

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

Minutes of the meeting held at the County Borough Council Headquarters, The Pavilions,
Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale on Monday, 12th December 2016, at 5.00 p.m.

PRESENT

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

County Borough Councillors

S. Bradwick	P. Howe
S. Carter	T. Williams
J. Elliott	R. Yeo
G. Holmes	

Officers

Mr A. Wilkins – Head of Legal – Corporate & Democratic Services

Mrs W. Edwards – Head of Community Learning

Mr P. Davies – Chief Executive Officer (Trivallis)

Mr B. Granville – Director of Homes & Communities (Trivallis)

J. Nicholls – Senior Democratic Services Officer

Also in Attendance

County Borough Councillor C J Willis – Scrutiny Performance Management Co-ordinator

39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs) J. Bonetto, (Mrs) A. Davies, (Mrs) L. De Vet, L. Langford, (Mrs) S. Pickering and M. Weaver.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

41. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr P. Davies (Chief Executive Officer) and Mr B. Granville (Director of Homes & Communities) of Trivallis.

42. 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 14th November 2016.

Matters Arising – Minute No. 37–The Chair referred to the recent BBC Wales ‘Week In, Week Out’ programme which had reported that Rhondda Cynon Taf has the highest contaminated rate of recycling across Wales. In response to the claim, the Chair informed Members that he would like Committee to receive a report outlining the figures for permanently contaminated recycling in Rhondda Cynon Taf from the Director, Highways & Streetcare Services. Following a discussion where it was acknowledged that Rhondda Cynon Taf operates a policy of ‘if in doubt, recycle’, it was **RESOLVED** that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee meet with the Director, Highways & Streetcare Services to discuss the figures and report back to a future Scrutiny Committee.

43. TRIVALLIS

The Chief Executive Officer for Trivallis thanked Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee for providing them with the opportunity to address the meeting. He provided some background to the recent rebrand from RCT Homes to Trivallis, which brought the previous subsidiary companies under one organisation. This has meant that tenants can access services more easily and has seen the allocation of resources to front line services. The Officers from Trivallis welcomed Committees’ questions.

In discussing those tenants who do not engage or behave with respect to their homes and communities, the Director of Homes & Communities reported that Trivallis want to re connect staff to the communities and improve communication so as to address those breaches in respect of nuisance and home maintenance. The Director confirmed that as a business raising fines against individuals is not an option and removing tenancies is ineffective, although he understood that the physical environment sets the tone for the estate. He added that enforcing a standard comes via the local contact and in view of this the Chief Executive Officer has met with all the community groups and the Tenant Residents Association (TRA), of which there are 12 that vary in scale and degree of activities, which provide local knowledge and will help to establish the community connection. The Director explained that Trivallis is keen to continue working in partnership with the Local Authority as it has done in the past on projects such as those undertaken in Penrhys which had positive outcomes for all concerned.

A Member expressed support for the Vibrant and Viable Places initiative which in Pontypridd Town Centre has seen the creation of homes above retail premises which enables people to access employment. However, he expressed concern at the levels of anti social behaviour in the town centre which have been fuelled by drug and alcohol abuse. He questioned Trivallis on their policy of dealing with tenants who suffer with drug or alcohol problems.

The Director of Homes and Communities acknowledged that allocating one bedroom accommodation to single homeless persons results in a lack of sustainability and can lead to a number of complaints so Trivallis acknowledge that this requires a smarter approach. By limiting the allocation to one homeless household per year allows for

better management of the accommodation together with a range of housing management tools available to deal with tenants' specific needs.

The Director referred to the Sustaining Tenancies Empowering People Support (STEPS) initiative which is a fully funded service by Trivallis and provides a support mechanism so that vulnerable tenants can remain in their homes. He added that this service also identifies those tenants at risk with immediate effect.

The Chief Executive Officer confirmed that Trivallis operates a Choice Based Lettings scheme with the Local Authority called Homefinder RCT which ensures that all housing allocations are carried out fairly. He added that this scheme is operated in partnership with other housing associations to let their homes. He outlined the process which is delivered through the RCT Common Housing Register (which also includes the process for downsizing). The Director explained that there is much less demand for properties in the North of the County Borough, where there are higher levels of deprivation and poor employment prospects compared to those properties in the South of the County Borough which has more effective transport links to local services and employment which is reflected in the incentives applied to properties therefore appropriate incentives need to be applied.

