targeting available support in those areas. Our plans to develop a Commissioning Framework to support people in the transfer across to Universal Credit (UC) have been put on hold following the delay in the national rollout imposed by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Latest

information received indicates that the DWP continues to implement slow and controlled roll out of Universal Credit across the North West of England to ensure its successful introduction. The Commissioning Framework will be progressed within the Council when more information on the way forward is known.

In the meantime, as well as training our staff to deal with the changes and respond to residents' concerns, the Council has also included key, up to date information in its monthly staff briefing which includes advice to frontline staff from the DWP and Welsh Government. We have also shared information with our residents to ensure that they are aware of the changes by:

- including articles in the Carers News newsletter that provide an overview of the changes being made and signposted readers to the dedicated RCT web pages.
- incorporated a 'Money Matters' section within our Cwm Taf Carers A-Z information directory that provides contact details for local and national organisations who provide benefit, money related support and advice. These guides were sent to all carers living within RCT and Merthyr as well as all 'places of interest' such as libraries, GPs, community and leisure centres etc. As this was jointly produced by RCT, Merthyr and Cwm Taf UHB so also distributed to all hospitals and health centres: <http://webapps.rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk/brochures/Flipping-Books/Cwm-Taf-Carers-AtoZ-Guide/English/>.

We have also provided local training in 'Managing finances' and 'Developing weekly budgets' to 602 people in Community First areas to help them to manage their money, avoid financial exclusion and problem debt. 49% of people trained, 295, reported that they felt more confident about managing their money. Our training experiences during the year have required us to change our focus going forward as individuals are presenting with additional complex support requirements. This year we have been required to provide additional help with basic skills; lack of confidence; digital exclusion and referring onto other support services e.g. CAB. There have also been areas of low engagement which we are addressing.

### **Provided opportunities for working age adults to enter employment, education and training**

In order to support more people to gain sustainable employment and tackle employability across the region across SE Wales, we have worked with Merthyr Tydfil CBC in order to set up a Regional Strategic Employability Group and a regional action plan has been developed. To support this, as a Council we have set up our own local Employability Group to focus on RCT requirements. The Group has undertaken a mapping exercise across Council services to establish any activities that support employment. This exercise has also been undertaken across businesses and other organisations across Rhondda Cynon Taf concentrating on the 16+ age group. 140 organisations have been contacted, with 135 responses received. Further analysis of the information arising from these mapping exercises will be undertaken in 2014/15 in order to identify employability support services.

In order to improve the longer term outcomes of families currently living in poverty in Rhondda Cynon Taf, we need to tackle worklessness and promote parental employment by addressing barriers to work. Barriers to work include lack of skills and labour market experience. At the end of 2013/14, there were more people aged 16-64 employed in Rhondda Cynon Taf, 68.2% compared to 62.5% in the previous year. This is positive in terms of demonstrating progress in Rhondda Cynon Taf , but remains below the Welsh average of 69.5%.

Despite this improvement in employment in Rhondda Cynon Taf, the % of our working age residents claiming out of work benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) is above the all Wales average, with 3.7% compared to 3.3% across Wales. This percentage is higher for 18-24 year olds claiming JSA, at 7.9%, compared to 6.0 for Wales.

Our work during 2013/14 has focussed on supporting people to learn new skills to improve their employability, which will in turn assist in their search for sustainable employment, reduce the high levels of unemployment and dependency on benefits in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Through Communities First Work/Enterprise Clubs, 288 working age adults have secured employment following relevant training and learning opportunities to increase their skills and work base experience. In addition, there were 1,465 accredited qualifications gained through community learning programmes to further support improved employability. Examples include

*B had been out of employment for 15 years following ill health and felt ready to return to work but needed support with his Curriculum Vitae and carrying out job searches. He was somewhat cautious to start with but was soon at ease with the informal atmosphere and the support of the Communities First staff. He was soon more confident in accessing the 'Universal Jobsmatch' website, and conducting a more advanced job searches. B was gaining more confidence weekly and showed great determination to find full time employment.*

*B secured his first job interview as a General Maintenance Manager at a local residential care home, an ideal for him, as he had a full engineering and maintenance background and was within walking distance of his home. Further support was provided on interview techniques, and he secured the job early this year. B returned to the Job Club the following week to thank all their staff for the support and guidance, and mentioned we played a great part in helping him secure the job*

***In her late fifties, A had been unemployed for 3 years. She had been in counselling and on tablets for depression, and hardly left the house. A joined the Communities First Work Club and just after 2 months, A was able to stop taking her prescribed medication and looked forward to attending her weekly one-to-one sessions with her mentor. After 3 months she secured a job as an office cleaner. A said that the work club had 'built up her confidence a lot'***

We have also supported over 800 young people, including those with disabilities, to increase their employability through a number of different programmes. These include

- recruiting 11 young people on the Council's Apprenticeship Programme, offering fixed term paid apprenticeships in a range of Council departments including, Early Years, ICT, Housing Advice, Procurement and Cultural Services as well as traditional trades such as bricklaying and mechanics.
- providing work experience opportunities within the Council
- expanding the Vision Products traineeship scheme across Local Authorities in Gwent.
- working with Special schools to ensure that individuals with special educational needs are aware of the traineeship scheme at Vision Products.

During 2013/14, 3 young people have secured sustainable employment following completion of the Vision Traineeship Programme, feedback received from parents include

***"K has grown in confidence through being able to interact in a normal workplace setting with people that are not disabled, as opposed to teachers within the special school that she attends and her carers. She has developed a good work ethic which has given structure to her days. She has enjoyed her time at Vision Products and we feel that she has become far more independent. This has been a major experience for her to be working in a normal environment, which is an opportunity that she would never have had".***

***"J has definitely grown in confidence during his placement with VP and has thoroughly enjoyed it, he gets bored very quickly and likes to keep doing things, he's so happy to be there, just wished he could have stayed longer."***

### **Provided services to reduce homelessness and provision to meet the housing needs of individuals and families**

We have restructured our homelessness and housing advice service to ensure it meets the requirements of the Housing (Wales) Act to provide a housing solutions focused outcome for all persons presenting as homeless or in need of housing advice. This has included the development of specialist roles within the team including the private rented sector officer, to increase access to the private rented sector to provide additional affordable housing options. We are also working closely with our support providers to ensure our support services are aligned to the homelessness prevention agenda and meeting the needs of our most vulnerable clients.

We have made good progress in our homeless service during the year as evidenced by performance measures. Our performance remains among the best in Wales.

- 80% homeless households where homelessness prevented for at least 6 months
- Average 2 days homeless families with children spent in bed and breakfast accommodation

In recognition of the fact that communities and their economic environment are inextricably linked, in 2014/15 we have amalgamated our Physical and Social Regeneration plans into a single theme, "**Improving our Communities**". We feel this will bring related activities together and better align our work in this area. The Key Priorities to continue "**Improving our Communities**" as set out in our 2014/15 Corporate Plan are....

- Increase opportunities for working age adults to enter employment, education and training
- People better understand the financial choices that are available to them through the increased delivery of advice and information and improved financial capability at earlier stages in their lives
- Developing Aberdare and Pontypridd Town Centres, supporting the completion of at least 36 property enhancements across Aberdare and Pontypridd town centres
- Supporting Businesses to Create Jobs, aiming to assist in establishing at least 40 jobs through Council and Welsh Government grants, and a further 30 created by Companies delivering major contracts on behalf of the Council
- Maximising European funding to support the Council's priority for economic growth, through significant potential funding streams

You can view the detailed action plan for 2014/15 at [www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-improvingcommunities](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-improvingcommunities)

## **Performance Evaluation - Physical Regeneration**

Over the year, working on a regional basis has become more central to our overall priority of 'Physical Regeneration'. We have increasingly worked with our neighbouring Local Authorities in South East Wales with recognition that, in the current economic climate, there is a need to avoid duplication of effort and work collaboratively rather than competitively for the economic benefit of the region. These regional discussions have enabled us to jointly consider emerging plans around priorities for the upcoming round of European Funding, the criteria of which has a strong emphasis on getting people into work.

On a local level, we anticipate that these regional links will have a positive impact on the local economy in Rhondda Cynon Taf. During the year, our priority was aimed at

- **Encouraging and facilitating investment (including European funding) in Rhondda Cynon Taf to strengthen the economy and create jobs.** We wanted to create the right environment and promote our area as an attractive location to live, invest and do business. Supporting businesses to start up, grow and win contracts was integral to this, with the aim of creating jobs for the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- **Developing sustainable town centres which contribute to the economy of the County Borough** - making our town centres a focus for our communities as place to live, work and shop.

We have achieved this in many different ways during 2013/14:

- Through grant support from the Local Investment Fund and via the Council's own Capital Grant scheme, we exceeded our target of creating 73 jobs by supporting a diverse range of businesses to create 86 jobs.
- 43 local people have been employed as a result of Community Benefit clauses, built into our major contracts of over £2million.
- We piloted Community Benefits within smaller projects, which resulted in the creation of 3 additional posts.
- The construction of new primary schools in the County Borough employed 26 people and contributed to the training of 2 apprentices.
- The renovation of the Old Town Hall in Aberdare created 7 jobs.
- Since 2010/11, the Townscape Enhancement and Heritage Projects in Aberdare and Pontypridd have supported 33 businesses to create 37 jobs.

These achievements demonstrate the correlation between this priority and the priority of 'Social Regeneration'. We have made efforts over the past few years to more closely align these two Council priorities and for the forthcoming year of 2014/15, they are represented as one priority of 'Improving our Communities'.

**We said we would encourage and facilitate investment (including European funding) in Rhondda Cynon Taf to strengthen the economy and create jobs.**

Attracting new development to the County Borough is key to improving our local economy and we progressed the implementation of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)<sup>1</sup> to help support growth in the County Borough. The proposals must balance the need to fund high quality infrastructure within the area - thus attracting future investment - with the need to ensure the County Borough is affordable and attractive for developers. Development to date has included extensive consultation with stakeholders and the public which have helped to shape the proposals. For example, following concerns raised by housing associations of the potential detrimental impact of the CIL on provision of affordable housing, charging levels for residential developments were revised. This work will continue to completion in 2014/15.

We continued to work proactively with developers to deliver business and residential developments, including expanding our developer forum to include a forum for planning agents which received the following positive feedback:

***"In my view (and the view of our members), this forum is an extremely positive move from the council and is helping us to work more closely and effectively on issues that we all find difficult to resolve"*** Planning and Policy Advisor, Home Builders Federation

Through the forum, a suite of conditions to be attached to housing permissions was agreed with developers. Previously, conditions were often frontloaded at the beginning of the development, this has been amended to a process of staged permissions at different points at the building process. This will allow development to happen in the most efficient and viable way, encouraging developers to work within the County Borough. Through adopting a more consistent approach across developments, it should also result in less time spent appealing conditions.

43,854m<sup>2</sup> new floorspace was granted permission and/or developed into major commercial developments. This included development of a new supermarket, petrol station and infrastructure at Talbot Green, a strategic site within the Local Development plan, and new school and

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<sup>1</sup> Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a new Levy that local authorities can choose to charge to new developments in their area. The finance generated from the CIL will be used to fund the provision of new or improved infrastructure that will support new development in the region

leisure facilities in Aberdare. 534 new houses were built with a further 969 granted permission, linking to associated priorities to address the housing needs of residents which are explored in more detail in the social regeneration and public health and protection plans.

Small and Medium Enterprises employ more people in Rhondda Cynon Taf than large businesses, so supporting our local Businesses remained a key area. 86 jobs were created in a diverse range of businesses in 2013/14 through grant support from the Local Investment fund and via the Council's own Capital Grant scheme, exceeding our target of 73. We also supported 29 social enterprises to create 17 jobs via the South East Wales Community Economic Development programme.

An independent mid term evaluation of the Local Investment Fund concluded the project was on track to reach its targets and in some cases has already exceeded them; delivery arrangements and method of engagement with business is fit for purpose and the project represents good value for money in the way it engages with and supports business. As a result of good performance the Local Investment Fund has been extended and will now complete in June 2015.

#### **Case study: Allied Aerosystems**

*The company specialise in the calibration and repair of test equipment from all sectors of aerospace, engineering, automotive and manufacturing. Grant support enabled the purchase of new test equipment, enabling greater efficiencies to be realised in existing processes and enabling the company to compete for significant large scale contracts and develop international opportunities. This resulted in the creation of 2 new jobs.*

#### **Case study: Like an Egg video Production Company**

*The company produce commercial films such as promotional videos and adverts and also work with community organisations, including supporting communities to make their own films. Supported via a grant to purchase production equipment, the company were able to take on a Production assistant, increasing their workforce from 3 to 4.*

One area of Local Investment Fund performance which has not been as positive is supporting the creation of new enterprises ie new business start ups. Across the region there was a target of 300, with 169 achieved to date (56%). The target across RCT was 64, with 49 to date (77%). However, this only measures the support provided to businesses at the point they actually start, and much support is also targeted at those within their 3, 6 and 12 months of operation, which is a crucial stage development for businesses.

We continued to support Businesses through information sharing and networking, running 14 Business club events attended by 531 businesses. We launched a Business enquiry service which was used by 358 businesses to obtain relevant business information including advice on grant support, property and land availability. Qualitative feedback from Businesses indicates the value they place on Business club events:

***"I just wanted to say thank you for organising the meeting earlier today. I have been to several networking events in South Wales and I can honestly say that today's was one of the best and most worthwhile so far"*** Paul Fear Photography

The most recent data (2012) shows there were 5,030 active Businesses<sup>2</sup> in the County Borough. There were 505 new Business start ups in the County Borough during this period, however, there were also 555 Business closures suggesting that many new businesses are currently not sustainable. The rate of business births as a percentage of active enterprises in RCT (10.0) compares favourably with Wales (9.4) although it is lower than across the UK (11.4). Closure rates of 11.0 are marginally higher than across Wales (10.2) and the UK (10.7). Although support has been provided to new Business start ups in the form of grant programmes, work has not yet been progressed to analyse the reasons for the number of Business failures which may help to target this support more effectively. This review has taken longer than anticipated because understanding the reasons for business failure is difficult, due to the issue that when a business ceases to exist, tracking the business becomes impossible. Using the intelligence we have, we will look to complete this work in 2014/15, consisting of an in-depth analysis of the data, refining our understanding of the trends arising from the analysis and using this information as a basis to determine future action. We are working to provide more flexible, targeted support to new businesses and maintain longer lasting relationships with the businesses we support to assist them to remain sustainable.

Working in partnership with other South East Wales Local authorities, we undertook significant preparatory work to maximise the level of European funding for the region in 2014/15 and beyond. This included the development of projects for the Welsh Governments Vibrant and

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<sup>2</sup> The number of active enterprises in the County Borough that had either turnover or employment at any time during the reference period

Viable Places Regeneration investment fund, which aims to target intensive investment in a small number of town centres, coastal areas and communities first clusters. The continuation of this work is included in our plan for 2014/15.

As a large and complex organisation, the Council itself has a significant impact on the local economy, and we assisted local firms to be competitive for Council contracts by holding 'meet the buyer' and supplier development days, which were attended by 369 suppliers. One local business, Calibre Contracting Limited, said the 'meet the buyer' event was really valuable when they were first looking for contracts. They had had opportunities to meet the buyers in person, as well as the support organisations which helped them in their tender responses so they were able to submit tenders accordingly. 208 local businesses submitted bids or tenders for Council contracts and over 70% of creditor payments by the Council were made to local businesses (with postcode CF, SA, NP), contributing £49m to the local economy.

We continued to build community benefits clauses into our major contracts (over £2m), delivering tangible benefits to our communities. 43 local people were employed as a result of Community benefits clauses. In addition to this, we began development of Community Benefits clauses and requirements for smaller projects (less than £2m). Targeted Recruitment and Training requirements were incorporated on a pilot basis within the Community Benefits section of the South East Wales Highways Framework, which set out increasing requirements at specific threshold costs to create an employment opportunity for a long term economically inactive person; to sustain that employment; and to create a second new entrant opportunity. This has already resulted in the creation of an additional 3 posts. The use of similar requirements will be expanded to further suitable contract areas in future.

We evaluated the economic impact (Community Benefits) of major contracts let by the Council for the construction of new primary schools at Abercynon, Cwmbach and Ynysboeth. These benefits ranged from key deliverables such as employing 26 people for a combined 716 weeks to less quantifiable benefits such as engaging schools in the construction process as a learning resource. The contracts also contributed to the training of 2 apprentices through an innovative 'shared apprenticeship' scheme with neighbouring local authorities. Where contracts were not of sufficient timescales for an entire apprenticeship to be completed, contractors committed to undertaking part of an apprentices training which was then completed on another scheme. This has enabled high quality training opportunities to be created which would not otherwise have been possible as part of smaller construction schemes.

**We said that we would develop sustainable town centres which contribute to the economy of the County Borough.**

We focussed our efforts on our two largest town centres, Pontypridd and Aberdare, in order to develop regional hubs as a catalyst for future growth and investment.

We completed public realm enhancements in Pontypridd town centre including Taff Street, Market Street, High Street, Church Street and Mill Street. Provision of new high quality paving and street furniture has had a major impact on the appearance of the town. In addition, the programme of townscape enhancement projects continued to improve both the appearance and utilisation of business premises in the town centre, with new jobs being created and floorspace brought back into use.

We completed design work and the tender process for the restoration of Pontypridd Lido. The Lido is the only listed lido to have survived in Wales, and the restored Lido will be a regional visitor attraction aiding the regeneration of the wider Pontypridd settlement area. Continuation of the project forms part of our new Regenerating Our Communities plan and we are currently on track to complete the project in 2015. Another important part of the project is the delivery of a range of community, educational and volunteering projects for which preparation has taken place and delivery will begin in 2014/15.

In addition to these major projects, we continued to work with partners such as local traders, the town council and local community groups to develop smaller initiatives to encourage additional visitors to the town centre, and the set up of a weekly timed 'Parkrun' which attracts over 100 runners to the town every Saturday.

In addition to these major projects, we continue to support partners in developing and delivering their own projects. For example, conservation officers provided advice on restoration of a listed building on the Pontypridd station redevelopment, and we coordinated our work so the design of the station forecourt would complement the public realm work in the town. We provided advice and support to trader and community led events such as 'Yaberdaberdare' and a weekly 'Parkrun' in Pontypridd, encouraging additional visitors to our town centres. Through a continued partnership approach, supporting local traders, the town council in Pontypridd, and community groups to deliver successful projects through the provision of advice and facilitation where necessary, we aim to support the continued prosperity of our town centres.

Building on the work already undertaken in Pontypridd, the initial development of a Business Improvement District (BID) began. A BID is a defined area within which businesses pay a levy in order to fund projects such as improvements to the trading environment, Business support initiatives and economic development. This work will be continued as part of our 2014/15 plan.

In Aberdare we continued a programme of townscape enhancement (TEP) and heritage projects (THI) to improve the physical condition and quality of business premises within the town, bringing floorspace back into use and supporting businesses to develop and grow. For example, the Grade II listed Old Town Hall, a previously derelict building, was restored to create 6 new housing units<sup>3</sup> and also provided the premises for a new business, creating 7 jobs. Since 2010/11 the TEP and THIs in Aberdare and Pontypridd have in total supported 33 businesses to create 37 jobs and bring back into use 3320m<sup>2</sup> of business floorspace.

During the course of delivering the public realm enhancements in both Pontypridd and Aberdare we listened to the concerns of town centre businesses over potential disruption to trade caused by the works. As a result we took action by making improvements to plans to mitigate disruption by introducing measures including: guaranteeing access for deliveries to business premises; a text and e-mail service to businesses to inform them of day to day works operations and location of works; business as usual publicity and on site signage specifying names of businesses.

A local history society said "***Thank you for the splendid work that has been done to date within the THI (Townscape Heritage Initiative) in restoring and enhancing the historic Victorian Character of Aberdare town centre. The impact of the initiative in enhancing the character of various business premises and prominent buildings has been very positive and most welcome...likewise the work done in renewing pavements and street furniture in the conservation area as a whole***".

Initial results from our interim evaluation show that the investment in Pontypridd and Aberdare is having a quantifiable impact. There has been a 7% increase in footfall in Pontypridd town centre, bucking the national trend where visitor numbers to town centres are generally in decline (Wales -5.3%; UK -3.7%). Although footfall in Aberdare town centre has declined by 3.1%, this has been at a slower rate than the national average. The number of vacant retail premises was also lower in Pontypridd (9.3%) and Aberdare(10%) than the national average (Wales 17.9%; UK 11.9%,); vacancy rates were also low in Llantrisant (3%), Treorchy (4%) and Ferndale (9%). However, other town centres in RCT showed higher levels of vacancies (Porth 15%, Mountain Ash 20%, and Tonypandy 15%).

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to full case study in Enforcement plan evaluation for further detail of the housing benefits of this scheme

Final evaluation of the Pontypridd and Aberdare regeneration programme in 2015 will aim to capture more in-depth, attributable and longer term outcomes from the regeneration work.

We were not given the opportunity by the Wales European Funding Office to bid for further European funding opportunities for the regeneration of Mountain Ash or Treorchy town centres. We will continue to look for funding opportunities in these areas.

In recognition of the fact that communities and their environment are inextricably linked, we are amalgamating our Physical and Social Regeneration plans into a single theme, **Improving our Communities**. We feel this will bring related activities together and better align our work in this area. The Key Priorities for **Improving our Communities** as set out in our 2014/15 Corporate Plan are:

- Increase opportunities for working age adults to enter employment, education and training
- Enable people to better understand the financial choices that are available to them through the provision of advice and information
- Reduce homelessness and provide services that meet the housing needs of individuals and families
- Develop Aberdare and Pontypridd Town Centres, supporting the completion of at least 36 property enhancements across Aberdare and Pontypridd town centres
- Support Businesses to Create Jobs, aiming to assist in establishing at least 40 jobs through Council and Welsh Government grants, and a further 30 created by Companies delivering major contracts on behalf of the Council
- Maximise European funding to support the Council's priority for economic growth, through significant potential funding streams

You can view the full action plan for 2014/15 at [www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-improvingcommunities](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-improvingcommunities)

**APPENDIX 2a**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP**

**Notes** of the meeting of the Scrutiny Working Group held at the Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

**Present:**

County Borough Councillor (Mrs) M Davies - in the Chair

**County Borough Councillors:**

J David  
(Mrs) S J Jones  
(Mrs) S Rees  
(Mrs) J Ward

**Cabinet Member**

County Borough Councillor M Forey

**Officers in Attendance:**

Mr G Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children's Services  
Mr N Elliott – Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing  
Mr R Gatis – Service Director, Community Care  
Mr P Griffiths – Service Director, Performance and Improvement  
Ms Lesley Lawson – Service Improvement Officer, Strategic Planning  
Ms K May – Democratic Services Manager  
Ms A Edwards – Scrutiny Support Officer  
Ms E Coates – Scrutiny Support Officer

**Older Person's Advisory Group**

Mr G Bell  
(Mrs) L Corre  
(Mrs) A Davies  
(Mrs) A Tritschler

**Welsh Government**

Ms N Newton

**1. APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillor (Mrs) A Roberts.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declaration of interest was received in relation to the agenda:

- (i) County Borough Councillor (Mrs) S Jones – in relation to agenda item 2 – Challenge of the Council’s delivery of its priority plan – Maintaining People’s Independence – “ I am a director and trustee of Cwm Taf Crossroads”.

