

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at the Council Headquarters, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on
Tuesday, 15th December 2015, at 5.00 p.m.

PRESENT

County Borough Councillor G.R.Davies – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

J. Bonetto	P. Howe
S. Carter	M. Weaver
G. Holmes	R. Yeo

Officers

Mrs W. Edwards – Head of Community Learning
Mr S. Lock – Head of Operational Procurement
Mr S. Vaughan – Service Manager - e Procurement
Mr P. Griffiths – Service Director, Performance & Improvement
Mr C. Jones – Service Director Legal & Democratic Services

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors S. A. Bradwick, J. Bunnage, (Mrs) A. Davies, (Mrs) L. De Vet, J. Elliott, L. Langford, (Mrs) S. Pickering, (Mrs) A. Roberts, D. Weeks and T. Williams

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, there were no personal declarations of interests made, pertaining to the agenda

23. MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee held on the 9th November 2015.

Minute 20 – Further to the previous meeting (held on the 9th November 2015) when Members resolved to assess the two topics considered for review i.e. Traffic Calming and Parks, against a set criteria as reported in the 6th July 2015 meeting (to determine whether they should be incorporated into the work programme), the Senior Democratic Services Officer advised Committee that the Service Director Highways and Streetcare Services and the Head of Leisure, Parks and Countryside would be attending a future meeting of this Committee to provide an overview of both areas. This would allow Members the opportunity to make an informed decision around topic selection following receipt of further information around the specific service areas.

24. RHONDDA CYNON TAF'S WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT 2014-2015

The Head of Community Learning provided Members with a report highlighting the performance of the Council's Library Service against Welsh Public Library Standards as demonstrated in the Annual Report 2014 – 2015.

Members were informed that this is the first assessment on the Library Service's performance under the Fifth Framework for the Welsh Public Library Standards which was introduced by the Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport in April 2014 and it comprises of 18 core entitlements and 16 quality indicators.

Committee was advised that the Welsh Government's response to the Annual Report 2014-15 noted that the Authority achieved all 18 core entitlements and of the 7 quality indicators which have targets Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved 3 in full, 2 in part and failed to achieve 2. The Local Authority was one of only 8 authorities to meet all the 18 core entitlements.

The Head of Community Learning explained in more detail those areas that were highlighted as requiring attention, namely ICT, stock acquisition and staffing. It was stated that the service changes in 2014 have impacted upon the performance against some indicators and a number of examples were provided. The Head of Community Learning referred Committee to the comparable data within the report which demonstrated the breakdown of performance of Library Services across Wales and continued to explain that with budget reductions it is increasingly difficult to meet some of the Quality Indicators, for example those that refer to expenditure (which includes purchasing materials and number of staff employed). Others will not be met at all, such as Quality indicator 12 (supply of requests) if the Local Authority continues to maintain the mobile library service (due to the restrictions of the 2 week rota). A discussion followed regarding the importance of being able to strike the balance between meeting all the performance indicators whilst still being able to retain a library service which can meet the needs of its residents. It was explained that a customer survey of all library users will be undertaken in 2016 which will help identify any gaps in provision following the service changes.

A Member asked whether the demand for the library service has diminished over the last 10-15 years. Despite the decline in the number of book issues Members were assured that books are still as popular as ever and the use of e books through Borrowbox (an online library loan service) has enhanced the service. Libraries are being used increasingly as community venues to host events such as Adult Education classes by Voluntary Organisations and Community Groups. It was explained that community profiles, which have been produced for each area within the County Borough and depict visitor numbers, book issue numbers and other useful information will provide a useful tool for analysis in the future.

Discussions centered on the changes being made in order to attract new users such as Careers Wales being located in Pontypridd Library and many libraries liaising with local schools to host school and class visits. The use of volunteers within the Library Service was also referred to as a means of enhancing some services such as assisting with younger reading. Members expressed concern at the potential for

some libraries to become single staffed branch libraries and they queried whether volunteers could work alongside full time staff should this be considered as an option for change. The Head of Community Learning commented that this was a sensitive issue and the Service's strategy is to use volunteers to provide activities that add value to the work of librarians. She stated that single staffed libraries, although not ideal, are common place in other Local Authorities such as Newport City Council.

