

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale on Tuesday 8th November, 2016 at 5 p.m.

PRESENT

County Borough Councillor B. Stephens – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

S. Carter	B. Morgan	L. Walker
M. Griffiths	G. Thomas	
(Mrs) S. Jones	R.K.Turner	

Co-opted Members

Mr.J.Fish – Voting Elected Parent/Governor Representative
Mrs S. Jones – Voting Elected Parent/ Governor Representative

Non- Voting Co-opted Member

Mr. D. Price – Representing UNISON

Officers in Attendance

Mr.G.Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children’s Services
Mr. P. Mee – Service Director, Public Health & Protection
Mr. P. Nicholls – Head of Legal Litigation
Mr. D. James – Head of Communities and Prosperity
Ms N. Lewis – Communities First Co-ordinator
Ms. A .Batley – Service Director Children’s Services
Ms. N. Thomas – Service Manager Early Years and Family Support
Ms. G. Beynon – Play Commissioning and Information Service Manager
Ms. A. Harris – Regional Adoption Manager, Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Collaboration

25. CHAIR

In the absence of the Chair, County Borough Councillor C Leyshon, the Vice Chair County Borough Councillor B. Stephens took the Chair for the meeting

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: County Borough Councillors (Mrs) J Bunnage, (Mrs) J. Cass, P.Jarman, C. Leyshon, S. Evans-Fear and Co-opted Member Mr S. Jones

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

28. MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on the 7th September 2016.

29. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF AGENDA

The Committee agreed that the agenda would be considered out of sequence to enable the Regional Adoptions Manager, Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Collaboration to attend to present the report as she was on her way from another meeting.

REPORTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

30. REPRESENTAION AND COMPALINTS PROCEDURE ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee were presented with the Social Services Annual Complaints Report for 2015 /16 which provided information on the background of the Social Services statutory complaints procedure, information on lessons learnt from complaints and performance data for Adult and Children's Services together with achievements for 2015/16 and future developments .

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services informed Members that the report overall was very positive. He explained that the Local Authority provides a robust and effective service and the number of complaints received remains comparatively low. He reported that very few complaints reached stage 2 of the

complaints procedure and felt this was due to excellent work carried out by the complaints team.

Members asked whether many areas of complaints are due to communications issues and lack of understanding between staff and clients. The Group Director confirmed that communication has been an issue previously but training and communication skills have been improving year on year. A Member questioned whether Stage One of the Complaint procedure is a discussion based procedure or a written one. Members were informed that the complainant is invited to discuss the issues raised and this can be done over the telephone or face to face within ten days.

A Member questioned as to what reasons were behind the highest number of complaints being in the Assessment Care and Locality Teams. Officers explained that this was due to the difficult nature of the work the service undertakes.

Members of the Committee complemented the Department for the hard work that has been undertaken. A Member asked if there was any way in which the wording could be changed from "Complaints" to Quality Standards in the future. Officers replied that this could be looked at in the future.

After considering the report Members **RESLOVED** to accept the report and its recommendations.

- Acknowledge the contents of the Social Services Annual Complaints Report
- Accept the work undertaken by the Social Services Complaints Team

31. PLAY SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Following the presentation of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) and Action Plan at the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on the 7th September 2016 it was agreed that an updated report would be brought back to the Committee.

The Early Years and Family Support Manger took Members through the updated report in detail. She explained that the PSA had been submitted to Welsh Government in March 2016. The document had been presented to Cabinet in June 2016, formally signed off and then submitted to Welsh Government as a final version.

The red, amber and green ranking (RAG) is set as a template by the Welsh Government. It was reported that the criteria highlighted in red will require greater focus within the Action Plan. Officers informed the Committee that the Vision for Play for Rhondda Cynon Taf is as below:

- Our Vision is that all children and young people should be able: to have fun; enjoy their childhood and youth; pursue learning; and pursue the development of life skills thought access and opportunities to participate in high quality, wide ranging play, leisure, sporting and cultural opportunities, which celebrate diversity of interest and need. The Council will achieve this by focussing on the quality and quantity of play opportunities available through English and Welsh.

The Play and Family Information Service Manager reported that to date no feedback has been received from Welsh Government however, it was anticipated that there would be following a meeting on the 30th November 2016

Members of the Committee thanked the Officers for coming back with an updated report addressing the issues previously raised. A Member raised concerns in relation to what was being done at home to encourage family cohesion in regards to play and what support would be given. Officers responded by informing Members that there are a range of services being delivered in partnership with Leisure, culture and Sport that supports the broader well being agenda. There is great focus on working in partnership with the Early Years and Family Support Training Centre , Education, SNAP Cymru, YMCA Colleagues and Play Wales to ensure that the training needs of the play workforce are being met. Member were also informed that the Play Commissioning and Family Service Manager administers the Holiday Fun Time project which is part of the early years umbrella and accepts referrals from Disabled Children's Team (DCT) Social Services and Team Around the Family.