### **3. PRESENTATION**

The Service Improvement Officer provided the Working Group with a short presentation outlining the feedback which the Council had obtained through its meeting with the Older People’s Advisory Group (OPAG). (The full note of this meeting was attached to the agenda pack for Members’ consideration.) She explained that OPAG was asked for their views on:

- How well the Council was doing in relation to the two Outcomes in the Maintaining People’s Independence Priority: What we did well?
- What we did not do so well?
- Examples of personal experiences.

The Service Improvement Officer highlighted the key issues raised by OPAG, as set out below, and explained that representatives from OPAG had been invited to the meeting to further highlight to the Working Group their views of the service based on their experiences.

#### Key issues raised by OPAG Members

- **Contacts recorded by First Response** - do we have comparative information across authorities? Can the figures be broken down to indicate areas of high demand and used to target resources?
- **Support of Learning Disabilities** – more user friendly information e.g. bus/train timetables. The voice of the service user needs to be stronger together with consideration of the level of support at weekends for those in community.
- **Direct Payments** - Direct Payments can be good – provide flexibility – people don’t want to go to bed at 5.30 pm. However, becoming an employer is a big responsibility - financial monitoring in place but how can we be sure about the quality of care.
- **Intermediate Care and Reablement** - Mostly positive experience - excellent care. Majority had seen and used the Carers’ A - Z. However, Carers needs are not always considered - assumptions made that people can manage - assumption that some ‘medical’ tasks can be undertaken by carer. Other issues:
  - Home assessment prior to discharge can be traumatic for carer
  - Issue around who supplies what e.g. hospital, primary health care or social services
  - Poor communication
  - Carers don’t always recognise that they are ‘carers’
  - Carers feel isolated
  - Respite care needs to be reviewed
  - Lack of advice and information on entitlements/services
  - GP practices need to recognise carers

- **Telecare** - Some awareness of telecare but more information needed on various packages.
- **Dementia Packages** – Concern that these can be open to abuse. Young sufferers should not be placed with elderly. Are aware of the Butterfly Project.
- **Adaptations** - Sometimes people are forced to pay because waiting times are too long but not everyone can afford to do this. Sometimes there is a lot of money wasted on adaptations – might benefit from a rethink in some cases. There is a need for more one bedroom flats which would enable older people to remain in their own home.

#### **4. OPAG REPRESENTATION**

The representatives from OPAG also provided the following feedback directly to the Working Group:

- **Adaptations** – In some cases undertaking major adaptation work is not always appropriate in terms of cost effectiveness and also upheaval to the families.
- **Carers** – the pressure on carers 24 hours a day needs to be appreciated and that there should be more regular assessments of their needs. In particular the demands on child carers are not always considered. There can be an expectation on carers to administer eye drops/medicines, perhaps change catheters, without always having any instruction. Whilst there are good services out there for Carers, there is still a lack of information in the primary care setting sometimes around what services or benefit entitlements may be available to carers. It was acknowledged that the Council did provide good services for carers when they were identified. OPAG pointed out that the role of carers in society needed to be recognised and given that resources were limited perhaps there was a need to become more innovative in the long term in how we address the issue of caring for the frail or elderly.
- **Direct Payments** – there is a need for more monitoring. Quality of care is an issue. Also the responsibilities of being an employer can be an issue.

Following OPAG's feedback there was a general discussion amongst those present with officers responding to areas of concern.

Outcome1 – Work towards the integration of health and social care services to provide, based on need, a more holistic ad seamless service for people in RCT

- Members agreed that OPAG's remarks in relation to the First Response data would assist in benchmarking and provide a great deal of useful data which could be considered by the Scrutiny Committee. The Service Director reported on the processes following the initial referral and explained that whilst the majority of issues were dealt with by the Council, in many cases this was signposting people to services. The cases referred to the re-ablement and intermediate care team

would then be assessed by the multi agency team as to whether there was a need for social services involvement. If it was determined that there was a need for on-going support the case would be passed to the appropriate Locality Team. He added that he was proud of the work undertaken by the reablement and intermediate care team which played a key role in preventing cases of delayed transfers of care.

Outcome 2 – Review existing and develop new provisions, where appropriate, to provide need led services that focus on independence, quality, protect the dignity and well being of clients and make best use of resources (and in doing so help meet the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Bill)

- With regard to the information for Carers, the Service Director Adult Services referred to the A-Z document which had been introduced for a number of years. He also added that it was important to give staff the knowledge to pass on.
- With regard to the points made in relation to adaptations, the Service Director reported that End of Life Pathways was a difficult challenge for staff. Sometimes the progression of an illness can be difficult to predict. He pointed out that those making the assessments were professionals and tried to work as sensitively as possible with the families. He appreciated that whilst for the most part things were done well, the experience for an individual when things did go wrong was very powerful.
- Direct Payments – with regard to the concerns raised the Service Director reported that there had been a few cases of abuse of the process but now there were better processes in place. The move to direct payments was a huge cultural challenge for people to get to grips with but the current direction of travel was for people to have more control over their care. There was, however, a need to monitor the outcomes.
- Medication – the Service Director explained that the Health Board are aware of the issues and are attempting to challenge current practices.

The representatives from OPAG were thanked for their attendance and informative feedback. Mrs Core pointed to the need for early involvement in any future consultation process due to the size of the Group to ensure a good and effective response.

## **5. CHALLENGE OF THE COUNCIL'S DELIVERY OF ITS PRIORITY PLAN – MAINTAINING PEOPLE'S INDEPENDENCE**

The Service Director, Performance and Improvement explained to Members the purpose of the meeting, namely to review, challenge and propose improvements to the evaluation of performance on the Council's priorities during 2013-14. Members were asked to consider the following points in reaching their conclusions

- How well does the evaluation explain how service users/communities have benefitted as a result of the work?
- Does the evaluation give the reader a sense of how well/not so well the council has performed?
- To what extent have the findings from the 2013/14 evaluation been used to inform the 2014/15 plan?

#### Outcome 1

- Members commented that the positive statistics in relation to the re-ablement team suggested that service users had benefited.
- The inclusion of case studies would be informative for the reader with further thought needed to how these messages could be relayed to the public. The Service Director, Adult Services reported that there were a number of ways e.g. press releases, internet, sharing information with the Health Board. The Group Director commented that the powerful messages from the OPAG representatives also needed to be discussed with the Health Board.
- With regard to the concerns which had been raised in relation to adaptations, the Service Director, Adult Services pointed out that he was not aware that there was a significant issue. He suggested that the Community Occupational Therapists were skilled and sensitive enough to manage each case appropriately.
- Members commented that the plan was clear in relation to what targets had or had not been reached with explanations provided. However, Members did question how these targets were set and how realistic they were. An overview was provided of the information taken account of when setting targets.
- Members questioned the missed target MO2 relating to the evaluation of the usefulness of the Directory of Services. Officers explained that the resource in this case was staff resource rather than monetary. However, the CSSIW had commented favourably on the website, the challenge now was to keep it up to date.

#### Outcome 2

- The Chair suggested that the numbers receiving Direct Payments was low. It was explained that the target was a local indicator and that the direction of travel was positive.
- It was suggested that the key priorities for 2014/15 as set out in the delivery report were quite broad.

(Mrs) M Davies  
Chairman

The meeting closed at 4 pm.



## Performance Evaluation - Maintaining People's Independence

Our overall priority was and continues to be "Maintaining People's Independence" so that older and vulnerable people and their carers are supported to remain in control of their care arrangements and accommodation. Our priority is to provide good quality interventions that support independence whilst also retaining a focus on safeguarding vulnerable adults from neglect and abuse. To do this, in 2013/14 we planned

**to continue our work towards the integration of health & social care services<sup>1</sup> to provide, based on need, a more holistic and seamless service for people in Rhondda Cynon Taf.** We need to provide efficient integrated health and social care services that are responsive, citizen centred and support independence and in doing so meet the requirements of the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Bill

**to review existing and develop new provisions, where appropriate, to provide needs led services that focus on independence and quality, protect the dignity and well being of clients and make best use of resources** – latest predictions indicate that the number of people aged 65+ will increase by 40% by 2033 which will impact on people's ability to live independently. We therefore need to continue our work to support independence. There is also growing demand for suitable accommodation for younger adults with a learning disability (this was highlighted by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in the Performance Evaluation report (2011/12) <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/cssiw/publications/121031rcten.pdf>

In this priority we directly sought the views of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Older People's Advisory Group (OPAG)<sup>2</sup> to test the reality of our reported progress. Representatives from the OPAG also attended the Community Services Scrutiny Working Group to present and reinforce the findings of OPAG members. The points made by OPAG that related directly to the challenge of the 2013/14 plan progress have been referenced in the Performance Evaluation. All other information that was captured will be used by service Managers to inform service planning, work with our partners

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<sup>1</sup> Integration of health & social care services supports the Welsh Government's Sustainable Social Services Framework that aims to reshape and refocus social services in order to ensure that they remain strong, and can continue to meet citizens' needs and aspirations

<sup>2</sup> The Rhondda Cynon Taff Older People's Advisory Group acts as the governing body of the Rhondda Cynon Taff Older People's Forums. There are five forums in Rhondda Cynon Taff, ie : Upper Rhondda, Rhondda, Cynon, Taff Ely and Llantrisant. The Advisory Group consists of three elected members from each of the five forums. The Advisory Group seeks to serve and promote the interests of those people aged over 50 in Rhondda Cynon Taff

and/or **will** be used to shape the 2015/16 Priority Planning. We are grateful to the OPAG for its honest and valuable input into the evaluation of our progress.

**We said we would continue to work towards the integration of health & social care services<sup>3</sup> to provide, based on need, a more holistic and seamless service for people in Rhondda Cynon Taf.**

Our progress over the last year in this area has been mixed.

We successfully set up the First Response Service. to help improve how referrals are dealt with. Since implementation we have received 32,806 contacts, 29,039 of which were progressed within the Council. This could be perceived as a healthy response but whilst the call volume is high, we need to do more analysis on the information to be clear about where the calls are coming from in terms of location, client group and the nature of the calls. This will help us to get a clear picture of what the data is telling us so that we can target information/help appropriately and to get a true picture of how the First Response Service is improving the service we provide to the residents of RCT. Initial analysis of the response is indicating that 30% of the responses are an indication of need within the community. Rhondda Cynon Taf is the only Council in Wales that has this exact Service Delivery model so we are currently unable to benchmark our performance at this stage. However, feedback from customer call backs indicates that on average in 2013/14 98.7% of callers surveyed were satisfied with the service overall and 98% considered that the advisor had resolved their enquiry. The planned work to evaluate the First Response service is ongoing and so we have not met the original completion date of March 2014. This work will now be completed by December 2014.

In May 2013, we introduced a Short term intervention service which was designed to provide a short term enabling service. The service delivers individual planned support for up to six weeks with the aim of promoting independence and reduces the need for ongoing Social Care Services. As a result of this work and the more recent expansion of Reablement packages, we have achieved this and our data shows there were 71.52% of reablement packages completed where clients required no ongoing services, increasing from 68.38% in the previous year. However, whilst we will continue with our work to help people to maintain their independence in 2014, we have set a reduced target for this measure in 2014/15. The reduced target of 65%, reflects the likely impact of the Service widening access to people with dementia who are more likely to require some level of ongoing service.

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<sup>3</sup> Integration of health & social care services supports the Welsh Government's Sustainable Social Services Framework that aims to reshape and refocus social services in order to ensure that they remain strong, and can continue to meet citizens' needs and aspirations

Feedback from Service Users is generally positive:

- **"We were satisfied with the extra care we received, my mother is now capable to attend to her own needs, where at the time she could not manage her day to day tasks. Thank you for your help".**
- **"The girls on the rehabilitation team were excellent and what they taught him has made a difference to him and the referral to telecare made a big difference to his safety, we have a sensor on bed down & upstairs and on chair so every time he moves I can get there".**
- **"Please thank all of the carers who came to help me - they were all very friendly and helped keep my dignity throughout. They were also very punctual and would let me know who was calling if possible. This meant a great deal to me as I am of a nervous disposition."**
- **"I cannot thank & praise your service enough. I was grateful for the support & equipment I received especially as I live alone. Carers and meals came regularly at the promised time, many thanks "**
- **"The help I have received has benefitted me enormously and has assisted in regaining my confidence and independence."**
- **"I would like to thank you all that have helped me in my recovery in my own home or making me feel that I can carry on in my home and knowing that if I need help , advice or a chat that you were there in person and on the phone if I needed you."**

We also know there is more we to do, for example, one user told us "**I felt the service was helpful in some areas, however there were many areas where the service could not help and overall I feel my independence has not improved significantly. I feel that there was little/no information provided about when the service ended**". As a result of this comment we are currently reviewing the end of service information we provide to individuals and information for staff to pass on in the form of a leaflet

We have been unable to complete a planned evaluation of the usefulness of our Directory of Services (for Care Services). A revised updated version of "A Guide to Social Care 2014" has been published on the councils website. In order to meet the information needs of social care staff the Council's intranet site INFORM has been redesigned to make service information more accessible. This also enabled staff to provide support to service users. Specific evaluation re the Directory is being managed at service level and progress will be monitored. If progress is not as anticipated it will be reintroduced as a future priority item

We continue to work in collaboration with the Local Health Board. In May 2013 following consideration of a paper on the future for learning disability services across Rhondda Cynon Taf we have hosted a scoping workshop with colleagues in Merthyr Tydfil CBC and colleagues from the Local Health Board and formed a Project Board. However, with the long term absence of the Director who was leading the work this was postponed temporarily.

Further progress has been limited owing to resource issues. We have used £175K ESF partnership funding to support the implementation of the WG initiative on a "Framework for Integration of H&SC for Old People with complex needs. As a result of the progress and the steps we have put in place for the Council and the Health Board to work together this does not appear as a priority for 14/15 in our Corporate Plan. However, progress will be monitored within the Council and by partners in the Local Service Board.

We have reviewed what we do and how we make sure that the voices of Service Users are heard. We found that whilst we engage well with some Service Users, ie people with mental health difficulties and people with learning disabilities we need to do more for other groups. In 2014/15 specific work to do this is being managed at service level and progress will be monitored. If progress is not as anticipated it will be reintroduced as a future priority item.

In its Annual review of performance for 2012/13, the CSSIW recognised the pace of change in adults services has increased with evidence of initiatives coming to fruition. The report also recognises the Council has "longer term plans in place to look at all services to ensure value for money is achieved as well as meeting the needs of the Citizen" <http://cssiw.org.uk/our-reports/local-authority-report/2013/rct-annual-evaluation/?lang=en>

**We said we would review existing and develop new provisions, where appropriate, to provide needs led services that focus on independence and quality, protect the dignity and well being of clients and make best use of resources**

We have made positive progress overall in this area having completed the majority of things that we set out to achieve.

We have improved access to intermediate care as described above and also extended the use of intermediate care and reablement service to all hospitals and wards in the Cwm Taf area. As a result of this work, 94.17% of people who responded to a survey felt that the service we put in place helped them to remain living independently in their home. This is a significant proportion of responses overall but marginally below last years response of 95.6. We have promoted the service to people with memory problems by the development of a Reablement Memory Service. Initially this service was delivered in the Rhondda area, due to positive evaluation of the impact on service users, in 2014/15 the service will be rolled out across RCT. While individuals with memory problems or a dementia do benefit from a targeted Reablement service, full independence levels are generally lower than for individuals with a physical disability. As a result of the anticipated increase in the number of people receiving the service where there is limited improvement in independence, we have set a lower target of 92% for 2014/15 which better reflects the changing needs of the

client group. We have exceeded our target in the number of people discharged from hospital receiving a reablement service who have a cognitive impairment, eg problems with memory, forgetfulness or a dementia, as a result a smaller number of people have required ongoing service provision and remain living independently in their own homes. As part of the service delivery, information and guidance is provided to informal carers. The additional information about dementia and caring for an individual supports carers to continue in their caring role.

OPAG representatives were generally positive about the Reablement service but they had concerns about aspects of the other care services eg for those having long term home care, the timing of the service where people are being put to bed very early in the evening.

We have implemented new care contracts for the delivery of care to people with learning disabilities in Supported Living Schemes and have now streamlined the number of providers to one for each locality of Rhondda, Cynon and Taff. This enables a better use of resource as services can be more targeted in geographical areas so becoming more service user focused, less fragmented and more cost effective. This was implemented in October 2013 and to date is working well. It is our aim to ensure that the quality of care is maintained at a reduced costs thus providing better value for money. It is too early to say whether this has been delivered but we plan to complete the evaluation of this by the end of October. This evaluation is being managed at service level and progress will be monitored. If progress is not as anticipated it will be reintroduced as a future priority item. Early indications are that there is greater collaboration with assessment, commissioning and provider teams resulting in a more coherent delivery of quality care for people with a learning disability. The plans for evaluation are ongoing and qualitative monitoring has been ongoing through the year. A financial comparison will need to be made at the completion of a year of the new contracts.

We have increased the range of access to services to help people live independently by working with RCT Homes to make available two sheltered accommodation units in Hendre Gwilym (Penygraig) and Buarth y Capel (Ynysybwl) for people aged under 65 years old. We have completed the refurbishment, appointed "Drive" as the Tenancy Support Provider and arranged and facilitated the relocation of tenants. The units have now been operational since Spring 2013 and we have started an evaluation of the effectiveness of the new accommodation and care arrangements and the impact the lives of the tenants. Early signs are positive, for example, feedback from one resident "***Before moving into Cwrt Buarth y Capel I was living in a place which gave me no chance to meet others and have a life outside. When this flat became available I moved in and started going shopping and meeting people straight away. The building and the facilities are wonderful – my flat is out of this world and the "Drive" staff work really hard to help us live by ourselves but still have fun. I can't praise it enough!***"

The evaluation of the new accommodation overall is being now managed at service level and progress will be monitored. The evaluation will be completed by the end of October 2014 and if progress is not as anticipated it will be reintroduced as a future priority item. Early signs are that the accommodation is limiting the use of expensive out of county placements and maintaining individuals in their local areas.

As an additional support to people to enable them to live at home, we recognised the need to expand the use of Telecare. Telecare consists of equipment and services that support safety and independence, ranging from an emergency pendant that allows people call for help to placing detectors around the home which when activated will automatically call a 24 hour response service, thus giving additional assurance to people living alone. The findings from a review of Telecare completed in 2013 will also inform a revised Policy for the future provision of Telecare. Both the findings from the review and the consequent revisions to the Policy will be presented to Cabinet for consideration. With 430 service users in 2013/14 there were fewer people accessing the service than in 2012/13 (438). This data and the review of the service confirmed the need to do more to promote and market this service, this was also confirmed in feedback from the OPAG. Work on a marketing campaign to promote Telecare as a means of supporting independence is continuing and is contained in the 2014/15 Priority Plan.

Whilst much of our work to help people to live in their own homes longer is positive, we are also aware that there is still much to be done, including putting in place adaptations more quickly. Despite delivering Disabled Facilities Grants more quickly, from 271 days in 2012/13 to 232 days in 13/14, we note the progress that other Councils are making which has resulted in RCT's slight decline in comparative performance from 7th to 10th in Wales.

As a result of our overall work in this area, the number of people under 65 we support in the community has increased from 86.11% per 1,000 population to 87.39%. This means that more people are maintaining their independence and staying in their own homes for longer. This positive performance is also reflected in our comparative position within Wales, where we have improved our position from 11th to 7th out of the 22 Councils.

The number of people aged 65 or over that we support in the Community has fallen slightly in the last year, from 108.62 per 1,000 population to 106.9, however our performance still remains among the best in Wales which suggests that the initiatives and partnership arrangements the Council is putting in place is having a positive outcome for individuals and communities.

### **Direct Payments**

We have increased the number of clients choosing to pay their carers through direct payments (373 out of 2,795 service users) which provides our clients with choice about the care they receive. This is a greater number than the target set but we also recognise we need to do more to help people

have the confidence to manage their direct payment. We have undertaken a pilot scheme in which we provided additional support to help people to more effectively manage their direct payment. As the pilot started later than anticipated due to a delay in identifying appropriate service users to participate the evaluation was also delayed until June 2014 and appears in our 2014/15 plan. However, early indications are that the pilot has been successful and will be commissioned as a new service available within the parameters of an eligibility criteria.

In the OPAG meeting there was a query about how we monitor £ is being spent appropriately - There are a number of mechanisms in place to monitor this money eg care management reviews, audited accounts and work with the Dewis Centre for Independent Living.

### **Carers information**

It is estimated that 1 in 10 of our residents is already a carer, which is more than the average for Wales. Over the last few years we have been working hard to improve the help we provide to Carers so that they feel fully supported in providing care for a family member or friend. The Cwm Taf Carers Information and Consultation Strategy was launched at an event in June 2013. The launch included real life examples of caring roles from daily experiences to the implications of hospital discharge.

We are involving Carers in shaping the service and the progress we are making to develop support for all carers was recognised in the most recent (2012/13) CSSIW Annual Review and Evaluation report <http://cssiw.org.uk/our-reports/local-authority-report/2013/rct-annual-evaluation/?lang=en>. However, as the 2011 Census indicates, there are many 'hidden' Carers across Cwm Taf and we recognise we need to do more to identify and support them. It is hoped that this will be further achieved through the implementation of the Carers Information and Consultation Strategy. Because of this, Carers remains one of our priorities for 2014/15. This has been recently reinforced by feedback from OPAG who indicated that they had concerns about longer term carer issues including what could be perceived as the provision of "medical" care.

