



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL**

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday, 12 November 2019 at 5.00 pm at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park. Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

### **County Borough Councillors - Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-**

Councillor M Adams (Chair)

Councillor S Evans    Councillor J Brencher  
Councillor L Walker    Councillor G Caple  
Councillor S Morgans    Councillor W Jones  
Councillor A Cox

### **Co-opted Member in Attendance**

Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent/Governor Representative

### **Officers in attendance**

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Ms L Davies, Service Director – Public Protection Services  
Mr P Mee, Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services  
Mr A Perry, Senior Health & Safety Officer

## **20 Apologies**

An apology of absence was received from County Borough Councillors J Bonetto, H Boggis, J Harries, E Stephens, M Griffiths and P Jarman.

## **21 Declaration of Interest**

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

## **22 Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the following Overview & Scrutiny Committees:-

- Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2019;
- Special Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019.

## **23 Information Reports**

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications referred to the new format of future Scrutiny agendas which will present the relevant items to be reported by the Service Director. This section will include such items as information reports which are accessible via a link to the dedicated Scrutiny web page. Members were asked to identify any matters to be reported.

In response to a query regarding the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and the challenging areas as highlighted in 5.4 of the report, the Service Director, Democratic Services and Communications confirmed that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee has been allocated responsibility for scrutinising the Welsh language cross-cutting theme and would consider these areas at a future meeting.

## **24 Pre Scrutiny Feedback**

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications referred Members to the 'Pre Scrutiny Feedback' item on the agenda as an opportunity to highlight the Cabinet response to future pre scrutiny undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. This pre scrutiny exercise had enabled Members comments in respect of the draft Corporate Plan to be incorporated into the final version which was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

By reporting the pre scrutiny feedback item demonstrated that Scrutiny had been effective in influencing the Council's draft Corporate Plan and strengthens the scrutiny process.

The Co-opted Member commended the Council's Chief Executive for listening to the comments and feedback of the Scrutiny Committee as most if not all of the comments made had been incorporated into the final version of the Corporate Plan.

**RESOLVED** to acknowledge the outcome of the pre scrutiny opportunity afforded by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee by means of the appended Cabinet Decision Notice.

## **25 Review of the Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme 2019/20**

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications presented his report which outlined the Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme for the next six months from January 2020 to April 2020. Members were asked to review the work programme appended to the report and identify any items they wish to include as well as adopting a flexible approach to the work programme in order to accommodate pre scrutiny opportunities and future public engagement items.

Following a Scrutiny review undertaken by the Service Director and subsequently its presentation to Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in July 2019, it was proposed and agreed that future forward work programmes would be more streamlined and include fewer items so as to allow for more in depth review of topics and potential referrals from Council, Audit Committee and other sources. This flexibility would also enable the Committee to respond to matters coming forward. It was reported that a number of Cabinet/Scrutiny engagement sessions had been undertaken throughout October which informed the forward work programme.

The Service Director reminded Members that a scrutiny training session had recently been delivered and facilitated by Dr Dave McKenna and served as a reminder that should any Members require further training to progress their development it would be made available via the Council Business Unit.

Members were advised that in the future they will be asked to identify areas for

the public to be able to select, through social media, which will further enhance the public engagement in the Council's scrutiny process. This will increase the visibility of Scrutiny further with the residents of RCT and in the future will enable members of the public to actively engage with the scrutiny forward work programmes.

The Chair reminded Members that previous efforts to engage with members of the public included improvements to the Council webpages and taking scrutiny to venues other than the Council settings. Despite the location of the Council Headquarters which could be seen by some as a hindrance to public attendance at Scrutiny meetings, it was recognised that previously, items of public interest have attracted members of the public to Council meetings.

An update on the future introduction of webcasting provision and the upgrading of facilities available to Members in the Chamber was provided. This would further support public engagement and improve residents' accessibility to the Council business, especially amongst younger people. Members agreed that inspiring young people to take an interest in politics needed to be nurtured through our schools and initiatives such as mock elections and 'being councillor for a day' and scrutinising issues that are important to them.

Following consideration of the forward work programme Members **RESOLVED** to:-

1. Agree the Forward Overview & Scrutiny work programme for 2019/2020; and
2. Agree to build in flexibility to the work programme to accommodate future pre scrutiny opportunities and items generated through future public engagement.

## **26 Consultation Links**

The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications introduced a new item on the agenda entitled 'Consultation Links' which gives Members the opportunity to view the recent consultations (previously circulated to all Members on a monthly basis by the Graduate Scrutiny Research Officer).

Following a Member query, it was agreed that having the consultation links sitting under the respective scrutiny Committees would make it easier for Members to identify those open consultations which are relevant to their work. Another Member enquired about being alerted to Council wide responses to specific consultations.

## **27 Fire Risk Assessment Review**

Committee received an overview of the Council's procedures and processes for managing risk from fire and were asked to consider specifically whether the actions outlined within the report had adequately addressed Committee's queries at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018. At that meeting Members resolved that an E-Learning module is developed for all site managers to undertake and complete via the Council's Source and for progress to be reported back.

Following consideration of a number of options for progressing the E-Learning module it was proposed that an 'in-house' model be developed and uploaded

onto the RCT Source and further identified the need for two modules to be designed, one for a general safety awareness course for all employees to complete, the other specifically for site managers as part of their ongoing development. Both are in place and 'live' on the RCT Source since 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019.