Committee was informed that Trivallis have reviewed their current housing stock and have recently presented a new show home to their Officers and staff. They assured Committee that Trivallis meet the required levels set by the Welsh Quality Housing Standard.

A Member commented that previously, there has been a lack of engagement and communication between RCT Homes and Elected Members. The Chief Executive Officer confirmed that Trivallis is currently reviewing its contact details so that they can be made available to all Elected Members, AM's and PM's. He also extended an invitation to Elected Members to visit the offices to meet with Team Leaders. He considered that this would strengthen the partnership and understanding and enable his officers to properly understand the role of an Elected Member. The Director of Homes and Communities acknowledged that RCT Homes had lost sight of its business core whereas Trivallis now has a strong sense of Housing Management values.

Trivallis assured Committee that they have a strong relationship with neighbourhood managers and South Wales Police, however, if there is an urgent item on the agenda for the local PACT meetings a representative would attend.

With regard to recycling and whether the Trivallis tenants are fully engaged with the Councils' initiatives, Committee was assured that joint working with the Local Authority in this area has already been successfully undertaken. Trivallis confirmed that they are looking to continue working with the Local Authority to assist in the promotion of its recycling initiatives by any means required.

In conclusion the Chief Executive Officer and Director of Homes and Communities confirmed that any specific issues raised at the meeting would be given due consideration and reported back to the individual Member.

The Chair thanked Mr Davies and Mr Granville for attending the meeting.

44. RCT's WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Head of Community Learning presented the report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning in respect of Rhondda Cynon Taf's Welsh Library Standards Assessment for 2015-16.

Committee was informed that this is the second assessment report to be received under the Fifth Quality Framework which was introduced by the Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport in April 2014. It consists of 18 core entitlements which stipulate what all libraries in Wales will have and 16 Quality Indicators (7 of which have outcome targets). Members were informed that the Fifth Framework is made up of four themes.

The Head of Community Learning outlined the results relating specifically to the performance of Rhondda Cynon Taf's Library Service which indicated that all 18 core entitlements were met in full; of the 7 quality indicators the service met three in full and 4 in part which is an improvement on past results. The three areas identified as requiring attention include ICT, stock acquisition and staffing. Members were reminded that the Local Authority will be unable to meet the quality indicator in respect of ICT, which requires wi-fi to be available at every library venue, until the new permanent library in Rhydyfelin opens in 2017.

Committee recognised that the budget reductions in 2014 have impacted on staffing levels and the Book Fund but acknowledged the positive outcomes to have arisen from the assessment report as well as the positive feedback to have arisen from the customer surveys. A table set out at 4.8 of the report further demonstrated that Rhondda Cynon Taf's customers satisfaction levels compare favourably with other local authority areas.

It was **RESOLVED** to receive the Annual Assessment Report and letter from Welsh Government.

45. MOBILE LIBRARY REVIEW & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Senior Democratic Services Officer presented the report of the Director of Legal & Democratic Services outlining the review which was undertaken by the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in respect of Rhondda Cynon Taf's Mobile Library Service.

Committee was asked to form a view on the report and five recommendations set out at Appendix 1. Following consideration it was **RESOLVED** that the following recommendations be taken forward by the Executive:-

1. Further promotion of the mobile library service through existing partnerships such as Communities First, Housing Associations and local Elected Members;
2. To further promote the online facilities available to customers so that they can order books and/or CD's ready for collection from the mobile library;
3. To retain the length of stops (as to alter them would have an impact on the number of stops which would have a potential adverse affect on more customers);
4. That posters are displayed on the door of each mobile library vehicle to inform customers that all mobile libraries have disabled access;
5. That provision is made available on the mobile library, in the form of a checklist, for customers to be able to pre order books/CD's in advance of their next visit

46. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman raised concerns in respect of issues relating to agency staff and employment practices at Amgen Cymru in light of further recent publicity. He sought

Committee's views on inviting a representative from GMB Union to a meeting of this Committee in order to discuss employment and operational practices at Amgen Cymru.

Following discussion Committee **RESOLVED** that the Chair and Vice Chair meet with the Cabinet Member for Council Business and Human Resources to discuss any issues relating to Amgen with a progress update to be reported to Committee at a future date.

The meeting closed at 6.50pm

Chairman

G. R. Davies