For those Carers that receive support, feedback is positive

### **Case Study from Young Adult Carers (18-25 year olds):**

*J had to give up his painting and decorating course to care for his father at home. With the family's permission the project worker liaised with other professionals to highlight J's situation and to get more support for the father. J began socialising again with other carers and was then supported to access benefits advice, apply for work and completed some workshops with the project. He is now in part-time work.*

## Feedback from participants in Carers Events

### **Manual Handling Information Course March 2014:**

**"Learned more today than in the last 8 years! Will be doing more in the future for definite"**

**"Excellent what I've learnt today, will hopefully change our home life"**

### **Carers and their Rights Event March 2014:**

**"Interesting, good input. Keep the really good events going"**

**"I thought the day was very informative and helpful. Thank you"**

### **Carers Pottery Workshop Feb 2014:**

**"These workshops give Carers the opportunity to learn a new skill whilst giving us a break from our caring role, and also a lovely way to either meet new people or meet up with friends you have made on other workshops. Thank you"**

**"It's been a lovely first and wonderful experience meeting and working with people in situation not to dissimilar to mine"**

### **Carers Ceramic Painting workshop November 2013:**

**"Fabulous, would be lost without it (Carers Project), had a fabulous time and met some wonderful people"**

**"Thank you for the opportunity to try something new whilst giving me a stress free day"**

### **Quote from Mindfulness Course September 2013:**

**"Thank you. Life can be very difficult sometimes and I hope to use this course as a basis to make it a little less difficult and much more rewarding"**

As part of support to Carers, in April 2013 we merged Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf A-Z Carer Guides and created a "Cwm Taf Carers A – Z". This Guide aims to provide Carers and residents in Cwm Taf, with information about the services and support that may be available to them. The Cwm Taf A-Z has been made available via Merthyr Council, RCT and Cwm Taf UHB websites and has been widely distributed across Cwm Taf to locations inc Leisure Centres, Libraries, Day Centres, health locations, inc Hospitals and GP surgeries, and Third Sector organisations e.g. Interlink and the Alzheimer's Society <http://webapps.rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk/brochures/Flipping-Books/Cwm-Taf-Carers-AtoZ-Guide/English/> We have also completed a review of all our Carers Support Project documentation for carers to ensure its relevancy and accuracy.

Using funding from Welsh Government we have also appointed a Carers Measure Coordinator who is supporting the implementation of the Cwm Taf Carers Information and Consultation Strategy. Part of the role of the Coordinator is to raise awareness of potential carers by identifying Carers champions across all public sector settings; there are currently 130 Carers Champions in place. The champions represent the needs of Carers within their organisations, eg in Job Centre Plus staff are trained to identify Carers so that appropriate support is offered when seeking work or attempting to reenter employment. A significant amount of work has been undertaken to raise awareness of Carers in the Community. This includes a marketing plan "Who Cares" which is in place across Cwm Taf. This has involved displaying billboards across Cwm Taf; local cinema advertisements; distributing posters and press releases as well as interviews on local radio. Links have been made with Cwm Taf Pharmacies and information included with dispensed prescriptions. In addition, to provide further information regarding the Carers Measure a "Who Cares" information leaflet has been developed and widely distributed.

A Carer Aware e-learning module has been procured for staff across Cwm Taf. The aim of the module is to ensure staff are more 'Carer Aware', thus improving awareness and recognition of Carers. The module is also designed to give an insight into Carers issues, support available to them and Carers rights.

More detailed information about the work of the Council and our Partners in supporting Carers and implementing the Cwm Taf Carers Strategy can be found in the [Annual Report on the Cwm Taf Carers Strategy \(Report and Appendix\)](#) that was presented to Cabinet in May 2014 <http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/en/councildemocracy/democracyelections/councillorscommittees/meetings/cabinet/2014/05/13/cabinet13-may-2014.aspx>

In Rhondda Cynon Taf the number of Carers identified increased significantly between 2012-13 to 2013-14 and in increasing the numbers of Carers we are identifying this should mean an increase in the number of Carers Assessments offered. Since 2012/13 we have increased the assessments offered to carers in their own right from 39.5% to 60.4%. Whilst this is a significant increase within Rhondda Cynon Taf our performance remains within the bottom quartile for Wales and remains one of our priorities for 14/15.

### **Butterfly project**

The "Butterfly Project" is a new approach to dementia care, for which the Council has received national recognition. Following the success of the project in Clydach Court, Treleaw, this nationally recognised work in care for people with dementia was extended to another one of our Care Homes. The "Butterfly Project" was implemented in Dan y Mynydd, Porth, Home for the Elderly in 2013 and during Dementia Awareness Week in May 2014 it

become the second Council care home to secure the highest-possible award in the Butterfly Project from the Care Council for Wales. We will be completing the formal evaluation of the Projects in both Clydach Court and Dan y mynydd in October, which is later than first anticipated but clearly early signs indicate a huge success. This is reinforced not only by the national award and recognition but also from feedback from friends and family of those cared for in the home, who noted a "***remarkable difference and even improvement in the behaviour of their loved ones***" as a result of the project. There are plans to introduce the project to Cae Glas Home for the Elderly, in Hawthorn .

### **Multi - Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)**

The completion of the MASH will facilitate the most efficient and effective safeguarding service for both children and adults across partner organisations. The MASH will provide a physical hub for sharing information and concerns on child and adult referrals into safeguarding services. A way forward to implement the MASH was agreed by the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Childrens' Board in November 2013, ie agreeing to the MASH and to implement Adult's in advance of Children's aspects. The MASH remains a priority for the Council and its partners and is included in the 2014/15 Priority Plan. It is anticipated that the revised implementation date of March 2015 will be met for Adult Services.

In the meantime we have improved our performance in respect of completing Adult referrals where risk has been managed for the third consecutive year from 75.41% in 2011/12 to 91.84%. Despite this improvement our comparative position has worsened from 11th to 13th in Wales, although our performance is above the Welsh average for 2013/14.

The Key Priorities to "**Support Vulnerable Adults and Older People to live Independently**" as set out in our Corporate Plan 2014/15 are.....

- Helping people to live independently and maintain the same or similar performance levels as last year against growing demand.
- Safeguarding vulnerable adults, reflecting the important work that is needed to further reinforce the current arrangements in place and prepare for the new law that will be introduced in 2015.

You can view the detailed action plan for 2014/15 at: [www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-adultsindependence](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-adultsindependence)

**APPENDIX 3a**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**“MEDIUM TERM SERVICE PLANNING (MTSP) SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP”**

**Notes** of the meeting of the Scrutiny Working Group held at the Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2014 at 3 p.m.

**PRESENT:**

**County Borough Councillors**

R.K.Turner (Chairman), P.Griffiths, G.Stacey and R.Smith

**Officers**

Mr.C.Lee – Group Director, Corporate Services

Mr.P.J.Lucas – Director, Legal and Democratic Services

Mr.P.Griffiths - Service Director, Performance and Improvement

Ms.K.May - Democratic Services Manager

**1. APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillor M. Norris.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**RESOLVED** – to note that in accordance with the Members’ Code of Conduct, there were no declarations of interest pertaining to the agenda.

**3. INTRODUCTION**

The Service Director, Performance and Improvement explained to Members the purpose of the meeting, namely to review, challenge and propose improvements to the evaluation of performance on the Council’s priorities during 2013/14.

The Group Director, Corporate Services provided Members with an overview of the delivery of the 2013/14 action plan.

He reported that the evaluation report aimed to set out a picture of performance under five themes: financial management and planning; workforce; asset management; partnership working; and performance management.

He also reported that within the financial management and planning theme, the delivery of a balanced budget for 2013/14 was a positive outcome

together with being able to set a deliverable budget for 2014/15. The Group Director added that an underpinning theme for the whole plan was the continuation of financial stability within the Council.

The Group Director indicated that financial management and planning was closely linked to workforce planning as a significant proportion of the Council's expenditure was staffing related. The Group Director also highlighted the vital role workforce planning arrangements will play moving forward to help ensure Council employees are well trained and have good attendance, throughout a period where there will be significant reductions in funding levels.

The Group Director highlighted that 2013/14 saw the launch of the Single Integrated Plan (SIP) – "Delivering Change" which was a real milestone in partnership working. He also highlighted that the SIP provided a solid platform to build on and further improve the collaborative arrangements in place.

The Group Director concluded by indicating that effective MTSP arrangements are integral to supporting the delivery of the Council's other priorities, for example, through informing the allocation of resources.

Further to this Members questioned Officers having reference to the following criteria:

- How well does the evaluation explain "how service users/communities" have benefitted as a result of the work?
- Does the evaluation give the reader a sense of how well/not so well the Council has performed?
- To what extent have the findings from the 2013/14 evaluation been used to inform the 2014/15 plan?

#### **4. FEEDBACK**

##### **Continued focus on stability and sustainability in terms of finances through an effective financial management framework**

- A Member queried whether the information before them was complete as it did not fully set out the extent of progress made by the Council to implement the service changes agreed by Cabinet on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

The Group Director, Corporate Services provided an overview of the progress made to implement the agreed service changes and confirmed that further information would be incorporated into the evaluation of performance.

- Members questioned the Council Tax increase of 3.95% and enquired whether further information could be included in the evaluation to set out the impact on Council funding should the increase not have been

applied. The Group Director, Corporate Services confirmed that the evaluation would be up dated to incorporate this.

**Ensure that effective workforce planning arrangements were put in place and that services would receive the necessary support and guidance to secure best value from their staff resources**

- A Member commented that in 2013/14, the percentage of days/shifts lost to sickness absence was 4.34%, compared to 4.54% in the previous year. The Member continued by challenging whether the rate of improvement was sufficient and questioned what action is being taken by the Council to improve this position further.
- The Group Director, Corporate Services outlined a range of initiatives that were being delivered by Occupational Health to improve employee attendance, including the influenza vaccine being offered to front line staff, the take up of which resulted in over 600 staff being vaccinated. The Group Director added that absence management reports are provided to all managers who then work with Human Resources officers to target areas for improvement. It was also noted however that on-going attention is needed in this area to support further improvement.
- A Member queried whether the reference to the production of a Disability Hate Crime Strategy should also refer to the SIP as this is an initiative which was also being taken on board by the Police Commissioner. The Group Director, Corporate Services confirmed that this was the case and the evaluation would be up dated accordingly.

**Refocus the Council's performance management arrangements to improve the range and use of information that helps measure the impact that Council services have on service users and its scrutiny by Councillors/stakeholders**

- A Member commented that the purpose of this exercise was to form a view on the extent of progress made by the Council during 2013/14 and whether its work had made any difference. The Member continued by expressing concern that there was little reference in the document to public engagement or real life examples that could be related to.

The Group Director, Corporate Services indicated that a number of themes in the plan were inward facing and related more to support service functions. The Group Director added that the Council undertakes a range of public engagement activities, for example, a three phase annual budget consultation process that aims to set out 'what difference has been made' as part of phase 3, and also indicated that consideration would be given to building case studies into the evaluation where deemed appropriate. .

**Improve the efficiency of our buildings through reduction of carbon emissions and improved property management processes**

A Member raised concern that references within the evaluation around the amount of energy saved was not easily understandable i.e. 2,587,371 kWh energy savings. The Group Director, Corporate Services indicated that the relevant detail within the evaluation would be up dated to aide understanding.

**R.K.TURNER**

**CHAIR**

The meeting closed at 3.50 p.m.

## **Medium Term Service Planning - Delivering within our Means - Performance Evaluation**

Our overall priority for Medium term service planning aimed to maintain the long term health of the Council through strong and accountable financial and performance leadership underpinned by robust management reporting. We aimed to manage our finances innovatively throughout a period of sustained 'real term cuts' in order to support, within our means, the delivery of "Delivering Change". In 2013/14 we said we would:

- Continue to focus on stability and sustainability in terms of our finances through an effective financial management framework
- Ensure that effective workforce planning arrangements were put in place and that services would receive the necessary support and guidance to secure best value from their staff resources
- Improve the efficiency of our buildings through reduction of carbon emissions and improved property management processes
- Strengthen local public service leadership to tackle service delivery challenges from a citizen perspective by working in partnership
- Refocus the Council's performance management arrangements to improve the range and use of information that helps measure the impact that Council services have on service users and its scrutiny by Councillors/stakeholders

**We said we would continue to focus on stability and sustainability in terms of our finances through an effective financial management framework**

We continued to face significant financial challenges during 2013/14 as a result of reductions in funding received from Welsh Government, growing demand for services and inflationary pressures. At the same time as addressing this we maintained our focus on medium term service planning to enable key strategies and initiatives to be delivered that would benefit our communities for many years to come, for example, 21<sup>st</sup> century schools and progressing the construction of a food waste treatment plant.

The Council's revenue budget for 2013/14 totalled £469.203M after a Council Tax increase of 3.95%<sup>1</sup> and the delivery of £9.6M of savings / one-off funding measures:

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<sup>1</sup> Council Tax increase (3.95%) – annual increase in band D council tax

- Service efficiency savings<sup>2</sup> - £4M (this meant since 2004/05 over £60M of efficiencies have been delivered to reduce the Council's budget)
- Service changes - £3.2M
- One-off transitional funding - £2.4M

At year end the Council delivered a balanced budget i.e. a £0.267M underspend against the total budget, and general reserve balances stood at £10.271M<sup>3</sup>, above the level of £10M that the Council's Chief Finance Officer deemed to be the minimum at the start of the year. These outcomes helped ensure continued financial stability at the Council as well as providing a solid basis to plan for the future.

Throughout 2013/14 we continued to look ahead for the next three to five years to forecast our likely funding requirements taking into account future service needs, predicted changes to inflation and cost saving measures already underway. We also estimated the funding levels likely to be received; the outcome from this work told us that the 'funding gap' over the period 2014/15 to 2017/18 would be in the region of £56M (forecasted as at July 2013).

The size of the funding gap was unprecedented and meant that we could no longer continue to balance the Council's budget primarily from service efficiency savings. Instead, there was a need to also undertake a thorough review of service change / cut options and at the Cabinet meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> January 2014 a number of service changes were approved to help balance the budget for the 2014/15 financial year (the changes were approved following a period of public consultation and consideration of the findings from Equality Impact Assessments for each proposal):

(link to 8<sup>th</sup> January 2014 report)

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/en/councildemocracy/democracyelections/councillorscommittees/meetings/cabinet/2014/01/08/cabinet08-jan-2014.aspx>.

- School admission arrangements – the proposal to introduce part-time (half day) provision from the term after a child's 3rd birthday (pre-nursery and nursery) and introduce full-time provision from the September after a child's 4th birthday (reception). Full year saving

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<sup>2</sup> Service efficiency savings – changes to services that had no or very limited impact on front line service

<sup>3</sup> General Reserve Balances (£10.271M) – this figure being 'draft' at the time of writing (pre-September 2014 Council meeting) and is subject to review by the Council's external auditor as part of the annual audit of the Council's Statement of Accounts

of £4.5M. Since this time, the decision was subject to Judicial Review where the judgement found against the Council; as a consequence, this decision has not been implemented

- Meals on Wheels – retention of the 7 day service with the weekend service converted to a chilled meal provision. This means that meals will be prime cooked, sealed and chilled, and delivered on a Friday for heating by clients in their own homes for weekend consumption. The Council also took the opportunity to reconfigure meal production, reducing from 6 kitchens to 3, with the service change becoming effective from November 2014. Full year saving of £0.3M.
- Library Service – reduce to 12 libraries, enhance the mobile library provision and maintain the housebound service. Full year saving of £0.8M. The service change became effective from June 2014.
- Youth and E3 provision – amalgamate current provision to centre around hubs operating out of the 17 secondary schools. Full year saving of £2.2M. The service change became effective from June 2014.
- Day Centres – the re-alignment of provision based on an appropriate geographical spread resulting in a reduction in the number of centres from 19 to 9 and the introduction of consistent opening arrangements i.e. Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm for all centres. Full year saving of £0.6M. The service change became effective from June 2014.

Work to refresh the medium term financial forecast is a continuous process as is the identification of other service change / cut options. A further series of proposals were agreed by the Council's Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014 and arrangements are being made for these to be implemented during the 2014/15 financial year. The service changes approved on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014 were in respect of Adult social care charges; Heritage service; Arts and culture; Supported bus routes; Paddling pools; and Street Lighting (link to 14<sup>th</sup> May report). <http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/en/councildemocracy/democracyelections/councillorscommittees/meetings/cabinet/2014/05/14/cabinet14-may-2014.aspx>

The Council's external auditor, the Wales Audit Office, commented in its latest Annual Improvement Report, July 2014 that "The Council's strategic financial planning arrangements remain sound but improved communication and engagement with citizens is needed around the scale of the Council's improvement ambitions and the impact of service changes in its priority areas".

To address these findings we have become more focussed on communicating regular messages to residents in terms of what we are doing to reduce costs and make budget savings, and have established an on-line presence on our web-site (link <https://www.snapsurveys.com/wh/s.asp?k=140682255326>) for people to express their thoughts: 'Public Suggestions for Savings and Income

'Generating Ideas'. We are also arranging public road shows for people to tell us face to face their opinions and ideas, and are engaging with local community groups earlier so that we can collectively consider alternative service delivery modules.

It will be critical that we capture and use the feed back from these channels to inform future decisions and ensure there is on-going communication with residents.

Capital investment is the money local authorities spend on improving its land, buildings and other assets. During 2013/14 we invested £67M to maintain and improve our assets in areas such as:

- Aberdare community school - £26.9M
- Highways Improvements - £4.7M
- Vehicle replacement - £8.4M

**We said we would ensure that effective workforce planning arrangements were put in place and that services would receive the necessary support and guidance to secure best value from their staff resources**

We have delivered a range of support to help improve employee attendance. This includes

The launch of "**RCT source**" a website holding HR policies and procedures, online learning packages and calendar of training events, to provide staff with access to key information to help them in their roles. It also includes e learning for health, safety and wellbeing which has been developed to promote health awareness.

We have drafted a Manager's Guide to help Managers to better understand the Council's sickness absence policy. Once this is completed, this together with a range of additional guidance to support maximising attendance will be distributed to Managers. We are currently exploring the potential for sickness absence policy training session to be available via an e learning package.

A map of training for e-learning has been developed and a Training working group, including trade Union representation, has been set up to scope out and develop training sessions. This work is continuing in 2014/15.

In 2013/14, the percentage of days/shifts lost to sickness absence was 4.34%, compared to 4.54% in the previous year. The number of days / shifts lost of sickness absence per employee (based on headcount) also reduced slightly from 10.8 in 2012/13 to 10.7 in 2013/14. As a guide, the average days/shifts lost to sickness absence per employee in Welsh Local Government in 2012/13 was 10.2 days<sup>4</sup>. Attendance still remains a key issue for the Council, and work in this area will continue in 2014/15 with revisions to the Council's sickness absence policy and focussed 'fast track' occupational health interventions forming part of the "Making Best Use of Our Budget" Priority Plan.

We delivered a range of Occupation Health initiatives to help improve employee attendance which are also in line with our commitment to the Corporate Health Standard to raise awareness of health issues. These include diabetes awareness week, heart matters and free blood pressure checks for staff as part of the Know your Numbers Campaign 2013. The Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit checked the blood pressure of 496 staff across various locations across the Council including offices in Clydach Vale, Ty Elai, Ty Trevithick, Bronwydd and Ty Glantaff. We also continued with the Council's Cycle to work Scheme, there were two launches resulting in over 100 staff are participating.

A new initiative for the Council was providing the influenza vaccine to more than 600 front line staff. This will also be offered to all staff who are not under the NHS scope in 2014 and will continue in 2014/15. We anticipate that this will help to keep our front line staff well during the winter at the same time as reducing sickness absence.

Introduced the Welsh Government Jobs Growth Wales programme to the Council, providing 14 paid 6 monthly work placements. The programme aims to give job ready young people the opportunity to gain work experience to enable them to progress to permanent employment, and all 14 people were successful in securing employment following their placements, some within the Council and others at other employers.

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<sup>4</sup> The average days / shifts lost to sickness absence per employee in Welsh Government in 2012/13 (10.2 days) is based on full time equivalent employees. The information in respect of Rhondda Cynon (10.8 days in 2012/13 and 10.7 days in 2013/14) is based on head count. Therefore, the all Wales and Rhondda Cynon Taf information is not directly comparable but has been quoted as a guide.

### Case study: Jobs Growth Wales Placement

Moving back to Rhondda Cynon Taf after studying and working in West Wales, Amanda found it difficult to find full time work and spent 7 months looking for a job. After finding out from a careers advisor that work experience placements were available at RCT Council, she undertook an 8 week placement with HR in May 2013. Following this, she applied for a Jobs Growth Wales placement within the people development team and started work in August 2013. During the placement she undertook general administrative tasks such as meeting preparation and database maintenance, improved her IT skills with additional training courses and gained knowledge and practical experience of working in an HR function. In December 2013, Amanda successfully applied for a position as an Administrative assistant within the Education, Employment and Training team and continues to work for the Council.

Following initial work on the production of a Disability Hate Crime Strategy, it was felt that a wider approach addressing all aspects of hate crime would be more effective, linking to the new Welsh Government Framework under development - Tackling Hate Crime and Incidents: A Framework for Wales. Delay in the publication of the Welsh Government Framework delayed finalising the RCT strategy, however positive progress was still made operationally in this area. This included the development and delivery of training sessions for staff to help them recognise potential incidents of hate crime and signpost service users to appropriate services and support. The development of an RCT Hate Crime Strategy will continue in 2014/15 as part of our Making Best Use of Our Budget Action plan. We also continue to work closely with South Wales Police in this area as part of "Delivering change", our partnership plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

### **We said we would improve the efficiency of our buildings through reduction of carbon emissions and improved property management processes**

33 energy saving projects were undertaken during 12/13 and with all the schemes fully operational a review was undertaken to determine their efficacy. 2,587,371 estimated annual kWh energy savings were made, based on a review of the technical information. This equates to approximately the same amount of energy as is needed to run 124 typical domestic households for a year. Although it would not be cost or resource effective to individually monitor the energy consumption of, for example, upgraded lighting, for the larger CHP (Combined Heat and Power) and Photovoltaic schemes actual energy data was compared with estimates to verify the level of savings achieved. This exercise confirmed that for the 4 CHP schemes and 5 photovoltaic systems installed during 2012/13, the anticipated savings were delivered.

38 'Invest to save' energy projects were undertaken during 2013/14, including installation of voltage optimisers, more efficient boiler plants, heating controls and lighting schemes, and the installation of solar panels on Council buildings to generate renewable energy. Each scheme was carefully considered to ensure that significant energy savings would be achieved, both lowering our CO2 emissions and providing cost savings.