Members raised a number of queries and concerns which were responded to as follows:-

- Should the E-Learning be mandatory to ensure that all employees and Site managers are fully compliant? That would ensure that all employees are fully compliant and that any procedural changes are acknowledged rather than relying on voluntary pick up. Currently the employee general awareness module is optional and there are plans to make the Site Managers module mandatory;

- How are our schools equipped to deal with fire in view of the recent investment delivered through the 21st Century Schools? Effective building design, Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) - sSprinkler systems, robust fire safety procedures and management arrangements, annual FRA review processes regular checks via audit reporting are in place to ensure strict guidelines are adhered to;

- How are empty properties/Council buildings protected against fire? – Through CCTV and Guarding Service on behalf of Corporate Estates as well as alarms to protect the Council's assets;

- With whom does the liability for managing all issues relating to fire risk assessments/training in our schools lie and could something be formally set out to clarify the responsibilities? – Ultimately the individual responsibility for managing fire safety for the school sits with the Head teacher, Governing Body and the School as a whole as well as and ultimately RCT Council; Clarification of responsibilities can be found in policies HS1 (General H&S Policy) and HS20 (Fire Policy);

- Are spot checks carried out on schools and Council buildings on a regular basis? -No, all visits to schools and other Council buildings are pre-arranged;
- Are the fire safety teams fire risk assessors allocated the same school/Council buildings to visit every year on their set frequency as this could foster complacency? – The fire safety teams Fire risk assessors are currently allocated the same properties and buildings to assess but are professional/competent in their work and carry out thorough checks assessments to relevant standards raising no issue of complacency;

- How are HMO's/Private Landlord properties assessed for fire risks? – There is legislation for all rented properties with the highest proportion of enforcement action taken for non-compliance with fire precautions. There is no direct link with Housing Standards and the payment of Housing Benefit (now Universal Credit) but the Council does can exercise control over private rented properties offered to homeless clients by fully assessing the housing to identify and resolve any immediate fire and other related hazards before a tenancy is agreed.

Following further discussion it was **RESOLVED**:-

- 1.To acknowledge the contents of the report;
- 2.To build the newly developed E-Learning modules into all new employee induction courses;

3. That 'spot checks' are carried out on schools and council owned buildings, in addition to the regular pre-arranged fire safety assessments, to ensure full compliance;
4. That the Council's fire safety teams fire risk assessors are tasked with undertaking fire risk assessments on schools and council buildings on a rotational basis to prevent familiarity and potential complacency; and
5. That a further report is brought back to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in four months to ensure implementation of the actions raised by Scrutiny Members.

## **28 Crime & Disorder**

The Service Director, Public Protection Services presented an update report as requested by Members of the Overview & Scrutiny at its meeting held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2019, when they determined that further information and clarification of each priority of the Cwm Taf Community Safety Delivery Plan 2018-21 was required, in addition to receiving qualitative data and the measures within the six strategic priorities. Committee stressed the importance of being able to measure whether the communities of RCT feel safe as a result of implementing the actions and whether they are making a difference to people's lives.

Committee felt that having additional information about the impacts of the actions within each of the priorities would assist them in identifying which matters within the Cwm Taf Community Safety Delivery Plan 2018-21 they wish to scrutinise in more detail.

In order to assist Members with their selection of topics for further scrutiny, the Director, Public Health, Protection and Communities highlighted some of the key areas within the Community Safety Plan:-

Violence against Women/Sexual/Domestic Abuse – Due to recent regulatory changes the agenda is now much broader yet remains a significant crime and services are only able to respond to a small proportion of the need. The focus has shifted from the preventative work to addressing the immediate and acute need.

Serious Violence & Vulnerability – Particular reference to the 'County Lines' drug gangs from big cities expanding their operations to smaller towns, often using violence to drive out local dealers and regularly exploiting children and vulnerable people to sell drugs. Community Partnerships are responding to this threat across the County Borough.

Members discussed the six priority areas in turn and sought clarification on how our communities are reassured following a serious crime in their community. The Director explained the process for those serious crimes, which are rare in RCT, but in response to the most significant crimes, in particular domestic homicides, the response involves a review undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership to identify lessons learned, publish reports and implement action plans.

A Member identified low-level crime as of more concern to residents, with limited reporting for fear of repercussions particularly amongst older residents.

The Chair asked Members to identify and select only two of the strands of the

Cwm Taf Community Safety Partnership Delivery Plan for further consideration in order to properly scrutinise the issues and produce tangible outcomes. The Director, Public Health, Protection & Communities added that any areas that are not selected but of relevance to the work of the Committee can be considered as information reports such as the town centre survey, ASB and low level crime.

All Members agreed that many of the topics are interlinked with crosscutting elements and particularly the topic of County Lines, which impacts on communities for many different reasons. Members also identified the need to improve communication which had been a recurring theme illustrated in the summary of actions arising from the qualitative evidence gathered from service users and residents and should be considered in each of the topics chosen for further scrutiny.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED**:-

1. To acknowledge the qualitative data and evidence captured within the updated report;
2. To select 'County Lines & Protection of Vulnerable People' and 'Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence' as topics for further scrutiny within the Cwm Taf Community Safety Partnership Delivery Plan at the Crime & Disorder Committee to be held in March 2020.

## **29 Chair's Review & Close**

The Chair thanked Committee for a positive response in respect of items considered today and the recommendations taken forward.

Next Meeting: - Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee will be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019 at 5pm in the Council Chamber to consider the items as included on the Work Programme.

**This meeting closed at 7.05 pm**

**Cllr M Adams  
Chairman**