A Member expressed concern at the potential for reducing the Book Fund by 25%, which is also being considered as an option for change. The impact that this could have such as attracting fewer local residents to the libraries if there are fewer books to choose from or customers having to wait longer for their book requests was acknowledged however, it was also accepted that choices have to be made whilst recognising the constraints on Council resources.

Following discussion, Committee formed a view that a letter is submitted to Cabinet on behalf of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee as part of the Council's Service Change Consultation process currently underway in respect of the Library Service.

Following discussions it was **RESOLVED:-**

1. To acknowledge and accept the report in respect of the Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Assessment Report 2014-2015; and
2. That a letter is sent to Cabinet on behalf of the Committee, as part of the Council's service change consultation process, to express its concerns at the reduction in the book acquisition budget and that some of the Council's Branch Libraries could become single staffed branch libraries under the proposed changes. Committee also wished to request that Cabinet consider the Council Library Services budget sympathetically, should funding become available, in light of the improved Welsh Government provisional settlement.

25. LOCAL BUSINESSES SUBMITTING BIDS/TENDERS FOR COUNCIL CONTRACTS

The Head of Operational Procurement presented his report in order to set out the reasons behind the Council's Quarter 1 and 2 performance (Financial Year 2015-2016) in respect of the number of bids and tenders submitted for Council contracts by local businesses. Members were also provided with an overview of the procurement processes in place to enable local businesses to bid for Council contracts.

Members were provided with background information regarding the procurement process within Rhondda Cynon Taf and how it is used to achieve the best possible services for the benefit of the community. This is supported by the Council's own set of Contract Procedure Rules which helps to implement efficient and controlled procurement system. Details of the Corporate Procurement Unit (CPU) were provided and how it plays an important role in the Procurement Strategy and Policy.

The Head of Operational Procurement explained the current performance and performance trends of the Council's Procurement Unit and in particular the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) which was introduced in the Financial Year 2013-2014 to

capture the Unit's performance in its work to encourage and support local businesses to access Council contracts. He acknowledged that setting the target for this KPI has proven difficult and Members were referred to the report which set out the targets and trends for the KPI since 2013/2014. Members were reminded that this item had been referred by the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee following its review of the KPI. In order to demonstrate the range of contract opportunities advertised during this period, attached at Appendix A of the report was a full list of the contract opportunities, which also demonstrated that of the 81 suppliers submitting tenders, 48 were local suppliers.

Members were assured that mechanisms are in place to encourage local suppliers to bid for Council contracts and a number of examples were provided such as the facilitation of events and workshops or Meet the Buyer Events which provides advice and guidance to suppliers. The Council also encourage businesses to sign up to Sell2Wales, the National Procurement website for Wales, which allows small businesses to receive automated tender alerts by email as well as advice and instructions on how to bid for tenders. Also available is eTender Wales which is the Council's e-tendering portal where contract opportunities are advertised to registered suppliers/contractors. Examples of supplier development events held during 2014/2015 were also referred to at Appendix B of the report. It was confirmed that there were 115 attendees at the Meet the Buyer event held in Llantrisant on the 24th November 2014.

Details of specific frameworks were provided such as the local taxi buyers bidding for Home to School contracts which gave Committee a brief understanding of how this type of smaller contract, which can change frequently due to the needs of those being transported, is being conducted on e auction. E auction is generally used for specific tender opportunities and its success has meant that a number of Local Authorities have adopted RCT's approach.

Members queried the reasons for the decline in the KPI and it was explained that although there are a number of external factors which contribute to the lack of engagement from local businesses, as set out in 4.9 of the report, the Head of Operational Procurement recommended that the reporting timescales for this measure should be done on an annual basis rather than quarterly which will assist in producing a more meaningful outcome.