Case Study - Berw Road Carpark

***In October 2013 we replaced old, inefficient lighting at Berw Road Carpark, Pontypridd. The new LED lighting offers brighter, whiter light and increased efficiency. The new lighting cost just under £21K and has saved approximately £5K of electricity in 11 months. We expect this scheme to pay for itself within 5 years.***

We continued the installation of smart meters at key sites, providing us with additional intelligence on our energy usage patterns which will enable us to manage our energy use more effectively and help inform future investment.

We undertook initial investigatory work into the installation of renewable energy projects on Council land. The feasibility studies undertaken showed that a hydroelectricity scheme at Dare Valley Country Park would not only make savings on current energy costs, but also generate funding from the sale of surplus energy, resulting in an estimated payback period of 8.5 years. As a result of this work, we will construct a hydroelectricity scheme at Dare Valley Country Park, as well as undertaking feasibility reports at other sites, as part of our 14/15 action plan.

New legislation required the expansion of Display energy certificates (DECs) to eligible buildings over 500m<sup>2</sup>. Display energy certificates show the actual energy use of a building and help the public see the energy efficiency of a building. 249 of the 260 Council buildings eligible had up to date Display energy certificates (DEC) prepared. Non-completion of the remaining DECs was mainly due to insufficient data availability. For example, a year of historical energy consumption data is required and a number of newly built / occupied buildings such as new schools, had not been in the Council's possession for sufficient time to gather this information. The outstanding DECs will be completed as part of the 2014/15 programme.

Carbon dioxide emissions from our 100 largest buildings increased by 2.55%. However, the data was negatively impacted by weather correction (amending the figures to reflect the average temperature), with absolute CO2 emissions savings of 6.02% achieved. We are reviewing the way we measure CO2 emissions to better reflect energy saving projects over the whole council portfolio.

**We said we would strengthen local public service leadership to tackle service delivery challenges from a citizen perspective by working in partnership**

We launched and published "Delivering Change", the Single Integrated Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf, at the beginning of 2013/14, and it was formally adopted across all partner organisations. The Strategic partnership arrangements were reviewed to better align with the priorities of the SIP, with 3 partnership boards established to oversee the delivery of the three key priorities - Health, Safety and Prosperity. A scrutiny working group of elected and co-opted Members was also established to scrutinise current performance and delivery arrangements and provide recommendations to the Local Service Board. In line with the annual review of the SIP, we are continuing to review the effectiveness of our arrangements as they become embedded. A review of the partnership structure will take place in 2014/15 with the aim of further increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the current arrangements and moving towards a more innovative partnership structure.

We launched a local information system in partnership with the Data Unit~Wales in February 2014. The Cwm Taf Data Observatory<sup>5</sup>, a joint initiative with our partners in Merthyr Tydfil CBC, South Wales Police and Cwm Taf University Health Board—draws together published needs data to provide relevant information in a single place. Data is displayed for geographical areas where possible and bespoke areas, like Communities First clusters and GP clusters. The aim of the observatory is to increase organisational intelligence to assist in the delivery and monitoring of the SIP.

We developed collaborative arrangements across Cwm Taf to tackle shared priorities for improvement over geographical boundaries. We set up and launched the Cwm Taf Community Engagement Hub<sup>6</sup>, a central online resource that allows partner organisations across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil to promote consultation surveys and events. The hub also allows more transparent feedback of survey results by linking to reports and decision notices related to recent consultation. The hub aims to ensure that residents are not asked the same questions repeatedly by different partners and that organisations can share information and save resources. As part of the set up of the hub, a new

<sup>5</sup> <http://cwmtaf.infobasecymru.net/IAS/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cwmtafhub.co.uk/cwmtaf/kms/news.aspx?LoggingIn=tempVar&strTab=AdminNews>

citizen's panel was recruited with 1,120 people in Rhondda Cynon Taf becoming members as at August 2014. Of these panel members, 577 are contactable via email, allowing engagement to take place more rapidly and cost effectively. Organisations are able to share consultation information via the hub library, and access distribution lists of citizens panel members with specific interests to aid in consulting the most relevant members of the public. We feel the full potential of the resource has not yet been realised. Further development for 2014/15 includes settling up a young person's hub specifically aimed at issues relevant to them; use of a twitter feed to promote engagement through a channel popular with members of the public; enhancing the 'look and feel' of the website and use of the hub's survey design software to enable those organisation's without specific software to develop their own online surveys.

We continue to deliver a programme of ICT enabled schools transformation in collaboration with Merthyr Tydfil CBC, which is designed to underpin our vision for 21st Century Schools. A single shared Capita ONE management information system for Council use has been established and hosted within Rhondda Cynon Taf via a shared infrastructure. Service Level and Data Processing agreements have been established to underpin the joint governance arrangements.

Key system modules of Attendance, Admissions, Core Pupil Database, Education Exclusions, Governors & Special Education Needs have been agreed for use by both Councils. Rhondda Cynon Taf is more advanced in the use of the modules implemented given our previous progress.

This collaboration was recently referenced by ESTYN, the Education Inspectorate in a recent report following a monitoring visit to the Council, which noted the partnership work taking place to develop common data systems and share the ongoing evaluations with the Central South Consortium's data unit.

The final stage of the Capita ONE project to establish improved infrastructure resilience and continuity has been initiated in line with project plan.

Delivery of the programme will continue as part of our "Making Best Use of Our Budget" Priority plan for 2014/15.

We commenced the annual review of "Delivering Change" delivery and outcomes, which will be published in 2014/15. The Council's own contributions to the key themes are monitored through the delivery of our Priority action plans, and our progress is outlined within the specific sections of this report.

**We said we would refocus the Council's performance management arrangements to improve the range and use of information that helps measure the impact that Council services have on service users and its scrutiny by Councillors/stakeholders**

The Annual Delivery Report for 2012/13 was considered by Scrutiny Committee for the first time, in addition to approval by full Council. The Scrutiny Committee was asked to provide feedback on the improvement assessments and their correlation with in-year performance reports, the extent to which assessments highlighted the difference improvement priority areas had made in the County Borough and to what extent the new 2013/14 action plans addressed areas requiring further improvement. Feedback from the Scrutiny Committee was used to enhance the information contained within the report prior to consideration by full Council.

These improvements were recognised by the Wales Audit Office in their most recent evaluation:

***"The Council's scrutiny and reporting of performance is improving although there is scope to better evaluate the progress it is making towards achieving its improvement priorities"***

Wales Audit Office, Annual Improvement Report, July 2014

The Wales Audit Office recognised that the Council has "embraced opportunities to further develop members' role and effectiveness in scrutinising its improvement planning and performance, although the implementation of these new arrangements is at an early stage". Building on this work, in 2014/15 we further enhanced our scrutiny processes through the use of scrutiny working groups to evaluate progress against our priorities through the analysis of 2013/14 data and performance evaluation information. The use of working groups allowed the evaluation to take place in more depth for each individual priority. This process was used to challenge and strengthen the contents of the Corporate Plan and this Annual Delivery Report.

Acting on WAO recommendation following their review of governance statements across Wales, a working group was set up to compile the Annual Governance Statement, to produce a document which is more challenging and improves the way the Council operates. The Annual Governance Statement sets out how the council is governed and operates, covering the setting of priorities, management and scrutiny. As a result of Member and Officer contributions through the working group, a more evaluative and rounded document has been compiled drawing on a wider range of evidence such as inspection reports. This new approach has now been embedded and will be utilised in future reviews.

The Council's risk management strategy was reviewed and formally approved in March. A detailed toolkit was also produced for managers, with additional information on how to identify risk and areas to consider when assessing operational and strategic risks. The toolkit was used to identify strategic risks that could potentially hinder the delivery of the Council's priorities, as part of compiling priority plans for 2014/15. However, these risks have not yet been formally incorporated into a Strategic risk register, in line with the risk management strategy, and reported to audit committee. This work will be completed in 2014/15.

We achieved full payment for our 2010 - 2013 Outcome Agreement, demonstrating that we had achieved quantifiable improvements across a range of areas including Improving skills for learners, tackling the problems caused by alcohol abuse and contributing to climate change adaptation.

Medium Term Service Planning is critical to the Council's work. As set out in our Corporate Plan 2014/15 the focus this year is to make the "**Make the Best use of our Budget**", the Key priorities being.....

- A continued focus on stability and sustainability in terms of our finances through an effective financial management framework.
- A continued focus on ensuring effective workforce planning arrangements are in place through managing the number and deployment of staff resources; the provision of suitable and appropriate training and employment opportunities; and professional HR support to services
- Effectively managing our assets by reducing energy consumption and building our capacity to generate green energy
- Strengthening local public sector leadership to tackle service delivery challenges from a citizen perspective that can only be addressed working in partnership
- Improving the Council's governance arrangements to support the delivery of efficient and effective services

[www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-bestuseofourbudget](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-bestuseofourbudget)



## APPENDIX 4a

### RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

#### JOINT 'EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING' AND 'COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES' SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

#### EDCUATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP

**Notes** of the meeting of the Scrutiny Working Group held at the Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014.

##### **Present:**

County Borough Councillors:

(Mrs) A Calvert, (Mrs) M Davies, (Mrs) C Leyshon, (Mrs) S Rees, C Williams, D Weeks

Co-opted members:-

Mr J Fish, Mr J Horton.

Cabinet Members – County Borough Councillor (Mrs) E Hanagan & G Hopkins.

##### **Officers:**

Mr C Bradshaw – Director, Education & Lifelong Learning

Mr G Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children's Services

Ms E Thomas – Service Director, Schools & Community

Mr A Gwynn – Service Director, Children's Services

Mr P Griffiths, Service Director Performance and Improvement

Ms L Lawson, Service Improvement Officer – Strategic Planning

Mrs A Edwards, Scrutiny Support Officer

Ms E Coates, Scrutiny Support Officer

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors C Davies, D Weeks and co-opted member MS C Jones.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

#### **3. INTRODUCTION**

The Service Director, Performance and Improvement explained to Members the purpose of the meeting, namely to review, challenge and propose improvements to the evaluation of performance on the Council's priorities during 2013-14.

The officers in attendance provided Members with an overview of the delivery of the 2013/14 action plan. Following which Members questioned officers based on the following criteria:

- How well does the evaluation explain how service users/communities have benefitted as a result of the work?
- Does the evaluation give the reader a sense of how well/not so well the council has performed?
- To what extent have the findings from the 2013/14 evaluation been used to inform the 2014/15 plan?

#### 4. FEEDBACK - A TOP EDUCATION FOR ALL.

- **How well does the evaluation explain how service users/communities have benefitted as a result of the work?** The Director Education & Lifelong Learning indicated that the performance evaluation did explain the impact the service had had during 2013/14 and commented that in terms of data outcomes for children the evaluation illustrated a generally positive picture. The Director commented that the positive outcomes identified within the evaluation were measurable results that had also been assessed by Estyn, many of which could be compared with the results of other local authorities across Wales.

The standardised scoring measurement within English and Maths within primary schools was queried by Members, in that was it a realistic measurement? The Director, Education & Lifelong Learning confirmed that this was an appropriate method and indicated that this data was consistently collected by Welsh Government and was therefore comparable across local authorities in Wales.

- **Does the evaluation give the reader a sense of how well/not so well the council has performed?** The Director, Education & Lifelong Learning considered that the evaluation did achieve this by for example:

- Comparing the Council's performance with the performance of other local authorities in Wales;
- Contextualising performance results where children were in receipt of Free School Meals;
- Including Estyn inspection feed back that provides an independent view of performance / outcomes.

Members of the working group also commented in support of the evaluation and its content, indicating that it did provide the reader with a good idea of the performance of the service, with positive feed back regarding the layout of the evaluation being put forward, including the direction of performance through 'arrows'. It was added that the narrative did give a balanced view highlighting both the positive and negative performance. The Service Director, School and Community commented that the evaluation was an honest evaluation, with the service recognising that there was always more that could be done to improve.

One member queried whether the targets set had been achieved and the Director, Education & Lifelong Learning advised that not all the targets had been met. The Director, Education & Lifelong Learning also provided further context by indicating that some targets were ambitious and the group discussed the importance of setting the right

balance i.e. the need to be ambitious and at the same time realistic. The Director, Education & Lifelong Learning reinforced the need to set ambitious targets and explained how Council wide targets were 'built up' from information at an individual school level.

The Director, Education & Lifelong Learning referred members to the 2 Key Indicators highlighted within outcome 5, which were measures used within the Estyn Inspection Framework i.e. % of schools inspected by Estyn that were judged at the time as being at least 'good' on a 2 year rolling basis between April 2012 and March 2014 (51.52%) and % of schools inspected by Estyn that were judged as presenting prospects for improvement as being at least 'good' on a rolling 2 year basis between April 2012 and March 2014 (75.76%). The Director commented on the positive Estyn judgements and in particular the judgement on future prospects. The Director, spoke of the hard work and efforts of the Local Authority, the Joint Education Service (JES) and schools, and he commented that he was hopeful that this positive position could be further improved moving forward.

It was queried why the plan excluded any reference to post-18 education and the Director, Education & Lifelong Learning advised that in respect of adult education there were very few indicators available to measure performance, as the option to participate in adult education is voluntary and for enjoyment and is not structured in the same way as statutory education. The Director, Education & Lifelong Learning did refer Members to an Estyn Inspection conducted 18 months previously for the Adult Education service and the resulting complimentary report, and also spoke of the recent impact to the service in respect of diminishing budgets for this area due to the reduced funding from the Welsh Government and other providers.

The Director was further queried on how the assessment was evidence based and the Director commented on the attainment target drive within schools and the use of the 'Fisher Family Test Data' across the UK, to set targets for pupils that compared with the top 25% of similar pupils across the UK. The Director advised that this data is the starting point to set targets for individual pupils and based on teacher knowledge of the child could be increased or decreased for a variety of factors. The Director confirmed that through JES and the Local Authority, meetings were held with schools to challenge targets. The Service Director, Schools & Community also spoke of the ambitious target set in respect of attendance figures and the improvements evidenced within this area.

One member queried whether data was captured in respect of Looked After Children (LAC) within schools within the County Borough and the officers confirmed that this information was reported to the Council's Corporate Parenting Board. The Officers also confirmed that in respect of attendance, LAC children had one of the best attendance levels within the County Borough. It was added that LAC educational outcomes were however not as good, them being broadly similarly to children entitled to FSMs, and the Director spoke of both the education and social issues prevalent to LAC.

- **To what extent have the findings from the 2013/14 evaluation been used to inform the 2014/15 plan?** The Director, Education & Lifelong Learning commented on the Education Services' self evaluation that assesses the performance of the Service based on Estyn's three key questions which was considered by both Cabinet and Scrutiny

earlier in the year. The Director confirmed that self evaluation was an ongoing process for the service which involved every officer in the service.

A Member commented on the base line data within the evaluation report and referred to the presentation previously provided to the Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee in respect of how data can be used to intervene; it was queried how data was co-ordinated in every school and what methods were used to capture interventions? The Service Director, Schools & Community advised that every school had in place a 'tracking' system which gathered data on each pupil. The group were advised of the different systems that were used and commented that each school fed this data into the Local Education Authority (LEA). The Service Director commented that the LEA were then able to analyse and interrogate the data. Members queried further whether it was the intention to standardise the IT systems and coding used in respect of attendance and the Director commented that ideally he would like all schools to utilise SIMS. The Members questioned why the implementation of the SIMS system could not be enforced and the officers advised that this was at the discretion of the Head Teachers and Governing Bodies. The Service Director, commented on the robustness of the data gathered through the tracking systems and the robust plans in place for each child. One member further queried whether we were using the data to its maximum impact and the Director, Education & Lifelong Learning advised that the well performing schools rigorously used their data to improve; there were however opportunities to make further improvement through continuing to work in partnership with schools. Members also questioned how 'good practice' could be applied within each school regarding the importance of data and again the officers commented on the need for 'buy in' from the Head Teachers and Governing Bodies to drive this forward.

Members discussed the importance of the Governing Bodies within schools and commented upon the difficult job of a Governor, and the governor vacancy rate was queried. The Director commented that there was a 14% vacancy rate for governors and spoke of the difficulties in recruiting due to the position being a voluntary one and the commitment that was needed from the role. Members further discussed the training opportunities available to Governors. The Service Director, Schools & Community commented on the move to federating neighbouring schools which can help to address the issue of governor vacancies.

One member commented on the future aspirations of the service and queried whether there was confidence in the financial stability of the Authority to take the aspirations forward. The Director, Education & Lifelong Learning referred Members to the WAO report presented to Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014 around the Council's strategic financial planning arrangements.

Members of the group commented on the cost to the service in respect of school surplus places and the Authority were congratulated by members of the group for making difficult decisions in respect of school closures to address the problem and help improve opportunities for children and young people to achieve their full potential.

## **5 FEEDBACK – KEEPING ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE AND IMPROVING THE LIFE CHANCES OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN.**

- **How well does the evaluation explain how service users/communities have benefitted as a result of the work?**

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services commented that in his opinion he felt the evaluation was a balanced illustration of the performance of the service and commented upon the additional independent evidence from the CSSIW that also provided assurance in this regard. The Group Director added that the evaluation formed the basis for the statutory requirement of the 'Report of the Director for Social Services'. The Group Director acknowledged that there were still areas that required attention and spoke of the future potential impact of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014, and also spoke of the potential for further collaborative working within the area.

One member commented on the criticism by the CSSIW within the evaluation around the Council's ability to manage the increasing demand for frontline services, and the Member queried what progress had been made in this area? The Service Director, Children's Services advised of the number of short term measures put in place in respect of recruitment to social worker posts, including the employment of agency staff and secondment of staff from less pressurised service areas. Many of the vacant posts have now been filled. It was also confirmed that a comprehensive work force review is being undertaken. The officers commented that a report following the review would make recommendations on achieving a sustainable workforce into the medium to longer term.

It was further queried why critical actions 1 & 2 of outcome 2 had revised targets for completion, and officers were asked for a progress update on the actions. The Service Director, Children's Services advised that the actions referred to the development of a new Case Management System in partnership with SEWIC. The model that was identified was judged to be not sufficiently robust, particularly with the requirements of the Social Care & Wellbeing Act in mind. The Service Director commented that new combined single and core assessment and child care plan modules are being introduced during 2014/15 which will reduce bureaucracy for hard pressed front line staff

Members recognised that the number of initial assessments being completed within time had decreased due to increased demand and staffing issues. The Service Director, Children's Services spoke of the recent appointment of social workers that will improve this situation once the backlog had been cleared and the assistance the MASH would bring in this area by the co-location of multi-agency frontline staff to further quicken the processes.

The officers were questioned as to whether there were any implications for the service due to the recognised budget deficit. The Group Director, Community & Children's Services advised that the service would be challenging the statutory provision, looking at the most efficient and effective way to deliver services and also commented that the service would need to review what 'needs to be delivered' compared to 'what would be nice' to provide. The Group Director referred to the range of services currently provided and spoke positively of the alignment between corporate and service priorities. The Group Director, Community & Children's Services added that there was always room to improve and reaffirmed that safeguarding service users was of paramount importance,

One member referred to a recent school training day event he had attended and the focus in relation to safeguarding and the general comments at the event in respect of lack of multi agency dialogue. The Member questioned whether MASH would resolve these issues and questioned why this priority was revised to an implementation date of March 2015, questioning whether the service had adequate staff and budget to take this priority forward. The Group Director, Community & Children's Services advised that part of the delay was to enable dialogue to take place with all parties involved and the Service Director commented on the complexities of the actual practice, and added the importance of undertaking thorough research to ensure the system would be **safe and fit for purpose**.

The Service Director, Children's services was queried on the prevention strategy and the group were advised that the purpose of the strategy is to retarget and refocus the services to help those in greatest need and impact on those who would otherwise progress to requiring more intensive interventions.

Members raised concern in respect of 'Flying Start' and the perception that services were provided on a post code lottery. The group were advised that this was a Welsh Government initiative with strict criteria and that the programme is area specific. The officers commented on the general consensus of 'inflexibility' of the system by other Local Authorities in Wales and officers confirmed that if a young person within the County Borough was in need or at risk and wasn't entitled a provision under the Flying Start scheme then systems are in place to identify and address this within the Council.

- **Does the evaluation give the reader a sense of how well/not so well the council has performed?** The Group Director, Community & Children's Services commented that this was much more difficult to do in this area, as the service was continually a moving target. The Group Director commented that the rise in LAC numbers could potentially be seen as both a positive and negative outlook of the service's performance, and the Director commented on the need to also review and take account of the support and services being provided by other organisations within the County Borough.

It was commented by the group that the evaluation could be further improved if additional narrative was included to explain some of the issues the officers had outlined in the meeting, to contextualise the information. Officers advised that a lot of the information did go to the Corporate parenting Board but recognised that it would also be appropriate to share some of the information with scrutiny.

It was commented that there was clear correlations between the Education service and Children's services and officers were asked to provide examples of occasions when the services needed to work collaboratively. Members were advised of a number of examples including work in respect of safeguarding, attainment of LAC, the flying start initiative and also collaboration in respect of transport provisions. The officers also spoke of the importance of integration and the need to integrate the service around the needs of the community. Members again commented that the evaluations would benefit from a further emphasis on the collaborative work between the two services for the benefit of the service user.

(Mrs) M Davies  
Chair

The meeting closed at 3.55 pm.

## Performance Evaluation - Education - 'A Top Quality Education for All'

The focus on education is to continue to drive up standards in both early years' settings and schools and improve the outcomes for all children. If we are to break the cycle of deprivation, a top quality education that meets the needs of all children is essential. A key priority is to improve standards of literacy and numeracy, to ensure all children attend school as a matter of course and can access a curriculum that meets their needs and prepares them for the world of work and other education pathways.

Following Estyn's inspection of education services for children and young people in March 2012, during which the Council was identified as Adequate ie Strengths outweigh areas for improvement and required follow-up through Estyn monitoring. A plan for follow-up visits was agreed with Estyn link inspectors. The first follow-up visit took place in December 2013; the second took place from 31st March – 2nd April 2014 and the third and final visit took place on the 30th June – 3rd July 2014. Based on the evidence gained from the three visits, the Council was "***judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the inspection of March 2012. As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales considers that the Council is no longer in need of Estyn monitoring and has removed us from requiring further follow-up activity***". View Inspectorate report containing outcomes of each of the three monitoring visits in relation to the six recommendations at [www.estyn.gov.uk/download/publication/323395.8/outcome-of-monitoring-visit-rhondda-cynon-taf-county-borough-council-2014/](http://www.estyn.gov.uk/download/publication/323395.8/outcome-of-monitoring-visit-rhondda-cynon-taf-county-borough-council-2014/)

### Why we agreed this priority

We have worked towards achieving our vision of making schools into vibrant communities that meet the needs and aspirations of individual pupils through high quality teaching and learning. This is being achieved through improving governance, providing effective leadership and continued focus on the needs and outcomes of our children and young people.