In respect of criteria highlighted as red within the Action Plan "consultation with children on the opportunities they would like to access" a Member of the Committee queried as to where playing with electronic games came in to the equation. The Play Commissioning and Family Information Service Manager explained that there were a number of questions ask and the consultation focused on ' What, where and who the children liked to play with, the information in respect of electronic games can be brought back to a future Committee if required.

Members queried as to why there was a decrease in the number of play sessions provided. In response to the question Officers explained that over the past 7 years commissioned play providers have been encouraged to become registered with CSSIW. Due to the recent changes in registration, there is now a requirement for provision to be registered to provide care for children up to the age of 12 years

instead of 8 years and training is being provided, however some have made the decision not to pursue registration .

Once again Members thanked the Officers for their hard work

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- Approve the updated information
- Provide an Update to Members on the outcomes of the Welsh Government meeting after November 2016
- Report back to Members additional information in respect of electronic play.
- Receive further reports at the appropriate time.

32. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TACKLING POVERTY REVIEW

RECOMMENDATIONS – REPORESS REPORT

The Chair welcomed Mr D James, Head of Communities and Prosperity along with Mr P. Mee Service Director Public Health and Protection to the Meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

The Head of Communities and Prosperity updated Members on the progress made since the report to Cabinet on 24th November 2015 that set out the recommendations following a strategic review into the Council's approach to tackling poverty. The Cabinet agreed to a review of the Communities First Programme, as part of a wider examination of Rhondda Cynon Taf's Strategic Approach to tackling poverty. The review found that better integrating the three Welsh Government Tackling Poverty programmes of Flying Start, Families First and Communities First, and ensuring the programmes are aligned with the core business of the Council, would improve the strategic direction and the impact of the service "on the ground". This should in turn lead to better outcomes for children, young people, families and communities most in need. The review identified a number of key areas that required attention and strengthening.

- Strategic direction and governance
- Programme infrastructure
- Effective system of monitoring and review
- The targeting of hard to reach groups.

A single Communities First Strategy has been developed that has replaced the eight plans that clusters have previously produced. The Strategy outlines how the revised Communities First programme will work in practice, but linked to other tackling poverty programmes , core services and its partner organisations The strategy also shows how the programme had been restructured to support the delivery of the

Councils Corporate Plan, the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act .

After presenting his report in great detail Mr D James introduced the Service Director Public Health & Protection to the Committee to comment on the recent statement of the Cabinet Secretary for Children and Communities on Resilient Communities during which the Minister stated that he is “minded to phase out Communities First programme whilst establishing a new approach to meet the challenges of the Future”. The Service Director, Public Health & Protection informed the Committee that it is not yet known what is actually meant by the statement until further guidance is received from Welsh Government. However the changes that have been made as a Council to the Communities First in Rhondda Cynon Taf puts the Council in a strong position to inform Welsh Government’s review and shape the future programme. He also informed Committee that Welsh Government are consulting on the proposal at the moment and a decision will be made January 2017.

Members thanked both officers for their in depth report. Members were pleased to see the Communities First movement in to central areas. Members asked what provisions were in place for families who were on the outskirts of a Community First Area and how the provisions could be accessed. Officers explained that no individuals would be refused help and each request would be referred to the appropriate point of access. Newsletters, etc promoting what is available to all. After a lengthy discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the updated report and its findings
- Receive further information following the outcome of the Ministers Statement

33. VALE, VALLEYS AND CARDIFF REGIONAL ADOPTION COLLABORATIVE ANNUAL REPORT 2016

The Chair welcomed Ms Angela Harris, Regional Adoption Manager to the meeting and invited her to present the report.

Ms Harris introduced herself to the Committee and explained the background of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative which is comprised of the adoption services of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf C.B.C , Merthyr C.B.C and Cardiff City Council and is one of five regional collaboratives which form part of the National Adoption Agency. The Regional Adoptions Manger explained that the report at Appendix 1 is the Annual Report which forms part of the Regulation 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and section 15(c) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Regulations) (Wales) 2015 and is required to be brought before Scrutiny.

Ms Harris explained the current position of the VVC to Members along with the detailed Annual Report and its findings.

Following presentation of the report Ms Harris responded to Members' questions.

A Co-opted Member thanked the Regional Adoption Manager for the feedback and honesty for admitting there were challenging and teething problems that were not envisaged. The Service Director Children's Services explained that it was a learning process and working with other Local Authorities and sharing different ways of working seems to be on the right track for the future.

Members were pleased to see positive outcomes regarding the timely placement of children, the recruitment of adopters and an improved service to birth parents.

Members asked respect of disruptions of placement of an adopted child how does this affect the children long term. Ms Harris explained that the pattern of disruption was in the very early stage and hopefully the effect on the child would be minimal.

In Conclusion, the Chairman thanked the Regional Adoption Manager for her in-depth report and the Committee **RESOLVED** to agree to receive future reports at an appropriate time.

The Chairman thanked all Members and Officers for their attendance.

B. STEPHENS - CHAIR

Meeting Closed at 18:45

These minutes are subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee