

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee sitting in its role as the designated Crime & Disorder Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, on Wednesday, 19th March, at 5.00 pm.

Present:

County Borough Councillor R K Turner – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors:

H Boggis	S Bradwick	(Mrs) J Cass
(Mrs) M E Davies	P Griffiths	G Hopkins
(Mrs) C Leyshon	(Mrs) S Rees	G Thomas
P Wasley	C J Williams	

Officers in Attendance:

Mr P J Lucas – Director of Legal & Democratic Services
Mr P Mee – Service Director for Public Health & Protection
Ms D Pearce – Strategic Commissioning Manager, Public Health & Protection

Cwm Taf Local Health Board

Ms Nicola John – Executive Director for Public Health

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs) A Crimmings, P Jarman, M A Norris and G Stacey.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, the following declaration of personal interest was made in relation to Agenda Item 3:

County Borough Councillor H Boggis – “My employer works closely with Families First delivering the Strengthening Families Programme”.

11. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee sitting as the Crime & Disorder Committee held on 30th September 2013 be approved as a correct record.

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

12. SUBSTANCE MISUSE SERVICES

The Service Director for Public Health and Protection introduced the report which provided an overview of the current substance misuse provision across the Cwm Taf region, the current performance, recent success stories and emerging issues and pressures. He introduced the Strategic Commissioning Manager and explained that she would provide more detail for Members in relation to the specific issues. He reported that he was also pleased to introduce Ms Nicola John, Executive Director for Public Health, Cwm Taf LHB who was also the chair of the Cwm Taf Substance Misuse Area Planning Board (SMAPB). He explained that the role of the SMAPB is to consider needs of those who misuse illicit drugs, alcohol, prescription drugs, over the counter medicines and volatile substances such as lighter fuel, glue etc., with the overall outcome of reducing the harms associated with substance misuse.

The Strategic Commissioning Manager provided the Committee with an insight of the services in relation to prevention, supporting substance misusers, supporting families; tackling availability and protecting individuals and communities; and also explained the 4 tier model of care framework which was in place. She reported on the importance of the launch in October 2012 of the DASPA (Drug and Alcohol Single Point of Access) which dealt with all referrals for adults into the substance misuse services. She also explained that work had been undertaken to reconfigure service provision in order to achieve consistency and equity across the Cwm Taf region.

The Strategic Commissioning Manager reported on the emerging trends in relation to substance misuse explaining that whilst there now appeared to be less opiate use there was a rise in stimulant use, especially the new psychoactive substances. Other key issues included the use of steroids and in particular, alcohol consumption which research was now identifying as a key issue for the 50 plus age group. In conclusion, she explained that changes in service demand and emerging issues were constantly kept under review and commissioning decisions taken in response to this information.

Following the presentation of the information, officers responded to Members' questions.

A Member asked how the public could access the services and the Strategic Commissioning Manager explained that the DASPA linked with a range of services within the community such as GPs, outreach workers and PACT groups and added that she would circulate the DASPA number to Members.

A Member commented that whilst he fully supported the preventative work which was being undertaken, he had particular concerns in relation to the abuse of prescription drugs and questioned what could be done to resolve the issue.

The Executive Director for Public Health remarked that it was a very important point and explained that the drugs did not only come from doctors' surgeries with many being obtained illegally on-line. She reported that work was being undertaken with GPs around appropriate prescriptions and pharmacists also had a role to play in tackling this problem.

A Member commented on the availability of 'detox' facilities suggesting that unless there were sufficient residential establishments to deal with the deep rooted issues around the addiction then the problem would remain.

The Strategic Commissioning Manager explained that people's needs could be met in a range of different ways, some involved residential rehabilitation whilst others were community based.

A Member asked if there was a problem in the County Borough with regard to over the counter medicines.

The Strategic Commissioning Manager reported that the service did not receive many referrals in relation to over the counter medicines but in her experience this type of use was often additional to other substance misuse.

A Member referred to the financial implications of providing inpatient detoxification and residential rehabilitation.

The Strategic Commissioning Manager explained that funding for the service came from a ring fenced Welsh Government grant and also through the community care assessment process. She added that whilst the service had to employ tight criteria which included service users being fully engaged with the process, during the last 5 years they had not turned anyone away.

In response to a question in relation to performance enhancing drugs the Strategic Commissioning Manager reported that as well as offering the needle exchange service, wound management was also a key area in trying to protect the health of those injecting steroids. She explained that steroid users were in general reluctant to engage as they did not class themselves as drug users as a result they could only work to reduce the harm to themselves and others.

A Member referred to the report which pointed to changing patterns in drug use with a decline in opiates and asked whether there was anything that could be learnt from this.

The Strategic Commissioning Manager explained that there was an element of changing trends adding that whilst in the 80s there was a major problem with opiates there now appeared to be more stimulant use. The Service Director for Public Health and Protection pointed out that the picture was not straightforward as in contrast opiate use was still a significant problem in Ireland.

Members made reference to particular issues within their own communities which included the apparent trend of setting fire to the green waste recycling bins to inhale the fumes and the opening of shops which were selling drug related equipment.

A Member asked whether the growing use of the new legal 'highs' was due to people thinking that they were safe. The Strategic Commissioning Manager confirmed that this was often the case. She explained that the drug control authorities were finding it difficult to deal with these unregulated substances due to the speed which they were being created and the message which needed to be conveyed to the public was not to trust anything.

The Executive Director for Public Health thanked Members for inviting her to discuss such an important issue. She explained that substance misuse across the Cwm Taf region had a huge impact on the health of the population. She reported that whilst there was a general decline in the use of illegal drugs the one area which continued to rise was alcohol consumption and in Rhondda Cynon Taf the level was rising faster than the rest of Wales. She pointed out that the problem could only be tackled by all agencies working together. She explained that there was a cultural demand for alcohol and that alcohol consumption crossed all social boundaries.

Members reflected on the changing trend for alcohol consumption with people now choosing to drink more at home rather than visiting public houses. The Executive Director for Public Health explained that it was difficult to change people's behaviour. She pointed out that at UK government level there was much that could be done through alcohol pricing but that otherwise it was a case of providing services and raising awareness. The Service Director for Public Health and Protection agreed that it was a complex problem and pointed to the work of the Licensing Committee and the initiatives undertaken through the Safety Partnership Board by police and youth workers on Friday and Saturday nights and also work being undertaken in relation to parental responsibility, under age sales and proxy sales. There is, however, a cultural issue which is more difficult to tackle in relation what are acceptable levels of alcohol consumption.

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked Ms John, Mr Mee and Ms Pearce for attending.

RESOLVED: to note information received.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

13. POLICE AND CRIME PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services reminded Members that at the last meeting of the Crime and Disorder Committee, there had been a request to have sight of the work programme for the Police and Crime Panel for South Wales Police. He also reminded the Committee that the Council had two representatives on this Panel, namely, County Borough Councillors P Jarman

These minutes are subject to approval at the next scheduled meeting of the Crime & Disorder Committee

and R Smith. He reported that the work programme for 2013/14 was attached to the agenda for Members' consideration and that once the work programme for 2014/15 was published this would be provided to Members.

RESOLVED: to note the content of the work programme.

R K Turner
Chairman

The meeting closed at 6:05 pm