The outcomes that we worked towards achieving during the year were based on recommendations from Estyn, self evaluation assessments from our schools and central services, and what the Council considered to be a priority if we are to improve key educational outcomes for our children and young people. On our 2013/14 plan we said we would

- Ensure effective leadership and an ethos of aspiration and high achievement
- Ensure high quality teaching and learning, to support the delivery of improved educational outcomes for our children and young people

- **Tackle the barriers to learning that many young people face**
- **Embed a culture of self-evaluation and self-assessment, use of performance and other information to drive improvement, and support those schools where there is a risk that the quality of education offered is not as high as it should be**
- **Increase engagement between schools, parents, families, and the communities they serve, recognising the powerful influence to be gained though working together to improve the life chances for our children and young people**
- **Continue to invest in education facilities throughout the County Borough to raise educational standards and support community learning and leisure activities**

**We said we would ensure effective leadership and an ethos of aspiration and high achievement**

The Council has strengthened its use of the powers it has available for the improvement in leadership and management in its schools. We have increased the use of intervention powers, and focused this on performance improvement, rather than simply imposing sanctions. Where there is under-performance, we undertake robust challenge and provide additional support to our schools to help them improve. We have developed an integrated approach to underpin this school improvement strategy, which includes a revised and improved Partnership Agreement, and modified human resource and performance management policies and procedures. As a result, the respective responsibilities of schools, the Council and the Central South Consortium for school improvement are clearer, as well as the consequences for poor performance. The use of powers includes formal meetings between the Director of Education and elected Members with head teachers and chairs of governors. We have also issued formal warnings to headteachers and governing bodies where improvements have been too slow. Since the introduction of this process the Council has used its powers of intervention to rigorously hold 34 primary schools and 10 secondary schools to account.

It is agreed by all education partners that good quality leadership is a key component of any good school, and is compulsory to raise standards and to tackle educational underachievement. As well as increasing the use of powers, new training programmes were introduced, including the revised mentoring and coaching programme for new and aspiring headteachers that focuses on developing quality leadership skills. Also an "Emerging Leaders" course for those teachers preparing to apply for middle leadership roles, such as Head of English or Senior pastoral roles. In addition to this the 'Transforming Leadership' programme for aspiring headteachers was delivered for the second year in both primary and secondary schools. School-to-school support was also introduced in 2013/14, whereby the most effective headteachers, senior

and middle management and other practitioners use their expertise to share good practice and build capacity within and between schools. School governing bodies also introduced new interview and assessment centre processes when recruiting headteachers and other senior roles. This reinforces effective leadership as being a key priority for schools if they are to improve performance in order to help our children and young people to achieve good educational outcomes.

67% (14 out of 21) of our schools inspected during 2013/14 were judged as being at least 'Good' by Estyn for leadership and management. This included 3 secondary schools who were graded good, 1 pupil referral graded excellent and 10 primary schools that were all graded good. 29% (6 out of 21) were graded adequate, which included 4 primary schools and 2 pupil referral unit. 1 primary school was graded unsatisfactory. This school will be provided with intervention support, as will all those graded adequate, as would expect all our schools to be good schools. Over the two year rolling period RCT performance of 72.7% did not achieve the ambitious target of 90.0% of schools being graded at least 'Good', but was higher than the all Wales average of 69.8%, and we are reassured by the latest findings from Estyn that we are making progress in this area although improving leadership and management remains a key focus for the Directorate in 2014/15.

**We said we would ensure high quality teaching and learning, to support the delivery of improved educational outcomes for our children and young people**

In order to raise standards across all key stages of learning, the Council with its partners has worked closely with schools to establish that quality teaching methods are being used effectively in the classroom. Schools are categorised appropriately through the School Improvement service, where officers use a category model to determine the level of support available to the school and work flexibly with schools to use resources effectively, taking into account the school's context. Training programmes are also available to support quality teaching and pupil learning. 36 secondary school teachers and 40 primary schools teachers from across school clusters have participated in the 'Outstanding Teacher' programme since it commenced in 2013. These teachers were identified through school reviews or by the school headteachers as being good classroom practitioners, and having the capacity to work with other colleagues to develop their skills. The programme develops the teachers own pedagogical<sup>1</sup> skills and also supports them in developing coaching skills in order to support others. Initially the teachers are

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<sup>1</sup> [Pedagogy](#) can be defined as the art of teaching. Beyond simply understanding the content one is teaching, pedagogy involves being able to convey knowledge and skills in ways that pupils can understand, remember and apply.

working to raise the standards of teaching in their own schools; this will then cascade not only to other schools within their cluster but to those schools within the Consortium School Improvement Groups.

Other interventions have been provided to those schools with the furthest to travel in terms of their literacy strategy. This included supporting primary schools to strengthen the delivery of reading and catch up programmes, with a particular focus on helping boys to improve, as statistics demonstrate that boy's literacy results are below that of the girls. At key stage 2 girls (90.8%) outperformed boys (83.7%) by 7.1 percentage points in English, compared to 7.3 percentage points in the previous year. This confirms that the gap is narrowing and boys are starting to catch up with the girls. The percentage of primary pupils that achieved a standardised score of 95<sup>2</sup> or more in English, has increased to 72.2% from 61.9% in 2012. An even bigger increase was seen in the percentage of primary pupils achieving a standardised score of 95 or more in Welsh (first language) with 82.8% achieving compared to 55.9% in 2012. 60.8% of primary school pupils achieved a standardised score of 95 or more in Mathematics, which was below our target of 76.4%. One of our main priorities for 2014 will be on supporting the implementation of the numeracy strategies across primary schools.

Programmes such as 'Tactical Teaching' have been used to support improvement in literacy across the curriculum in secondary schools, along with encouraging pupils to gain essential skills accredited qualifications. All headteachers are part of the School Improvement Groups that meet half-termly to share best practice; they also focus on developing policy and new approaches to school improvement in partnership with the Council. In 2013, the percentage of secondary pupils who achieved a standardised score of 95 or more increased to 61.4% compared to 50.4% in 2012. However, the percentage of secondary pupils achieving a standardised score of 95 or more in Welsh (first language) declined in 2013 (61.4%), compared to 63.0% in 2012. Improving literacy remains a key priority, along with numeracy, in secondary schools for 2014.

We have also made improvements to education information technology infrastructure to enable teachers and pupils to access the latest technology and information to support learning. All schools have had Wi-Fi installed and 70% to-date have had broadband upgrades, with the remainder being completed in the following months. All schools now have access to 'Hwb', which provides a digital learning environment that supports teaching and enhances learning for pupils.

*Case study: Pupils engage in digital learning*

<sup>2</sup> A standardised score of 95 or more indicates that a pupil is around average for their age

***For the second year running Cwmclydach primary school has received a national award for innovative use of digital learning. Improved attainment results and attendance levels demonstrate that pupils engage more through digital learning. 87% of pupils at Cwmclydach primary school achieved the expected level in the core subject indicator, compared to 85% in the previous year, and attendance levels improved from 92% in 2012/13, to 93%.***

Performance at key stage 4 improved for all the key indicators in 2012 and again in 2013. The rate of improvement in 2013 was better than the Wales average. For the level 2 indicator RCT results (77.9%) outperformed the All Wales (77.8%) performance for the first time. However, too few children achieve A\*-C in GCSEs, especially in core subjects. 46.3% of pupils achieved the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh (first language) and Mathematics, compared to 43.8% the previous year. 21.4% of pupils eligible for free schools meals achieved the same level 2 indicator, including English or Welsh (first language) and Mathematics, compared to an all Wales average of 25.8%.

In the last year secondary schools have been challenged more and additional intervention has been used to ensure robust improvement plans are in place, including detailed 'statements of action' for schools causing concern. Responsible officers monitor performance rigorously at a level proportionate to the category of the school, with the Director of Education and Cabinet Member for Education directly engaged in monitoring schools causing the greatest concern. The Council requires all secondary schools to submit regular updates on predicted standards for Year 11 (16 years old) pupils based on their latest data. As well as providing an ongoing view of progress, this has also supported headteachers to hold middle leaders to account and know whether support and interventions are making an impact. School improvement officers are working more collaboratively with those in services supporting social inclusion, wellbeing and additional learning needs to ensure that a wider range of issues are taken into account when discussing a school's performance and its provision.

*Case study: More able and talented - (Mission Discovery event, at King's College London)*

***For the second year running a team of RCT pupils had their 'Space Flight' proposal selected, by space programme medics and NASA astronauts, to become a live experiment that will take place up in the International Space Station. RCT is the only Council in the UK where 2 experiments designed by pupils will have been conducted in space.***

13 of our schools that were inspected by Estyn during 2013/14 were graded 'good' for teaching, 7 were graded 'adequate' and 2 'unsuccessful', these 2 schools will be given additional support. Improved performance across all key stages demonstrates that teaching

methods are getting better. The percentage of RCT pupils achieving the Foundation Phase Indicator improved from 77.2% in 2012/13 to 80.6%, narrowing the gap against the all Wales average of 83.0%. Also 82.6% of 11 year old pupils achieved the expected levels in the key stage 2 core subjects indicator, compared to 79.3% in 2012/13, but we still remain in the bottom quartile. A higher increase was made at key stage 3 with 73.6% of 14 year old pupils achieving expected levels, compared to 66.9% the previous year, taking us from the bottom quartile to the third quartile. The average capped points score for 15 year pupils increased from 305.1 in 2012/13 to 323.8, closer to the all Wales average of 333.1. When comparing our performance to that of similar schools in Wales, based on the percentage eligible for free school meals, performance overall was slightly above average in 2013 in both primary and secondary schools.

### **We said we would tackle the barriers to learning that many young people face**

Improving attendance continues to be a priority for the Council. Between 2011 and 2013, attendance in primary schools improved at a higher rate than the Wales average, by 1 percentage point from 92.4% in 2011 to 93.4% in 2013, just slightly below the all Wales average of 93.9%, but enough to take us from the bottom to third quartile. When compared to similar schools on the free-school-meal benchmarks, attendance in 2013 is around average in primary schools. Attendance in secondary schools improved at a similar rate to the Wales average between 2011 and 2013, by 1.3 percentage points from 90.7% in 2011 to 92.0% in 2013, but we still remain in the bottom quartile. However, attendance by pupils who receive free school meals is below the average for Wales. The Council has successfully reduced the level of persistent absentees from 10.2% in 2011 to 6.9% in 2013 (Wales: 8.7% to 6.2%) When compared to that in similar schools on the free-school-meal benchmarks, attendance in secondary schools is below average with 37% (7) of schools in the bottom quarter and 58% (11) below average. Only 21% (4) of schools are in the top quarter and 42% (8) are above average overall. By working with our partners we have put in place a vulnerability profile mechanism, which effectively highlights young people who need additional help to keep them engaged in education, training, and employment.

The Council has consulted stakeholders regarding a code of conduct for issuing fixed penalty notices for poor attendance and a 'zero tolerance' approach to authorising holidays in term time, a code of conduct practice guide issued to schools in September 2014. We have produced a practical strategy and toolkit for improving attendance, following consultation with headteachers and other stakeholders. Headteachers have feedback that they find the toolkit '*valuable and effective in outlining consistent procedures*' and helps in improving attendance. Initiatives include reward and sanction systems, public campaigns to raise parental awareness of the importance of good attendance and recruitment of partners to help raise the profile of high attendance and make positive contributions by offering prizes for good attendance in school. A

programme of governance training has also been delivered to school governors, according to Governors Support Officers is proving effective, as a greater understanding and confidence in using attendance data is evident at school governor meetings. We have also used advertising space on Council fleet vehicles to promote the message "*Give Attendance 100%, Miss School, Miss Out*"

Destination of school leaver data for 2013 shows that there has been an increase in the percentage of year 11 pupils remaining in full time education from 86% to 87.5%. Whilst the percentage staying on in school has remained constant, there has been an increase in those continuing in college. 79.8% of year 13 pupils who left further education planned to go onto further study, which is above the All Wales figure of 78.9%. Nationally, the percentage of year 13 pupils who intended to progress to higher education has decreased by 0.3% but has remained constant in RCT.

Vulnerability Profiling was implemented during the year to help identify those young people with barriers to learning so that targeted intervention could be put in place to help them to improve in these areas or prevent them becoming disadvantaged. We have used this information to target those young people and support them through alternative learning pathways and by providing a range of programmes and interventions in securing employment and providing individuals with skills to gain employment in the future. Core programmes included 'Bridges in to Work' (BIW), 'Future Jobs Fund' and 'Your Future First'. 159 jobs secured through the BIW programme during the year and 815 all together since the start of the programme in January 2009.

*Case study: Improving future prospects*

**'Your Future First' programme at Cynon supported a 17 year old boy who left education with no qualifications to overcome social and behaviour difficulties and gain the confidence needed to return to education and gain alternative learning qualifications and secure a work placement to what he described as being his 'dream job'**

Between 2010 and 2012, these interventions have contributed to the reduction in the level of year 11 leavers becoming NEET by 1.2% points and year 13 leavers becoming NEET by 2.6% points. 2013 data shows a further reduction of 0.4% points for year 11 and 3.4% points for year 13. The number of 16 year old pupils leaving education without a qualification decreased in 2012 to 0.9% and again in 2013 to 0.5%, but we still remain in the bottom quartile and remain a priority for the Council. The 2013 data represents 16 pupils compared to 26 in 2012.

With effect from April 2013, the Council ceased to manage the Special Support Assistants mainstream budgets centrally. All Additional Needs Funding (ANF) is now delegated directly to mainstream schools on a school cluster basis. The funding system provides an improved way of distributing resources and places schools at the centre of the decision making process. £2.7 million of Additional Needs Funding was delegated to 17 school cluster groups support mainstream inclusion. To ensure fair and equitable resource allocation, schools have been issued with guidance materials and training.

Learning Support Classes (LSCs) in mainstream schools were reviewed during the year to ensure that sufficient provision is available for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). Following an analysis of data, gaps in existing provision were identified and proposals for the realignment of LSCs were submitted to Cabinet in November 2013. Proposals for a 3 year realignment plan were agreed and are in the process of being implemented. The Access and Inclusion Service has improved how it uses data to better track ALN pupils and to evaluate use of the Additional Needs Funding. Data suggests that 49.1% of pupils with special educational needs achieved the expected levels in the core subject indicator at key stage 2, which is 4 percentage points more than 2012, and 27.6% achieved the core subject indicator at key stage 3 expected levels, which is 7.5 percentage points more than 2012. Estyn Inspections said pupils with ALN access ‘good quality provision’ in all special school settings and an excellent primary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) with sector leading practice in a number of areas. Estyn reports also stated that learning support provisions attached to mainstream schools are predominately good and that most pupils with special educational needs make good or expected progress in specialist settings.

The Behaviour Support Service has been remodelled and Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) provision has been restructured, which resulted in secondary PRU provision being centralised at Ty Gwyn. The outcomes within this setting will be closely monitored to measure the success of the new provision. Plans for review of the Behaviour Support Service in mainstream schools are underway with a proposed schedule for delegation currently out with schools for consultation until the end of October 2014. Implementation of changes is planned for September 2015. In 2013, 23.6% of 16 year old pupils left the Educating Other Than At School (EOTAS) provisions without a qualification, compared to 22.5% in the previous year. Performance target was missed by 4.4 percentage points, but it is anticipated that the changes within the service will support improvement.

**We said we would embed a culture of self-evaluation and self-assessment, use of performance and other information to drive improvement, and support those schools where there is a risk that the quality of education offered is not as high as it should be**

In conjunction with Central South Consortium and as part of the self-assessment process, a revised categorisation model is used to effectively measure schools performance based on evidence of achievement. The main focus of this challenge is based on reviewing provision, planning, leadership and attainment outcomes. Those schools that don't meet the expected standards are taken through a formal process of challenge, which sometimes includes outcome reports being presented to the Council's Cabinet and the Education Scrutiny Committee, where an action plan is agreed and support is provided to improve performance. As at March 2014 72.7% of schools inspected by Estyn were graded at least 'Good' for **improving quality** in leadership and management on a 2 year rolling basis compared to a RCT target of 68.0%.

More effective structures to support the ongoing improvements in data collection, analysis, and reporting have been put in place in schools and made available to supporting services. This includes a Data Improvement Strategy, a project management board, and an 'Information and Systems Team' to collect, analyse and share data. The information technology infrastructure in schools continues to be improved, with all schools receiving Wi-Fi installs and the majority having broadband upgrades. Regular data review meetings have taken place throughout the year to help officers, systems leaders and school managers have more informed conversations about pupils and their performance. Governing bodies' use of data is also improving, with a better understanding of how to interpret data, and how to use it for improvement purposes.

It is evident that schools are gaining confidence in the improved data collection systems, as processes have been more efficient. Schools are using both the Council's data packs and their own analysis of local data to identify more robustly issues around teaching and learning. Primary and secondary schools are sharing data more effectively and this is leading to better-targeted support for pupils as they transfer across the key stages of the curriculum. In 2013, between key stage 2 and key stage 3, over 31% of pupils improved by at least 2 levels, the highest being Mathematics (42.5%) and the lowest being Welsh (31.1%). The Council now requires its schools to make better and more appropriate use of their pupil level data to provide targeted support for pupils eligible for free school meals, additional learning needs and other vulnerable groups

**We said we would increase engagement between schools, parents, families, and the communities they serve, recognising the powerful influence to be gained though working together to improve the life chances for our children and young people**

The Council continues to practice its positive partnership ethos, and has strong links with their schools, Coleg Y Cymoedd, 14-19 Network, Careers Wales and a range of commissioned voluntary and private sector organisations. 92.5% of schools inspected by Estyn over the last

three years were graded as at least 'Good' for partnership working. RCT being the host Council for the Central South Consortium we have committed valuable resources to ensure it has the right approach and support for it to be a success. Working together we have supported our children and young people to achieve improved standards and outcomes. This is evident from improved attainment results across all key stages and the reduction in the number of young people (aged 16 to 19 year olds) not in education, employment and training<sup>3</sup>, despite the very difficult economic climate.

Together with 'Communities First' and 'Save the Children' we have provided learning opportunities and courses for parents and young people to improve literacy and numeracy skills. Programmes such as 'Family Learning' brought families together to learn as a unit, helping parents to improve their skills to support their children to learn. The 'Essential Skills' course supported adults to improve their employability, literacy and numeracy skills, to help them into the job market. Other programmes like 'FAST' (Families and Schools Together) supported those families from the most deprived areas of RCT, where they trained people to deliver the programme in those primary schools where the child of the family attends school. This programme consists of specialised training is provided to help families to learn how to overcome behavioural and learning difficulties. 248 families engaged in Family Learning during the year 84.3% of which achieved an accredited qualification. Plans are being developed to start measuring the outcomes attached to family learning programmes.

We also continue to work closely with Children's Services in ensuring that Looked After Children (LAC) and children with disabilities needs are provided for. This work includes completing joint assessments, monitoring of care and learning plans, agreeing to put in place home to school transport arrangements, supporting arrangements for Looked After Children and providing advice and training for educational settings, foster families and carers.

Effective working relationships between Education, Children's Service and Health was also required for the development of safeguarding practices for children, young people and adults, which included the development of a suicide and self-harm reduction protocol. Both Children's Services and the Youth Offending Service have been involved in the Restorative Approaches in Schools (RAIS) initiative and have formed part of the E&LL Multi-Agency RAIS Steering Group to develop this work in the Council.

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to Appendix C for data - Reference O3-Me16-18

**Continue to invest in education facilities throughout the County Borough to raise educational standards and support community learning and leisure activities**

An integral part of the school reorganisation plan has focused on the removal of surplus school places, which has been achieved through school modernisation projects. These projects have contributed to reducing the number of primary schools with significant surplus capacity from 68 to 42, accounting for the reduction of 1,864 surplus places. In secondary schools, surplus places have increased during the last year, with 11 schools now having 25% or more surplus places compared to 9 in 2012. However, it is projected that the closure of the three secondary schools in August 2014, which is being replaced by the new school at Aberdare, will reduce surplus places by 932.

A great deal of progress has been made during the year in the construction of the school modernisation projects, including the completion of the £11.5m Abercynon Community Primary School that replaced out-dated facilities at the former Abercynon Infants, Carnetown and Abertaf Primary Schools; £6.7million expansion of Cwmbach Primary School which now offers an extra 150 infant places; and £5million Ynysboeth Community Primary School which brought together two schools in one building for the first time in over half a century. The Council's massive £50m education, leisure and community master-plan in Aberdare is well-advanced and is scheduled for completion by April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, with a proposed phased occupation up to Whitsun 2015.

Other school modernisation project proposals that commenced in the year, included building works at Trerobart Primary which is due for completion in October 2014, road safety works completed at Parc Lewis Primary School, and minor internal works completed at Penyrenglyn Primary. Following the closure of Glanffrwd Infants School at the end of 2013 academic year, pupils now attend either Trerobart or Parc Lewis Primary Schools. Also the closure of Ynyswen Infants means that from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014 pupils attend Peyrenglyn Primary School. Rhydyfelin Nursery has also been closed resulting in pupils now attending Heol-Y-Celyn Primary.

The Council has secured the capital funding to continue to close schools and to build new or remodelled schools to further reduce surplus places, this includes the £160m 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme. This programme will remove over 2,400 surplus places and a further 1,500 to be planned over the next few years.

Our 2014/15 Key Outcomes to continue to ensure 'A Top Quality Education for All; Every School a Great School' are set out in our 2014/15 Corporate Plan are.....

- Build great school leadership at all levels of the system
- High quality teaching and learning
- Working in partnership to overcome the barriers to learning and safeguard the wellbeing of learners
- Embedding a culture of reflective practice to plan and drive school and service improvement
- Creating opportunities for the wider community to fully engage in lifelong learning
- Providing a learning environment fit for the 21st Century

You can view the detailed action plan for 2014/15 at [www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-education](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-education)

## Performance Evaluation - Keeping all Children and Young People safe and improving the life chances of vulnerable children.

*In this priority, our focus was on safeguarding and supporting children and young people in need including those that are carers; significantly improving the range and effectiveness of services to support children and families in their own homes; providing high quality care and permanent family homes for children who are unable to live with their birth families; delivering and commissioning high quality services for children in their early years; and preventing young people from becoming involved in criminal activity.*

The Council has a legal responsibility to safeguard and protect vulnerable children and young people from harm. In meeting this commitment our goal is to keep children with their families when it is in their best interest, to help secure more positive outcomes in terms of the child's health, well being and life chances. To provide appropriate help quickly to those who are vulnerable, to help families with the most complex problems and to find permanent alternative care for those children who need it.