A Member enquired as to whether there are examples of good practice from other Local Authorities which could be adopted by Rhondda Cynon Taf to further support local businesses. At this point the Head of Operational Procurement confirmed that further supplier engagement would be undertaken as well as further work with Community Services. It was confirmed that the "Selling to the Council Guide" which is available via the Council's website will be fully promoted at the next round of supplier events. Details of the Council's spend with local suppliers was highlighted by means of the particular Key Performance Indicator attached at Appendix C within the report.

Following discussions around the scope of the work Committee **RESOLVED:-**

1. To acknowledge the report of the Head of Operational Procurement which set out the various factors that influence this key performance indicator and the mechanisms in place to manage supplier engagement; and
2. That the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee undertake a short review into the number of local businesses submitting bids and tenders for Council contracts over a period of one or two meetings with the aim of developing evidence based recommendations.

26. WORK PROGRAMME

- I. The Senior Democratic Services Officer requested that Members of the Committee formally approve the draft Terms of Reference for the Participation Rates in Recycling work subject to any amendments. Having considered the document which had been previously circulated, the Terms of Reference and Scope of the Committee's work in relation to the Participation Rates in Recycling was **RESOLVED** as:

Participation Rates in Recycling

Terms of Reference

In 2014/15 Rhondda-Cynon-Taf failed to meet its target around waste recycling; therefore improvements were needed to support the Council's priority of 'Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf Clean and Green' and also avoid financial penalties from the Welsh Government. The national target for 2015/2016 is 58%. At its meeting on the 14th September 2015 Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee resolved to consider participation rates in recycling across the County Borough as part of their work programme and subsequently deliver a project aimed at increasing recycling in a targeted area.

Terms of Reference:-

'To identify a number of the lowest participation rates (the baseline) agree a programme of work to support improvement and report back to the Scrutiny Committee'

Aim:

- Contribute to improving the municipal recycling rate within a targeted area of Rhondda Cynon Taf (and assess whether the improvement has been maintained in 3 months);
- As a result of the targeted work, make a positive contribution to improving the overall municipal recycling rate within Rhondda Cynon Taf to at least meet the 2015/16 target set by Welsh Government; and
- Make recommendations to help further improve the municipal recycling rate within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Scope & Methodology:

- Identify an area of low participation for the Recycling Participation Campaign

- Engage with residents to understand why they do / do not recycle
- Identify barriers and good practice to help improve current participation, raise awareness of recycling and encourage action
- Receive training on Contamination
- Collect data to measure overall change in participation as well as in specific areas such as dry recycling participation and food waste participation
- Understand and report key findings and outcomes of the recycling participation campaign back to Scrutiny Committee
- From the information gathered, formulate recommendations for improvement to the service to better achieve the Council's aim

II. The Senior Democratic Services Officer requested whether any Members of the Committee who had previously attended the Contamination Training (23rd November 2015 in Ty Glantaf) and/or the Participation work (which involved a doorstep knocking campaign aimed at increasing recycling rates for food waste and dry recycling through a targeted approach in the ward of Cilfynydd) would provide feedback to Committee for the benefit of those Members who were unable to attend.

All Members considered that the Contamination Training had been an excellent training exercise and a valuable learning curve. Members agreed the training should be rolled out to all Members of the Council. Members found the doorstep knocking exercise to be a good opportunity to engage with members of the public and it was encouraging that on the whole the teams received a positive response and were able to respond to many requests for new equipment. One Member suggested that it may have been useful if they could have left calling cards for those residents who were unavailable on their initial visit and it was also commented that it would be interesting to meet with those residents who are not engaged with the Council's recycling initiatives.

Members were reminded that if they still wished to join the Participation teams in the New Year to undertake further work with the doorstep knocking exercise the teams would be more than happy to accommodate their requests.

Members were informed that the next meeting to be held on the 11th January 2016 at 5pm the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee would be sitting as the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Committee (under Sections 19 and 20 of the Police & Justice Act 2006) and would receive an overview of the formerly agreed topics.

The meeting closed at 6.45pm

G. R. Davies
Chairman