The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) inspected elements of Children's Services during May 2013, as well as providing the Council with its Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance (2012-13) this year. The overall assessment of Children's Services was that progress has been made in a number of areas but some areas still require attention. The Inspectors commended Rhondda Cynon Taf as having a sound base of good social work and case management on which to build further improvement of child focussed work. A good track record of taking an innovative approach to strategic service and practice development and improvement and for the development of a strategic approach to reduce the number of children it looks after and delivering more locally based placements. CSSIW inspectors identified potential risks around the Council's ability to manage frontline services as well as ensuring budgets are met overall within the service, particularly the financial impact of the high numbers of children on the Child Protection Register and those looked after by the Authority. Inspectors were also concerned with the number of children on the register and in the looked after system that had not been allocated a social worker and the absence of an effective workforce strategy. The evaluation demonstrates that some progress has been made and also, where we need to continue to focus. In our 2013/14 Plan we set out how we would

- **Ensure children remain with their families when it is in their best interest**
- **Improve assessment, planning and decision-making for those children who will require long-term permanent care.**
- **Safeguard and protect vulnerable children and young people.**
- **Prevent young people from becoming involved in criminal activity**

## We said we would ensure children remain with their families when it is in their best interest

Demand for services has continued to increase year on year with the number of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) and referrals to Children's Services continuing to increase throughout 2013/14. There were 3,441 referrals to Children's Services increasing from 2,767 and the rate of children registered on the CPR increased by 30%, from 363 to 471. This is mirrored nationally as the All Wales Child Protection data indicates that thirteen of the twenty two Councils in Wales have experienced an increase in Child Protection referrals. In Rhondda Cynon Taf it is anticipated that this is likely to increase further in 2014/15. Clearly the challenges facing the service will continue. Our work spanned a number of initiatives as set out below.

During 2013/14 we have drafted a new prevention strategy that will be completed during 2014/15 so that it will be consistent and complementary with the planned remodelling work in Children's Services, the review of TAF and the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act. Partners and relevant staff will be consulted with during 2014/15, before the strategy is presented to Cabinet for approval.

The purpose of the strategy is to help children and families to access appropriate help and support as early as possible, helping them to maintain their quality of life, preventing any problems getting worse and reducing the need for statutory support services.

CSSIW inspectors looked at the impact and effectiveness of preventative and early intervention services as one of their key areas for inspection during 2013. They concluded that it was too early to evaluate the impact of these services on the number of children becoming looked after or being registered through child protection. Inspectors did, however, highlight good practice around the Integrated Family Support Team and Team around the Family (TAF) approach.

The Team around the family model was rolled out across Rhondda Cynon Taf during 2013/14 supporting 133 families. In 2014/15 we are planning to work closely with partners in strengthening the TAF model, revising the documentation and simplifying assessment to ensure that effective referral pathways are in place.

The Rapid Intervention and Response Team<sup>1</sup> was launched as planned in April 2013 and has supported 155 children and young people and their families during the year. It was too soon to present a report that reviewed its work and impact during the first year of operation by March 2014, as anticipated but a progress report was presented to Corporate Parenting Board on 18 July 2014. [insert link](#). This service delivers direct, high quality support to families with some of the most complex needs. A local team based evaluation has provided initial evidence that it is effective in preventing the need for a statutory intervention or reducing the length of this. Further work is needed to integrate these services into a continuum of service delivery with other preventative programmes such as Flying Start, where Children Services work closely with Education to ensure the effective planning and provision of nursery education, and the Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) to ensure they work within an outcome focussed framework and can demonstrate their impact.

As demand for services increases year on year the implementation of the prevention strategy will ensure that our resources are targeted effectively on those in most need and where we can achieve the greatest positive impact on the lives of children and families, reducing the need for more intensive support in the longer term.

**We said we would improve assessment, planning and decision-making for those children who will require long-term permanent care.**

Our Assessment and Care planning services have felt the greatest impact from the significant increase in demand for services, and new legislation has reduced timescales and added to the complexity and expectations for work particularly in the court setting. It is also in our Assessment and Care planning services that we have experienced the greatest difficulty in the recruitment and retention of staff. The combined effect of the increase in demand coupled with the workforce pressures has impacted negatively on our performance in this area of work. There has been a decrease in the percentage of initial assessments completed within 7 working days falling from 51.7% in 2012/13 to 48.9% in 2013/14, which places us in the bottom quartile in Wales. This has to be viewed in the context of the significant increase (19.2%) in the number of initial assessments completed - 2646 in 2013/14 compared to 2219 in 2012/13. Whilst not all initial assessments are completed within 7 days, the average length of time they are taking to be completed has decreased to 23 days in 2013/14.

Our performance in relation to core assessments has also declined this year with 80.4% being completed within timescale compared to 85.1% in timescale in 2012/13, although performance still remains above the 2012/13 Wales average. The timeliness of those core assessments not

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<sup>1</sup> The Rapid Intervention and Response Team is a specialist team led by consultant social workers, designed to enable support to be provided quickly to families in crisis; the service provides a level of direct and intensive work with families over a 12 week programme which 'mainstream' social work teams are not resourced to do, to enable children to remain at home.

completed within timescale has improved this year to an average of 68 days compared to 71 days in 2012/13, but performance remains lower than the Welsh average of 65.4 days.

Work to improve the timeliness and quality of assessments will continue in 2014/15 to ensure statutory guidance is complied with. It is anticipated that the plan to implement a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the introduction of a new single assessment will improve the performance of these PIs.

As plans to reduce bureaucracy and free up the time of front line social workers by the design, pilot, roll out and evaluation of a new Case Management System in partnership with the South East Wales Improvement Collaboration did not proceed due to the emerging direction from the Social Service and Wellbeing (Wales) Act, as well as a challenge that the model was not robust enough, a new Children's Case Management System (CCM) is now being implemented. This will include the introduction of a new single assessment (referred to above) to reduce the need for multiple assessments and will be introduced during 2014/15.

Performance in referrals being allocated to a social worker has continued to improve in 2013-14, with 68.7% of referrals being allocated to a social worker for initial assessment, increasing from 67.7% last year, although ongoing issues of recruitment and retention have hampered progress and we have remained in the bottom quartile. The increase in volume of referrals coupled with our difficulty in recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of suitably qualified and experienced social workers has prevented the timely allocation of new referrals.

A number of actions have been taken in the short term to relieve immediate workforce pressures, particularly in Assessment Care Planning Services including the employment of agency staff and the secondment of staff from less pressured areas of service.

Many of the vacant posts have now been filled and a comprehensive review of workforce issues is underway that will contribute to a Children's Services Workforce Strategy in order to improve recruitment and retention and achieve a sustainable Childrens Services Workforce in the long term. This will be reported to members in January 2015.

Progress on improving the quality assurance framework has been slower than anticipated. This will support the strengthened arrangements recently implemented that will ensure that data is used to identify and address performance issues and to monitor outcomes.

This level of performance has been a combination of the increasing demand for the service and the low staffing levels we have recently experienced in key teams across the service. The service is currently reviewing business processes and information systems as part of its drive

to improve assessment and care planning and this is included in the 2014/15, Priority Plan. Targets have been set in anticipation of marked changes.

The number of children and young people requiring the care of the Local Authority has continued to rise across Wales and within Rhondda Cynon Taf over the last decade. Ultimately the number of looked after children within a local authority area will be influenced by factors such as population size, deprivation and the number of lone parent families. These pressures are actively managed through the Looked After Children (LAC) Action Plan.

The LAC Action Plan Group, which comprises senior officers from Children's Services and Finance, continues to meet regularly to monitor performance against the action plan.

Action has focussed on three main areas, supporting children and young people to live safely with their families and thereby preventing the need for them to enter the looked after system, ensuring effective and efficient processes for the existing looked after population and achieving an effective commissioning mix for placements between in house and out of county placements. Progress has been achieved in each of these areas.

The number of looked after children has increased from 621 in March 2013 to 650 (4.7%) in March 2014. Whilst an overall increase this does represent an on-going stabilisation of the looked after children population with the number of admissions into care reducing from a 20% increase during 2012/13 to 8% during 2013/14.

- The proportion of young people cared for via foster carers (78.9% of the looked after population) has continued to improve
- The proportion of young people in care placed with Council foster carers has increased to 46.6% in 2013/14 from 44.8% in 2012/13
- The number of adoption placements increased slightly from 39 in 2012/13 to 40 in 2013/14
- The number of special guardianship order applications granted was 34 in 2013/14, exceeding our target of 30 for the year
- The proportion of looked after children placed outside of Rhondda Cynon Taf has reduced from 26.9% in 2013/14 from 29.8% in 2012/13 (10 young people)

We have improved care planning of first placements of looked after children during the year that began with a care plan in place, with 98.9% of plans in place compared to 96.7% during 2012/13, this is also significantly above the Welsh average of 90.9%.

Children Services have continued to work closely with Education colleagues in relation to planning for individual children. CSSIW have commented positively on Children's Services and Educations joint ambition for looked after children and care leavers in terms of education and training. They reported that:

***"We saw examples of young people being supported in education despite placement moves and other significant obstacles and of care leavers being supported to access training opportunities to develop their employment related skills, for example driving lessons."***

A Commissioning Strategy has been produced and a contract between the Council and a reputable independent sector provider has been agreed. This provider has developed residential capacity within the County Borough, exclusively for the use of RCT children and improves our ability to manage costs. We have commenced a contract with an external provider to increase in house fostering capacity. We will be formally monitoring the impact of the contract as part of our 2014/15 Priority Plan but early signs are encouraging.

During 2013/14 we have acted as one of the pioneer sites for the Welsh Government 'When I am Ready' scheme which will allow care leavers to remain in their foster care placements under a type of 'supported lodgings' arrangement.

Our Fostering Service was subject to an annual inspection in February 2014. The overall inspection report was very positive and highlighted that children receive good quality care with positive outcomes, children's educational needs are being met and children's physical and emotional well-being is being promoted. The inspection also highlighted areas for improvement including the inclusion of foster carers as part of the quality of care review and the timeliness of foster carer reviews.

We have worked with Merthyr Tydfil, the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff Councils to develop a regional adoption service that will meet the requirement in the new Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act to implement an all Wales adoption service. The new service will be hosted by the Vale of Glamorgan and be operational by November 2014.

A revised LAC Action Plan for 2014/15 has been agreed to ensure that the momentum of the action progressed to date is maintained and to enable the consideration and implementation of new strategic initiatives.

**We said we would safeguard and protect vulnerable children and young people.**

Despite the rate of children registered on the Child Protection Register in 2013/14 rising by 30%, from 363 to 471 we have improved performance and exceeded the all Wales averages. 99.2% of child protection cases were allocated to a social worker during 2013/14 compared to 97.9% in 2012/13. 96.7% of initial child protection conferences were held within 15 days in 2013/14 compared to 94.9% in 2012/13. **97.5%** of child protection reviews were carried out within statutory timescales during the year compared to 96.6% in 2012/13. 100% of children on the child protection register have a child protection plan in place.

The development of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has been a focus for us over the last year in working towards the most efficient and effective safeguarding service for children and adults across partner organisations. The completion of the MASH will facilitate the most efficient and effective safeguarding service for both children and adults across partner organisations and will provide a physical hub for sharing information and concerns on child and adult referrals into safeguarding services. A way forward to implement the MASH was agreed by the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children's Board in November 2013, but we were not able to implement the agreed option by July 2014 owing to resource issues including staffing/budget constraints. Additionally within Children Services the development of the MASH needs to progress consistently with the remodelling work which is underway to ensure the continued provision of safe consistent services. MASH remains a priority for the Council and its partners and is included in the 2014/15 Priority Plan.

A new framework has been introduced on responding to and reducing the significant harm resulting from neglect. The multi agency guidance on "Neglect" has been completed and implemented alongside training for staff in safeguarding roles in all agencies across Cwmtaf.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf we piloted and have subsequently implemented the Welsh Government Child Practice Review Guidance. We have implemented recommendations from Child Practice Reviews due to date and will continue to monitor others through the agreed Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board procedure. A process has been established to disseminate learning from the reviews to relevant professionals. A Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board website is being developed, due to staff absences this will be launched during 2014/15.

**We said we would prevent young people from becoming involved in criminal activity.**

We have shown continued positive performance in this area, achieving year on year reductions in the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system and the rate per 100,000 ten to seventeen year olds is now considerably below the Wales average. In 2011/12, there

were 112 first time entrants into the youth justice system compared to 71 during 2013/14 with the number of offences committed by young people falling from 405 in 2012/13 to 320 during 2013/14.

During 2013/14 the successful 'Youth Bureau' approach has been rolled out to include young people subject to anti social behaviour referrals and the ongoing implementation of the Legal Aid & Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012 has assisted in further reducing the number of young people being remanded to Youth Detention Accommodation.

Work has continued during 2013/14 on the creation of a regional Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service across the Cwm Taf footprint in order to build on the strengths of the current two services and deliver sustainable, resilient and innovative services to young people, families and victims. A joint Multi-agency Cwm Taf Management Board has been formed and regular reports were provided to Cabinet and the Cwm Taf Regional Collaboration Board on the options for merging during 2014/15.

In evaluating the progress made, the service has been successful in reducing youth offending and has a strong base on which to build towards the new service.

In light of our progress overall, the Key Priorities to support **Keeping all Children and Young People Safe** as set out in our 2014/15 Corporate Plan are....

- Enabling children, young people and families to access appropriate support as early as possible, to help them maintain their quality of life, prevent any problems from escalating and reduce the demand for high cost, specialist support services; and
- Improve assessment, planning and decision making for those children who will require long-term permanent care in accordance with legislative requirements.

You can view the detailed action plan for 2014/15: <http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-safechildren>

## **APPENDIX 5a**

### **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **'STREETCARE SERVICES AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT' AND 'PUBLIC HEALTH AND PROTECTION' SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP**

**Notes** of the meeting of the Scrutiny Working Group held at the Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

#### **Present:**

County Borough Councillors:  
S Bradwick, (Mrs) J Bonetto, G Davies, G Smith, (Mrs) S Pickering, (Mrs) A Roberts.

Cabinet Members – County Borough Councillor (Mrs) A Crimmings

#### **Officers:**

Mr N Wheeler – Service Director, Streetcare  
Mr P Mee – Service Director, Public Health & Protection  
Mr N Brinn – Service Director, Highways, Transportation & Strategic Projects  
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director Performance and Improvement  
Mr N Jones – Service Director, Operational Finance  
Mrs L Davies – Environmental Protection Manager  
Mr A Mallin – Community safety & Partnership Co-ordinator  
Mrs D Pearce – Strategic Commissioning Manager Substance Misuse  
Mr D Jones – Head of Community Protection  
Ms H Morgan – Public Services Partnership Manager  
Mrs A Edwards, Scrutiny Support Officer  
Ms E Coates, Scrutiny Support Officer

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors S Powderhill and J Watts.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct County Borough Councillor G Davies declared the following interest pertaining to agenda item 2 – "I am involved with the needle exchange scheme for misuse of drugs and I am also a landlord."

### **3. INTRODUCTION**

The Service Director, Performance and Improvement explained to Members the purpose of the meeting, namely to review, challenge and propose

improvements to the evaluation of performance on the Council's priorities during 2013-14.

The officers in attendance provided Members with an overview of the delivery of the 2013/14 action plan. Following which Members questioned officers based on the following criteria:

- How well does the evaluation explain how service users/communities have benefitted as a result of the work?
- Does the evaluation give the reader a sense of how well/not so well the council has performed?
- To what extent have the findings from the 2013/14 evaluation been used to inform the 2014/15 plan?

#### **4. FEEDBACK - PUBLIC HEALTH & PROTECTION**

The Service Director, Public Health & Protection commented upon the evaluation report before Members and spoke of the reasons why the key priorities identified in the 2013/14 plan had been taken forward and the benefits that these had on service users and the local communities. The Service Director commented that all of the priorities within the plan were extremely important issues and the service continued to make positive progress in each of the areas.

The Service Director commented that he felt the plan was a fair reflection of the service's performance as it highlighted the improvements that had been made by the service as well as a number of exceptions and commented that the case studies within the document aimed to aide the reader to better understand the impact that the service's work was having. The Service Director also commented on the good evidence base to support the evaluation, indicating that the performance measures included were robust and outcome focussed. The Service Director concluded by adding that he was confident the evaluation was a balanced reflection of the position of the service.

##### **Outcome 1 – People in RCT live in safe, appropriate housing in sustainable and vibrant communities.**

Members referred to the statutory performance measure in respect of empty properties and queried the Authority's performance in respect of other Authorities. The Environmental Protection Manager commented that the Authority had improved in this area although performance in comparison to other Authorities would still be in the bottom quartile. The Environmental Protection Manager commented on the extensive resources needed to restore empty properties and the recent decision of the Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee to create a scrutiny working group to look into the area in further detail. The Service Director, Public Health & Protection added that the economic circumstances over the past few years had also impacted the area significantly. In respect of the evaluation report it was added that the comparison data across Wales which had recently been published could be included to help further clarify the picture of performance, as this was not available when the

evaluation was drafted. Members also asked that the challenges in this area be further emphasised within the report.

**Outcome 2 – Fewer people in RCT misuse alcohol & drugs**

Officers were questioned on the impact of the needle exchange scheme as it was felt that this was not illustrated within the report. The Strategic Partnership Commissioning Manager commented on the positive work in this area and spoke of the range of products and methods available within the scheme for service users. Following a query on the impact the scheme had on the local community the Service Director, Public Health & Protection commented that overall the scheme worked well, although there were individual areas of concern which the service were dealing with.

One Member of the group commented on the positive work illustrated within the evaluation in respect of alcohol and drugs misuse, although the Member further indicated that this picture was not reflected in the recent quarter one report for 2014/15 presented to Cabinet; it was queried whether the fluctuation of performance within this area should be noted within the report. The Strategic Partnership Commissioning Manager advised that the performance measures for the service were based on an average of performance and indicated that the Outcome Agreement measures illustrated a more meaningful picture of performance. The officer continued to advise of the performance results of key performance indicators within the service area and it was added that RCT's results exceeded the targets and in places were amongst the best in Wales. Members of the group commented that comparative data, where available, should be included within the report, to better set performance into context.

**Outcome 3 – Fewer people in RCT are the victim of anti social behaviour and public concern is reduced overall. People in RCT are protected from the actions of repeat offenders.**

Members spoke of the good work of the Authority in this area but also spoke of concerns in respect of antisocial behaviour (ASB) and the impact on the Authority, and it was queried how the public were able to report ASB. The Community Safety & Partnership co-ordinator spoke of the high volume of case referrals to the Authority and commented on referral mechanisms in place. The officer also commented on the good working relationship the Authority has with its partners such as the police, Health, Housing Associations and Elected Members. The Community Safety & partnership co-ordinator referred to a number of key performance indicators within the evaluation which reflected how successful the service was in this area. It was highlighted that although the number of referrals of ASB had increased the number of repeat offences had decreased.

**Outcome 4 – Fewer people in RCT are the victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.**

Officers were questioned on the impact the joint sexual violence and domestic abuse forum had in reducing the figures for Domestic Abuse as this was not illustrated within the report. The Service Director, Public Health & Protection spoke about the difficulty in setting meaningful performance measures for this area and instead referred members to the outcome delivery measures used. Officers commented on the significant unmet need and it was added that the Forum in addition to the Oasis

Centre and other support measures try to address this. Members were advised that performance in the area was very good, although there was always the capacity to do more. Officers spoke of the importance of early intervention within the area, to prevent domestic abuse patterns from forming within relationships.

Members commented on the previous work of a scrutiny working group set up to consider Domestic Abuse, and it was queried whether the recommendations from the working group had a positive outcome for the service. The Service Director, Public Health & Protection commented on the scrutiny work and the input the work had in respect of service delivery and measuring performance within the area.

**Outcome 5 – To control the availability of alcohol through effective licensing.  
To promote a fair trading environment in RCT.**

Members highlighted the reference to the pilot of 3 cold calling zones within the County Borough and it was queried whether this pilot would be rolled out further. The Head of Community Protection commented that cold calling zones was an issue being debated at a national level and advised that feedback was positive from individuals. The officer advised of the guidelines used in this area from the Office of Fair Trading. The Head of Community Protection commented on the limited powers of the authority in the area, and added that the introduction of further cold calling zones would be assessed on its merits. The group heard that following an evaluation of the service, 90% of residents felt better able to deal with cold callers.

Members also queried the processes in place in respect of test purchases and it was commented by Members that further test purchases in respect of solvents and tobacco needed to be undertaken. The Head of Community Protection agreed that more needed to be done in this area and spoke of the resource issues in undertaking this role.

## **5 FEEDBACK – STREET CARE SERVICES AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

**Outcome 1 – To deal with waste more sustainably by reducing the amount of waste that is recycled, reused or composted.**

Members of the group spoke of their concern in respect of recycling targets, highlighting the positives of recycling not just because of its environmental benefits but also in respect of the financial penalties that the Council could incur for missing recycling targets. Members commented on the awareness needed to educate further the general public on the financial impact missed recycling targets have on the Authority and the local tax payer.

The Service Director, Streetcare commented on the lack of tools available to the Authority to mandate people to recycle and the Service Director explained to the group that in respect of dry recycling the Authority were in the top quartile in Wales, however the food and green waste recycling was poor in comparison, therefore reducing the Authority's overall performance. The Service Director also commented that the nature of some houses within the County Borough, having little to no gardens, limited the amount of garden waste to be collected. The

Service Director continued to advise of the recent initiatives introduced with the new Side Waste policy and the work being undertaken at the Community Recycling Centres. Members were informed that sustained awareness campaigns were undertaken to push forward the message of the importance of recycling and the officer commented that there remained a core of around 30% of residents still not recycling. Members were also informed of the proactive steps taken by the service to encourage residents to recycle, and although positive results were noted, this was often labour intensive.

Members commented on the need to further pursue a publicity drive to encourage recycling within the County Borough, highlighting the future financial implications that could be felt and it was added that this should be stressed within the evaluation document. Members were also in agreement that Welsh Government should be lobbied into making recycling mandatory to assist Authorities in hitting recycling targets.

Members of the group commented on food recycling for businesses and food outlets and the collection of trade waste. The Service Director, Street care advised of the review being taken forward in respect of this area and the proposals to undertake evening collections to reduce the impact to the businesses and local communities. It was also added that evening collections would negate the need to invest in further collection vehicles. Members commented that this needed to be further highlighted within the evaluation report.

**Outcome 2 – To deliver cleaner streets all year round ensuring a continued focus on enforcement of littering, graffiti, fly tipping and fly posting, and promote civic pride.**

Members referred to fly tipping incidents across the County Borough which had seen a slight increase since the introduction of charges for collections were introduced. The Service Director, Street Care confirmed that there had been an increase and advised that this was more to do with 'contaminated waste', which was often a combination of black bag waste and recycled wasted. The Service Director added that he predicted that this would increase following the recent introduction of the non collection of side waste.

Members discussed the target set for the collection of fly tipping and indicated some experiences where incorrect information in respect of timescales for 'removal' had been provided by the Customer Care service. The officers confirmed that this would be checked with the Customer Care service.

**Outcome 3 – A well maintained highway and street environment that meets the needs of existing and future residents.**

One Member commented on the road resurfacing undertaken across the County Borough and the problems experienced in some areas with loose chippings and Members queried if any street cleansing measures were undertaken to address the issue. It was advised that road resurfacing was undertaken by 3<sup>rd</sup> party

contractors, who were responsible for ensuring the roads were left in an appropriate condition.

One Member commented on the timescales in place in respect of repairing street light outages and the Service Director, Highways, Transportation & Strategic Projects commented that current performance levels were in line with the contract in place for repairing street lights.

The Chairman summed up the meeting by commenting that in respect of future service provision, the report needed to highlight that the services would be provided on the basis of the resources available, due to the current austerity measures facing each Authority and the financial climate, with the potential need to also amend future targets. The Service Director, Performance & Improvement commented that the position with regard to austerity measures were reflected within the Medium Term Service Planning report.

G Davies  
Chair

The meeting closed at 4.10 pm.

## Performance Evaluation - Streetcare Services and the Natural Environment

We have made good progress in recent years in improving the local environment, roads and streetscene. Dealing with our waste sustainably continues to be a high priority and in addition to continuing to increase our recycling rates we are also working to minimise the level of waste produced by promoting reuse schemes and investigating alternatives to landfill for disposal of waste which cannot be recycled. We continue to work to deliver cleaner streets, both by education and awareness campaigns and strict enforcement of littering, graffiti, fly tipping and fly posting. Maintaining our highways and keeping traffic moving is a high priority for residents and we will target continued investment in our highways infrastructure and tackle problem parking through the introduction and appropriate enforcement of civil parking regulations.

### Why was this a priority in 2013/14?

We need to meet challenging Welsh Government and European targets to reduce the levels of waste sent to landfill and increase the amount of waste recycled. Despite year on year improvements in the recycling rate, Rhondda Cynon Taf did not achieve the Welsh Government recycling target of 52% in 2012/13, and was one of the worst performers when compared to the rest of Wales. Continued failure to meet national targets will have significant financial penalties in years to come if improvements are not made. We understand that living in a pleasant environment is important for people's health and well being. The importance of this to our residents was emphasized during the 2013/14 revenue budget consultation exercise, when out of over 250 people who provided feed back, 2 out of 3 felt waste management and street cleansing should be either a high or medium priority.

In our 2013/14 Plan, we said we would

- Deal with waste more sustainably by reducing the amount of waste that is sent to landfill and increasing the amount of waste that is recycled, reused or composted
- Deliver cleaner streets all year round ensuring a continued focus on enforcement of littering, graffiti, fly tipping and fly posting, and promote civic pride
- Deliver a well maintained highway and street environment that meets the needs of existing and future residents

**We said we would deal with waste more sustainably by reducing the amount of waste that is sent to landfill and increasing the amount of waste that is recycled, reused or composted**

We commenced the construction of a food waste treatment plant in collaboration with Merthyr Tydfil and Newport Councils, to reduce the amount of biodegradable waste sent to landfill. Planning application approval was received and the contract commenced in January 2014, with works commencing on site in March 2014. The site is planned to be operational in 2015 and its continued development will be monitored as part of the 'Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf Clean and Green' Action plan for 2014/15.

Fortnightly 'black bin/bag' residual waste collection was rolled out from 3rd June 2013, to encourage participation in the recycling service which remained on a weekly basis. As part of the fortnightly collections, a weekly nappy recycling scheme which residents could 'opt-in' to participate was also introduced. These substantial changes resulted in some initial disruption for a number of reasons, such as the volume of recycling making it difficult to get all the material off the street on the right day. In addition to this there was confusion in some areas over the correct collection day, resulting in some areas having bins/bags out on the wrong day or week and the service missing collections in some instances. Issues with collection days were resolved and a further round review analysis was undertaken where issues had been identified, with further changes implemented. The changes to collection days resulted in a marked increase in customer contacts and complaints regarding refuse collection and recycling in Q1 2013/14. Once the new arrangements had been embedded, complaints reduced significantly during the remainder of the year.

The introduction of the nappy recycling scheme was intended to target families of newborns, with an initial expectation that the scheme would be built up over time following an introductory pilot of 500 - 1,000 residents. However, demand for the scheme exceeded 4,500 requests including a number of residents requesting a weekly service to dispose of incontinence pads. However, the scheme has nevertheless provided a useful service to residents in reducing their residual waste by providing this weekly collection service. New vehicles and route optimization software have been purchased to support improvements in recycling and collections, the impact of these changes will be monitored in our 2014/15 plan.

The service is currently reviewing trade waste collections with a view to introducing evening collections to reduce overheads and ensure minimal disruption to businesses.

Community participation remains key to the success of waste reduction and recycling, and awareness raising initiatives continued throughout the year to encourage residents to participate in reuse and recycling initiatives. In Penderyn, a door knocking initiative saw dry recycling increase from 70.6% in week 1 to 88.1% in week 4 with 90.6% of residents recycling at least once in the 4 week period.

April 2013 saw the launch of the 'Why don't you recycle..? It's time to change' campaign. This included the distribution of a comprehensive user guide for residents '[Recycling Booklet 2013- Residents Information Guide](#)'. This booklet includes comprehensive information about the services available to residents to reduce, reuse and recycle their waste. It also provided explanations of what happens to our waste and why it is so important to recycle.

A user satisfaction survey at the County Borough's Recycling shop showed positive feedback from the 'Re-uniform' and 'Reboot' recycling initiatives, with parents able to purchase "like new" recycled, washed, cleaned and "bobbed off" uniforms at less than 60% of normal cost. This scheme is an example of the way that the different priority areas of the Council support each other, also linking into the aims of the Social Regeneration plan.

However, the positive progress regarding changes to collections to maximise recycling and community engagement was offset by difficulties in waste processing. In October 2013 "SiteServ", the company we use to process some of our waste, were unable to continue to collect and sort our residual waste and this had to be sent to landfill, which impacted significantly on our performance.

The overall outcomes of our work are mixed. Despite considerable improvements in reducing the amount of municipal waste sent to landfill and increasing the amount of municipal waste recycled since 2010/11, the Council has failed to reach the national recycling target of 52% for the second consecutive year and the amount of municipal waste that we sent to landfill has increased in the last year. This puts the Council at risk of significant financial penalties.

The Council sent 41.6% of municipal waste to landfill in 2013/14. This represents an overall improvement in performance since 2010/11, when we sent over 52% of our waste to landfill, and exceeded our internal target of 48%, performance has decreased since

2012/13 (38.2%) and was below the Welsh average of 37.7%. In comparison to the previous year, this equates to an increase of 1,350 tonnes sent to landfill.

However, our re-use and composting have both increased this year with 94.33 tonnes more waste prepared for re-use and 2,202.25 tonnes more of our waste composted than in 2012/13. The introduction of the fortnightly collection for residual waste has encouraged more residents to take part in our food waste scheme, which has increased the tonnage of food waste collected by 1,259.49 tonnes.

It is also important to note we have reduced the overall waste collected during the year by 5,977.56 tonnes compared to 2012/13, which makes it increasingly challenging to reach recycling targets based on percentage waste, as potentially reusable and recyclable items are no longer being disposed of.

We have estimated that if waste had continued to go to SiteServ for processing, the Council would have recycled, re-used or composted approximately 53.22% of its waste. We are currently working with Amgen Cymru for an alternative option which will enable us to return to target level in 2014/15. Longer term the completion of the waste treatment plant at Bryn Pica, which forms part of our 2014/15 plan 'Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf Clean and Green' will provide an alternative processing means.

**We said we would deliver cleaner streets all year round ensuring a continued focus on enforcement of littering, graffiti, fly tipping and fly posting, and promote civic pride**

We worked with partners including Keep Wales Tidy, Community Groups and Schools to identify projects that could be undertaken to tackle specific problems and problem areas within the community. This has included constructing outdoor classrooms, planters, footpaths and the clearance of overgrown land and fly tipping. We continued to work in partnership with RCT Homes, Newydd Housing and Hafod Housing to improve specific areas of concern throughout the housing estates in RCT.

The Cardiff City Cleaning Up The Game project in primary schools.

We delivered a successful project with Year 6 pupils at Tonyrefail Primary school, making them aware of problems with litter, in preparation for them to take part in the Lunchtime Litter Project at Tonyrefail Comprehensive school. Unfortunately, despite

working in partnership with Police Community Support officers and Community First, we were unable to introduce the Lunchtime Litter Project at Tonyrefail Comprehensive School as we were unable to secure the commitment from staff at the school which was essential to the success of the project.

We continued to focus on enforcement of littering, graffiti, fly tipping and fly posting, delivering a programme of patrols and multiagency enforcement operations in problem areas.

There were 3,399 reports of fly tipping and over 99% (3,374) were removed within 5 working days. This is significantly higher than the Welsh Average of 95.03% and represents some of the best performance in Wales. The average time taken to remove fly tipping incidents in Rhondda Cynon Taf was only 0.47 days. There has been a increase in fly tipping incidents recorded since 2012/13 (2,829 incidents of which 2,815 removed within 5 days taking an average of 0.19 days), which can partly be attributed to the introduction of fortnightly collection of residual waste and the introduction of charges to collect bulky waste. The Council's enforcement team will be focusing on household waste issues throughout 2014/15 to ensure that residents' understand the importance of disposing of their waste correctly. The Council will also focus on identified fly tipping hotspots to prevent the dumping of rubbish in the County Borough.

6,096 warning letters and 307 fixed penalty notices were issued for environmental offences such as littering and dog fouling. Enforcement aims to reduce the incidents of littering, graffiti, fly tipping and fly posting by raising public awareness and recognition of these offenses and the impact that they have on the County Borough.

An independent survey carried out by Keep Wales Tidy, found that 99.75% of highways and relevant land inspected were of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness. This is above the Welsh Average of 96.8% and represents some of the best performance in Wales. However, despite quantitative measures demonstrating strong performance, results from the national survey for Wales (a face to face survey of 14,500 people across Wales) showed that only 59% of respondents agreed that the local area is well maintained (Welsh average 70%); 49% agreed the local area is free from litter and rubbish (Welsh average 62%) and 68% agreed the local area is free from graffiti and vandalism. Public perception may be partly influenced by the condition of private land within the area over which the Council has limited control and by a limited number of problem 'hot spots'. There is an ongoing challenge to balance the high importance placed by the public on street cleansing with the financial pressures faced by the Council, managing

expectations while providing cost effective performance which compares favourably across Wales. Continued work in partnership with community groups to tackle specific problem areas, backed by a focus on education and enforcement in 'hot spot' areas and increased monitoring of complaint responses form a key part of our action plan for 2014/15.

**We said we would deliver a well maintained highway and street environment that meets the needs of existing and future residents**

Investment in our highways has continued to be a priority and we continued a programme of investment to improve the condition of our roads and footpaths. The programme of investment has included resurfacing of 128 streets and 48 footways. We have extensively used environmentally friendly preventative surface treatments which restore the skid resistance of road surfaces as well as sealing the surface to prevent ongoing deterioration. These treatments are carried out at a fraction of the cost and much more quickly than conventional surfacing techniques, reducing travel delays due to roadworks. One of the Council's busiest roads, the A4119 from Junction 34 of the M4 to the A473, was treated in a handful of off peak evening and weekend shifts compared to the 3 or 4 weeks of highly disruptive conventional resurfacing works that would have otherwise been required.

We also delivered the newly constructed Llantrisant Community Route, between Ynysmaerdy and Coed Ely. This route provides safer conditions for walking and cycling, promoting healthier lifestyles, as well as greater social interaction and a more sustainable way of travelling for people living and working in the area. The route also enables wheelchair users to gain access and ties in with the previously constructed Llantrisant Community Route 1-8 (Pontyclun Railway Station – Royal Glamorgan Hospital).

The impact of this work can be demonstrated by an improving trend in the condition of our overall road network. The Council's investment programmes have contributed to a reduction in the percentage of our roads that are considered to be in an overall poor condition, from 10.0% in 2012/13 to 9.94% in 2013/14, above the Welsh Average of 13.2%.

The key priorities for **Street Care Services and the natural environment** in 2014/15 as set out in our Corporate plan are:

- Deliver clean streets so that residents and visitors live in a cleaner and safer environment
- Improve recycling rates through targeting areas of low participation and raising awareness of residents
- Develop a **residual waste treatment plant** with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council in line with Welsh Government requirements and to review options to achieve higher levels of recycling through the processes operated by the Service
- Develop a **food waste treatment plant** with Merthyr Tydfil and Newport County Borough Councils in line with Welsh Government requirements and to review options to achieve higher levels of recycling through the processes operated by the Service
- A well maintained highways infrastructure that will support our Prosperity Priority through contributing to the economic, environmental and social development within the County Borough.
- A safe environment for RCT residents through increased protection from flooding and improved road safety awareness and training for our residents within our most vulnerable groups

You can view the detailed action plan for 2014/15 at: [www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-cleanandgreen](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-cleanandgreen)



## Performance Evaluation - Public Health and Protection – Protecting people from harm

Many of our residents lives are blighted by the anti social behaviour of others, with some suffering harm such as domestic abuse, violence and criminal damage. We will support victims of domestic abuse and work to reduce the harm to individuals of their own alcohol and substance misuse. We will continue to use our licensing and public protection powers to reduce anti social behaviour by effectively managing the late night economy and holding the perpetrators of anti social behaviour and other offences to account. We will also work to protect people, particularly our most vulnerable residents, from harm and exploitation by using our enforcement powers to ensure that housing meets required standards, businesses are effectively regulated and rogue traders are prevented from operating.

This outcome is focussed on ensuring that our residents are housed to appropriate standards; supported to reduce their alcohol and substance misuse; protected against antisocial behaviour and domestic and sexual violence and using our licensing and enforcement powers, ensuring that businesses are effectively regulated and rogue traders are prevented from operating.

In 2013/14 we said we would ensure

- **People in Rhondda Cynon Taf live in safe, appropriate housing in sustainable and vibrant communities**
- **Fewer people in Rhondda Cynon Taf misuse alcohol and drugs**
- **Fewer people in Rhondda Cynon Taf are the victims of anti-social behaviour and public concern is reduced overall. People in Rhondda Cynon Taf are also protected from the actions of repeat offenders**
- **Fewer people in Rhondda Cynon Taf are the victims of domestic and sexual violence**
- **That the availability of alcohol control was through effective licensing, and promoted a fair trading environment in Rhondda Cynon Taf**

### **We would ensure people in Rhondda Cynon Taf live in safe, appropriate housing in sustainable and vibrant communities**

Rhondda Cynon Taf has both the largest total number of empty properties and the highest ratio of empty properties relative to population size per local authority in Wales. During 2013/14, Welsh Government continued its commitment to fund the 'Houses into Homes' scheme initiative, and made £10M available to bring empty properties that have been vacant for 6 months or more, back into use as homes for sale or rent. We have been working collaboratively with our Cwm Taf partners, Merthyr Tydfil Council Borough Council, to secure £1,932M of this fund to tackle long term

vacant properties. As well as being a wasted housing resource, empty properties are a blight in communities, often being targets for anti-social behaviour and vandalism. Interest in the 'Houses into Homes' scheme has been positive this year with 383 loan enquiries/expressions of interest being made from potential purchasers. In 2013/14, over 50 units of accommodation were brought back into reuse, and £578,610 of loans approved and paid.

To better target our resources we have undertaken an "Empty Property" Survey to help us understand why properties are left empty, and to also explore the challenges owners face when trying to bring them back into occupation, this will be used to inform our work during 2014/15. Throughout the year we have also undertaken a campaign to identify vacant properties that are causing nuisance in the community, are unsightly or in poor condition rendering them unsafe. Enforcement action to address these issues has resulted in 212 properties subject to interventions such as provision of advice and support to bring them back into use or enforcement action aimed at mitigating their visual impact on the community. 94 of these empty properties were brought back into use, 8 more than in 2012/13, and work with many of the other 118 is ongoing to ensure their re-occupation. Our performance this year against the national performance indicator for vacant properties at 3.05%, has improved on last year (1.18%), but still remains in the bottom quartile of local authority performance for Wales. The complexities involved in restoring empty properties will be addressed by the Council during 2014/15.

### **Case Study**

An historic building in Aberdare has benefited from a £800,000 refurbishment project to create new businesses, jobs and living accommodation in the town centre. Aberdare's former Town Hall is a Grade II Listed Building which has been vacant for many years and has been slowly deteriorating. It has been given a new lease of life as a result of the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) and the "Houses into Homes" Loan Scheme. The THI was able to grant £478,000 to the project which will cost approximately £817,000 in total to complete. In addition, the Council has contributed a loan of £80,000 via the 'Houses into Homes' Empty Property Loan Scheme.

*"The funding and finance opportunity provided by Rhondda Cynon Taf Council through the Townscape Heritage Initiative and the Environmental Health Department has meant that our building can be refurbished to the highest standard which will reflect its historic value to the town centre". A spokesperson for Aberdare Town Hall*

The building now provides living accommodation through the creation of six flats on the upper floors and provides a mixed use of professional and commercial activity on the ground floor, where a new food outlet has opened creating seven new jobs.

Also during the year, 91 new affordable housing units were built to address local housing need, a large proportion of which were smaller one and two bedroom properties.

- **28** were made available to first time buyers through the Homestep Scheme (at typically 70% of the market value)
- **8** for immediate rental
- **13** for supported housing, and
- **42** for social rent by Housing Associations

We have delivered 2,801 energy efficient insulation measures to 2,617 homes in Rhondda Cynon Taf, working in partnership with energy providers, housing associations and private sector landlords. These initiatives include replacement boilers and external wall, cavity and loft insulations, which have made a positive contribution to reducing fuel costs, tackling fuel poverty, improving health and generating more disposable income for our residents. This is reflected in feedback received from residents including:

***"My house was very cold and last winter was terrible. I am delighted with the work and can feel a difference already"*** - Penywaun Resident.

***"We went from cold to warm, from sad to very happy"*** - Mrs L from Maerdy who found she was eligible for a new central heating system from "Nest"<sup>1</sup> which she had installed recently and will provide significant savings for her bills.

We have also employed a new Housing Energy Officer to provide impartial energy advice to householders. This support is available to those most likely to be suffering from fuel poverty e.g. elderly residents, households with young children, those on low income or people suffering with chronic health conditions. The Energy Officer has visited individuals to show them how to make changes, for example, adjusting a thermostat or setting a timer, as well as directing them to other support services. During the year, over 200 home visits have been made to local residents. Information sessions have also been held at public events, community housing surgeries and within organised groups e.g. 50+ Forum.

#### **Case Study:**

One 91 year old lady was unable to warm her home despite the heating being on and all the radiators set on high. The Housing Energy Officer visited and checked her boiler, which was set too low and adjusted it, set the timer clock to come on as and when required, and telephoned to claim the Warm Home Discount and change her tariff with the energy company for her. The next day the Housing Energy Officer received a telephone call

<sup>1</sup> Nest is a Welsh Government scheme working to help reduce the number of households in fuel poverty and make Welsh homes warmer and more energy-efficient places to live.

from the lady's son, who lives away, saying that she had rung him crying because a lady from the Council had come and sorted out her heating, saved her money and now she was nice and warm and felt so much better.

In order to determine our future policies to support the private rented sector we have reviewed the existing Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing scheme through a Member Scrutiny Task Team. Following this review, recommendations on regulation of HMOs and the private rented sector were made to Cabinet in October 2013 the detail of which can be found at:

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/en/councildemocracy/democracyelections/councillorscommittees/meetings/cabinet/2013/10/28/cabinet28-oct-2013.aspx>

As part of the review the Council recognised that without an Additional Licensing Scheme in the County Borough it would be difficult to ensure smaller HMOs and those in converted buildings are brought up to standard and properly maintained at that standard. It would also be more difficult to tackle anti-social behaviour and the impact of poorly maintained shared housing in local communities. A County wide HMO Licensing Scheme has since been agreed that includes all types of HMO and includes stringent conditions to limit the impact on their locality.

We have also undertaken a strategic review of social housing in the County Borough in relation to its size, type and location to better understand the relationship between availability and demand for rented housing, the impact of welfare reform, and whether any changes needed to be made to ensure that housing need can effectively be met. The findings of this review will be used to influence where new affordable housing is built, how social housing is allocated and the future investment priorities of housing associations in the County Borough.

#### **Fewer people in Rhondda Cynon Taf misuse alcohol and drugs**

The provision of services tackling the misuse of alcohol and drugs has changed in the last year. Rhondda Cynon Taf together with Merthyr Tydfil CBC now form the Cwm Taf Area Planning Board (APB) for substance misuse. Out of the seven APBs across Wales, Cwm Taf is the 5<sup>th</sup> highest for alcohol misuse and the 4<sup>th</sup> highest for drug abuse. During the year we have:

- Ensured that our service users do not have to wait long periods of time between referral and treatment. In 86% of cases clients have been seen within 20 working days
- Commenced treatment with 1,215 clients, of these, 893 completed their treatment (74%). For the remaining 322, treatment was withdrawn as they may not have attended, breached the treatment conditions or have died.

In 59% of cases clients have shown a reduction in their substance misuse. The other 41% may still be in the treatment programme or have not shown a reduction in their substance usage at this stage of their treatment.

Our work to ensure that fewer people misuse alcohol and drugs included a review of the existing needle exchange provision. This review included consultation with service users which identified gaps in current service provision. Recommendations for change were made to the Cwm Taf Area Planning Board, and are currently being implemented. These included changes to opening hours, providing late night opening once a week to make the provision of needles more accessible and changes to needle exchange to provide smaller quantities of needles in their pre packaged kits in order to reduce drug related litter. Such changes will enable the service to be more accessible to a wider group of service users, improve their health and in turn, reduce the risk of blood borne infections.

Our plan to review and reconfigure the specialist, secondary care substance misuse treatment service<sup>2</sup> to provide an accessible and integrated care pathway for service users has not progressed as originally planned. Whilst we have completed consultations with service users and established a baseline position, the wider review was delayed and it was recognised that a more in depth assessment of operational model and performance was required. This has now been completed as part of the 2014/15 plan, and includes actions to provide further training; updating local service level agreements and negotiating new terms for equipment. Progress will be evaluated during 2014/15.

To ensure that all our providers receive the correct training to support those in need of help for substance misuse, we have undertaken a holistic training needs analysis of both the substance misuse workforce, and the wider workforce that come into contact with substance misuse. This analysis identified the need for additional resources in particular work areas, for example, co-occurring mental health and substance misuse. As a result of the findings, staff dealing with substance misuse agencies have been trained in mental health services and vice versa. A multi-agency training programme has also been developed and resources secured to ensure that we have a consistent approach across all agencies, which will make better use of capacity within our partner organisations. It is also acknowledged that if the wider workforce has a good understanding of substance misuse issues, earlier interventions could be provided, preventing the escalation of many problems.

### **Case Study**

One of our treatment schemes ‘Turnaround’ is aimed at providing an intensive programme of support to those young people at risk or harm due to their substance misuse, who have engaged in offending behaviour but now show motivation to change. During the year we have engaged with 32 individuals, 8 of which were repeat referrals. 27 were between the ages of 13-15, and remainder aged between 16 and 17.

<sup>2</sup> Specialist secondary care treatment services are services that only deal with substance misuse interventions for people with complex substance misuse issues outside of primary care

All 32 individuals were seen within our 20 day target. 30 young people completed their treatment, and completed a survey to establish if our intervention made a difference. Parents and Agency representatives were also invited to contribute. The following positive impacts were recorded:

- All **30** young people reported a reduction in their substance misuse and improvements in their behaviour at exit
- **93%** (28 individuals) did not reoffend whilst on the project
- **73%** (22 individuals) reported an improvement in basic skills
- **77%** (23 individuals) reported an improvement in their physical health, and 90% (27 individuals) an improvement in their mental health. **90%** also reported an improvement in their quality of life
- **77%** (23 individuals) felt they had reintegrated with their community; **87%** % (26 individuals) with their family and **77%** (23 individuals) into their school or work

#### **Parent Comments**

*'Turnaround has really helped X's confidence levels and she has started to reduce her intake. Thank you'.*

*'Since starting the Turnaround Project, Y has grown in confidence, she come out of her shell and is talking to her mother about different things at home. She has totally rejected all substances and looks forward to coming to the project'.*

*'Z has done really well on the course. The staff are excellent, very supportive and Z enjoys going. Z has returned to school and we feel that staff have had a great impact on this. We would highly recommend this course'.*

*'A has benefitted from Turnaround, but he is not engaging in school and his attitude at home is poor'.*

**Fewer people in Rhondda Cynon Taf are the victims of anti-social behaviour and public concern is reduced overall. People in Rhondda Cynon Taf are also protected from the actions of repeat offenders**

We have used innovative ways of tackling anti social behaviour and community safety issues in locations identified as hot spots, supporting victims and communities experiencing antisocial behaviour (ASB). As well as day to day enforcement, support and intervention processes, the Community Safety Team has also co-ordinated and worked on numerous ASB operations in hot spot areas at key times. Operations have regularly taken place on Friday nights and other evenings with Police, Youth Offending Service and other key agencies, which have helped significantly to tackle ASB.

To better identify and target perpetrators of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB), Council departments are also working more closely to ensure an efficient, co-ordinated approach that will ultimately achieve a reduction in offending/reoffending by identified perpetrators. The Domestic Abuse Team is now sharing information on high risk Domestic Abuse victims and perpetrators on a weekly basis with the ASB Team and victims are provided with the necessary support, through a co-ordinated multi-agency action plan. We have also linked with the 'Team around the Family' and the 'Youth Offending Service' Bureau to share ASB case information in order to identify early on potential areas of intervention, improve information sharing, speed up the process and ensure that multi-agency working is optimised.

Seasonal ASB has also been addressed through multi- agency projects across Rhondda Cynon Taf that have proved effective in not only tackling ASB, but also engaging with young people. Three such projects are:

- Operation Streetwize<sup>3</sup>
- Youth Engagement Project
- Operation B.A.N.G. (Be A Nice Guy)<sup>4</sup>

In 2013 - 2014 these operations alone helped achieve the following results:-

- **2,365** young people engaged with, by the teams.
- **373** bottles / cans of alcohol seized from young people.
- **134** ASB referrals generated for follow up actions.
- **21** seizures of cannabis, bongs and other drug paraphernalia
- **13** fixed penalty notices / street warnings

During these operations the alcohol confiscated e.g. bottles of vodka and whiskey, can be from persons as young as 14. There is the potential for damage to the young person and their health, as well as possible damage to the community and public perception. Each seizure of alcohol and the advice given, helps to reduce and prevent potential instances of anti social behavior, and also helps to safeguard the young person and others.

A combination of all the above operations has contributed to achieving the following outcomes:

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<sup>3</sup> Operation Streetwize – A summer long campaign to reduce ASB and alcohol fuelled behaviour. In partnership with SW Police, SW Fire and Rescue and YOS, mobile engagement teams were formed, supported by a mobile CCTV unit, patrolled target areas in Trefforest, Tonypandy and Aberdare to engage, educate and deter ASB.

<sup>4</sup> Operation BANG is a national initiative run by South Wales Police. It raises awareness of personal safety during the seasonal period e.g. around Halloween and Bonfire Night and helps to reduce anti-social behaviour in our communities.

- **78%** of vulnerable/repeat victims of Anti Social Behaviour, no longer experiencing ASB.
- **74%** of individuals referred to the ASB unit did not go on to re-offend in the ASB process.

Extensive support has been given to our most vulnerable and repeat victims through support, enforcement action and risk assessments. A 'Victim Satisfaction Consultation' has been undertaken, the results of which provided the following feedback

- **100%** of respondents said that during their meeting with the ASB Victim & Witness Officer and risk assessment, they felt listened to and their ASB issues were understood
- **97%** said that the information that they provided during the initial meeting with the ASB Victim & Witness Officer was acted upon
- 100% said that during their initial meeting with the ASB Victim & Witness Officer they were provided with clear instructions about whom to contact or report to, if they experienced further ASB problems
- **94%** of respondents said that they felt reassured after the initial meeting with the ASB Victim & Witness Officer and risk assessment
- **100%** of respondents said that since the initial meeting with the ASB Victim & Witness Officer that they rated the level of support as either good, very good or exceptional
- **85%** of respondents said that they had been provided with regular updates on the progression of the case
- **94%** of respondents said that the issues that they reported with regard to ASB had been resolved, greatly improved or improved since the intervention of the ASB team.

Quotes from ASB Victims responding to this consultation include: -

***"Absolutely phenomenal service, the fact that I could speak to anyone at any time, provided me with much reassurance and has boosted my confidence"***

***"From beginning to end, the service and support was fantastic. Amazing, can't thank everyone enough"***

***"The response time and feedback was excellent, very pleased with the whole process"***

All the interventions have made a real difference to individuals and communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf as further evidenced by the case studies below:

### Case study

The perpetrators and their two sons moved into a RCT Homes property on a housing estate in the Cynon Valley. RCT Homes and the local Police received complaints regarding the anti social behaviour (ASB) of the family, and early interventions by RCT Homes went unresolved. ASB referrals were submitted to the ASB team for action. Two elderly ladies living next door to this family were directly affected by this behaviour which included countless incidents of verbal abuse, threatening words and gestures to neighbours, noise nuisance, assault and assault on Police, banging on neighbours walls and alcohol related ASB.

Direct action was undertaken by the ASB Team to:

- Co-ordinate and attend a multi agency case conference with partner agencies, community members and elected members.
- Create action plans to resolve the issues identified.
- Issue ASB warning letters to the family of the perpetrators.
- Visit the identified victims of the ASB (next door neighbours) and the ASB victim officer undertook a risk assessment of both. This identified them as high risk victims. Individual action plans were created by the ASB team, which led to increased Police reassurance and patrols; regular contact from the ASB unit for updates and support, and referrals to other agencies for additional support measures.
- Undertake home warning visit to the perpetrators accompanied by the SWP ASB Officer.
- Work jointly with RCT Homes to issue injunctions and housing related warnings against the perpetrators.
- Set up Acceptable Behaviour Contracts against the offenders to tackle their behaviour.
- Liaise with support services and housing advice centre on behalf of the perpetrators as certain needs and difficulties were identified.

We then applied for an ASBO against the main perpetrator in the family. This order was breached resulting in a custodial sentence for this perpetrator. To provide further support to the victims and to tackle the ASB the ASBO was varied to also exclude the perpetrator from the whole of the estate. Following further complaints against other members of the family an ASB Case conference was called by the ASB Team and a multi agency decision was made to apply for a Premises Closure Order. A successful application was made to the Magistrates Court for the Premises Closure Order. Meetings are continuing with social services and housing advice to ensure that the family members who were subject to the closure order are being supported, and Fixed Penalty and PIN notices have also been served.

Despite many lower level efforts to resolve this case, due to the continuing and escalating ASB of the family the Premises Closure Order was utilised successfully. The positive outcomes for the victims in this case are:

- The ASB has stopped overnight. (They were deeply effected victims of the family's behaviour).
- Much positive feedback has been received from the victims who now live a quiet and peaceful life in their home.

This positive action attracted much local and national publicity for how the behaviour of this family was tackled. Furthermore, at the time of writing and since the Closure order, the ASB team have received no further referrals regarding the behaviour of this family at their new location. There has also been a substantial reduction in calls and demand on resources.

### **Fewer people in Rhondda Cynon Taf are the victims of domestic and sexual violence**

Pontypridd Safety Unit (PSU) consists of a team of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA). IDVAs work pro-actively, to provide support to High Risk Victims of Domestic Abuse (High Risk of serious harm or murder). PSU has a dedicated IDVA to provide support to domestic abuse victims at the Specialist Domestic Violence Court that takes place in Pontypridd Magistrates Court and at the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference, (MARAC) where High Risk cases of Domestic Abuse in RCT are discussed, on a fortnightly basis. The Service is based in the Oasis Centre, which provides a base for the delivery of Children's groups and The Freedom Programme, for adult female victims of Domestic Abuse.

During the year, collaborative work with our partners has resulted in a joint Cwm Taf Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse Forum (SVDAF). This Forum has mapped existing service delivery to establish the gaps in provision and created both a strategic and operational plan to work towards delivering a coordinated and consistent approach to victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse across Cwm Taf. The plans purpose is to obtain the best outcomes for the client and their families, and also to hold perpetrators to account for their behaviour.

The implementation plan focus is on:

- **Support for victims** - providing adequate levels of support where domestic abuse occurs. 4,453 referrals to the unit have been received this year. 59% (2,629) were new referrals and 41% (1,824) were repeat referrals. 1,824 referrals were considered high risk cases of domestic abuse. Of these cases, 386 cases have received direct support from an IDVA<sup>5</sup>. We are now also sharing standard and medium risk domestic abuse referrals with Womens Aid in RCT, who have undertaken a 3 month pilot project to proactively contact these victims and offer their support. The results of the pilot project have proved successful and the two services complement each other to maximise outcomes for the

<sup>5</sup> Attempts would have been made to engage with all 1,824 high risk individuals but not all can be contacted safely and others have refused the offer of intervention. There is no obligation to engage with the service it is purely the client's choice.

service user. Some examples of the support available are housing issues; support with prosecution through Civil/Criminal Courts and with the target hardening premises, to ensure that the victim's property is secure and that they feel safer to remain in their own homes. Feedback received from clients using the IDVA service during 2013/14 reported that 85% felt safer as a result of IDVA intervention; 84% felt that their quality of life had improved and 74% reported a complete cessation of abuse.

### Case Study

**D** had a 7 year history with an abusive partner. She referred herself and received support from the IDVA service over a 7 month period. Her case was referred to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)<sup>6</sup>, and as a result:

- Police Watch was put in place and Police markers on the property, which makes the call a priority if the police are called
- **D** was provided with a personal alarm
- Property was target hardened

The IDVA also arranged legal support relating to child contact with the perpetrator; discussed a child protection plan with the school, and also linked with the Education Welfare Officer to arrange for one of **D**'s children, who had previously been home schooled, to return to school. A referral was also made for **D** to attend the 'Freedom Programme'<sup>7</sup> to recognise more about the dynamics of abusive relationships and to understand that what she had experienced was not her fault and could happen to anyone. Emotional support was also provided by the IDVA when **D**'s mother passed away.

Referrals were made to ensure **D** received a Christmas hamper and food parcels. Visits were made by the IDVA to 'Too Good to Waste' to provide a much needed washing machine, double bed base, cooker and table. Christmas presents were provided for the children, and household goods and toys were also donated.

<sup>6</sup> MARAC is a multi agency meeting e.g. police, health, child protection, where confidential information is shared on a high risk domestic abuse cases. Options for increasing the safety and reducing the risk to the individual and the family are discussed, and a co-ordinated action plan is formed. The IDVA represents the victim at this meeting.

<sup>7</sup> The Freedom Programme© is a 12 week course primarily designed for women. The aim is to help women to understand the beliefs held by abusive men and the effects upon children, whilst helping them gain the confidence to improve the quality of their lives and identify the local resources that can help. It is not about telling women what to do but about empowering them to make their own choices.

Food parcels were also ordered for D and her family by the IDVA. Things settled for D and she felt safer. D was also looking to return to work. IDVA made a referral for longer term support through 'Team around the family (TAF)<sup>8</sup>. The case came to a natural conclusion, and was closed in January 2014.

- **Perpetrators are held to account** - ensuring perpetrators are brought to justice. This year we have worked with partner agencies<sup>9</sup> to support victims at Court. Charges brought against perpetrators include actual bodily harm, common assault and harassment. Positive outcomes were achieved in 86% (398) of cases heard at Pontypridd Magistrates Court. The total number of cases heard was 465. Sentences include fines, custodial sentences, community orders or more commonly restraining orders.
- **Introducing preventative actions that** challenge the attitudes and behaviours which foster domestic violence and provide early intervention measures. Our plans to Pilot a Voluntary Perpetrator Programme, via Safer Merthyr Tydfil, for perpetrators of domestic abuse to challenge and change behaviour did not progress in 2013/14 due to unforeseen changes in staff resources. We have since commissioned an independent facilitator to deliver this programme during 2014/15. The programme aims to support men to change their behaviour and attitudes to achieve the safety of any women and children they are in relationship with and to support the well being of all concerned. This has two distinct strands, **Risk Management** (facilitating men to manage and reduce their abusive impulses so as to ensure the safety of any women and children they are in relationship with) and **Transformation** (facilitating men to become responsible and loving human beings in relationship with their partners and children so as to support the well being of all concerned).

In order to ensure that children receive education on healthy relationships, we have worked with partner agency, 'Valleys Kids' to disseminate training for the 'Building Safe Relationships Programme' in primary schools. Over 50 professionals from voluntary and statutory sectors were trained at 3 'Train the Trainer' events. This programme focuses on ensuring that children recognise safe and unsafe situations; exploring the relationship between feelings, thoughts and behaviour; exploring rights and responsibilities; provides opportunities to promote self esteem; explores interpersonal and conflict resolution skills and the development of safety strategies, and support mechanisms to keep them safe. This will help to facilitate a consistent, sustainable approach in the teaching of healthy relationships across schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

<sup>8</sup> TAF work with a family by bringing together a wide range of professionals to help them address the breadth of challenges they are facing.

<sup>9</sup> Our partners - Crown Prosecution Service, Probation – Domestic Violence, Witness Service and Domestic Violence trained Magistrates and Clerks

During 2012/13 we undertook a pilot exercise to implement signposting and referral of domestic abuse cases from GP surgeries. As a result, and in partnership with Cwm Taf Health Board, an electronic directory of support services has been created for GPs to access that provides an effective and consistent way of signposting victims of domestic abuse to appropriate support services. We have also attended GP training sessions to reinforce the importance of directing patients to support services for domestic abuse. An electronic referral form has also been developed, to improve the referral process, and a discreet information leaflet has been produced to hand out to patients (if it is safe to do so). The leaflet contains information about what patients should do and where to go for support and advice.

### **Controlled the availability of alcohol through effective licensing, and promoted a fair trading environment in Rhondda Cynon Taf**

During the year our focus has been on targeting high and medium risk licensed premises to ensure compliance with licensing legislation and licence conditions. Training for those working in the licensed trade has also been delivered e.g. National Certificate Personal Licence Holders 'refresher' training was delivered to 45 licensees; National Certificate Designated Premises Supervisors delivered to 16 licensees. In both cases attendees were targeted in accordance with Responsible Authority recommendations to address under performance in preventing nuisance, underage drinking and crime and disorder. The courses were favourably received and strengthened relationships between licensees and enforcement officers and this appears to have improved compliance.

#### **Case Study**

A visit to a local rugby club while a youth disco was in full swing revealed extensive underage drinking and dangerous management practices – including chaining and padlocking all the fire escape doors "for security reasons". A review of the licence was subsequently called. The management were given a strong warning and strict licence conditions were imposed. This triggered a dramatic improvement in management practice and the club is now compliant and actively involved in the 'Pubwatch'<sup>10</sup> scheme

We have also participated in 9 proxy sales exercises with South Wales Police to tackle illegal sales of alcohol. This resulted in 22 proxy sales being identified where adults have purchased alcohol on behalf of minors. One of the adult offenders was issued with a fixed penalty notice which

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<sup>10</sup> Pubwatch could be seen as the licensed trade's equivalent of Neighbourhood Watch. Licensee members work together to improve the safety of their premises for the benefit of their staff and customers, introducing initiatives to combat criminal activity and anti-social behaviour that can often be associated with the misuse of alcohol or drugs. A Pubwatch scheme will set standards of acceptable behaviour and act robustly against the small number of individuals who cause problems for the pub trade. This will often result in Pubwatch members agreeing to jointly ban problem individuals who are violent, damage property, use or deal drugs or act in an anti-social manner. In RCT South Wales Police and the Council's Licensing Officers attend Pubwatch meetings by invitation to share information and encourage good practice

required them to pay a penalty of £80. In addition, Trading Standards officers utilising supervised children, carried out test purchases for underage sales in:

- Alcohol - 61 test purchases resulting in 5 sales. 3 fixed penalty notices issued as a result.
- Tobacco - 3 test purchases resulting in 1 sale for which the vendor was prosecuted
- Fireworks - 7 test purchases resulting in no sales
- Solvents - 2 test purchases resulting in 2 sales. The Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985 makes it an offence to supply, or offer to supply, a substance to a person who you know, or have reasonable cause to believe, is under the age of 18 and if you know, or have reasonable cause to believe, the substance is to be used for intoxication. As in most circumstances this is extremely difficult to prove, we focus our efforts on advising vendors on how to identify underage people and how to spot signs of solvent abuse

We have also established a joint Trading Standards service across Cwm Taf, creating a joint Governance Board with Merthyr Tydfil CBC and an accompanying joint Cwm Taf Service Delivery Plan. As part of the Service Delivery Plan process, each Council has assessed the competencies and qualifications of enforcement officers, following which officers have been provided with the necessary legal authorisations to discharge the statutory duties relating to Trading Standards in both areas. This means that each officer is enabled to carry out enforcement duties across the Cwm Taf region. Both Councils agreed to support each other to provide mutual aid in the event of staff absence or an emergency.

One joint activity was the review of the animal feed and animal movement which was presented to the Joint Governance Board. It was agreed that a joint feed and animal health service plan would be developed and the two Councils would utilise shared procedures and forms and relevant equipment across the region.

To establish the issues that most concerned our residents, we asked them. At the annual 'Big Bite' event at Ynysangharad Park we conducted a survey and 46% of responses indicated that doorstep callers was the most concerning consumer problem. We have now set up an immediate response system to deal with consumer complaints about doorstep traders. Since its introduction, officers have immediately intervened in incidents on 13 occasions. Formal action, including prosecutions, cautions or warnings has been undertaken on 51 occasions following investigations by Trading Standards officers, against people who supply illegal goods operating in the shadow economy. We have also issued 11 press releases relating to the prosecution of illegal traders to keep our residents informed about illegal trading and the action taken as a result. This supports the Council's zero tolerance enforcement option to deter doorstep criminals from operating in the County Borough.

In relation to Trading Standards service delivery survey:

- 77% of service users surveyed said we were easy to contact
- 97% told us that they thought the service we provide is excellent/very good
- 84% had their complaint resolved after we had intervened and 94% would recommend the service

Respondents also told us:

***"All consumers need the ability and opportunity to seek advice that is free, correct and reliable".***

***"I gave me peace of mind and the knowledge that I can still contact her if the problems reoccur"*** - 87 year old resident

To help to give residents further peace of mind, five presentations have been made to older people to better prepare them to identify and resist bogus callers to their premises. They were also advised on where to seek help if they needed it. 91.4% of individuals who attended the presentations responded that they are now prepared to resist door step crime.

We also evaluated the piloted three Cold Calling Controlled Zones in Llantrisant, Porth and Tonteg by surveying the participants. The pilot lasted for one year and ended in March 2014. The zones were established to deter rogue traders and reduce distraction burglaries. The evaluation results were positive and the survey results suggest that the use of Cold Calling Control Zones is effective in both reducing cold calling, and increasing the ability of potential targets to refuse to deal with cold callers. The following feedback was received from our residents:

***"Feel safer in the Zones, for the older residents in particular".***

***"This is a really good idea, am impressed all around with it".***

***"As a carer to a vulnerable adult, this scheme has been a godsend. It's given me such peace of mind because I know that the neighbours will challenge any cold callers in the area".***

The three zones will now continue permanently. Cold Calling Control Zones will now be considered in other areas of the County Borough with significant problems, which meet the criteria set out in the guidelines set by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT).

The title of this priority plan has changed slightly in 2014/15 to better represent the work we are undertaking. The key priorities to

**"Protect people from harm and tackle anti-social behaviour"** as set out in our 2014/15 Corporate Plan are.....

- Fewer people in Rhondda Cynon Taf are the victims of anti social behaviour and public concern is reduced overall.
- People in Rhondda Cynon Taf are protected from the actions of repeat offenders
- Fewer people in Rhondda Cynon Taf misuse alcohol and drugs
- People in RCT live in safe, appropriate housing in sustainable and prosperous communities
- People in Rhondda Cynon Taf are safe and feel safe

You can view the detailed action plan for 2014/15 at: [www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-publichealthandprotection](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-publichealthandprotection)