























## **HOW DOES SCRUTINY WORK IN RCT?**

The Scrutiny function helps to inform the decision making process and improve the way the Council works. It assesses what impact the Executive's policies and plans will have on the County Borough and its residents.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf the Scrutiny process is essential for the following reasons:-

- Holding the Executive, chief officers and senior members of staff to account for the discharge of its functions by examining and challenging decisions;
- Scrutinising and reviewing policies and practices within a cross-service remit, and assisting in the development of such policies and practices;
- Undertaking pre-decision scrutiny which adds value to reports through wider consultation and involves non executive councillors at the pre-decision stage;
- Assessing the Council's performance against its planned targets;
- Scrutinising the work of other partnerships such as the Cwm Taf Public Service Board; and
- Championing issues of local concern to residents and contribute to policy development and service improvement.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf, following the Council's Annual Meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015, the decision was taken to revise the scrutiny structure in order to improve the scrutiny arrangements and to ensure scrutiny in Rhondda Cynon Taf is promoting the best interests of its citizens. These arrangements continued to be in place during the 2016/17 municipal year and are as follows:

**Overview & Scrutiny Committee** - The role of this Committee is to co-ordinate the work of the four thematic scrutiny committees ensuring that each is delivering effectively, in essence, 'scrutinising the scrutineer'. In previous years the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees have sat on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee; under the current arrangements it is not felt appropriate as there could be occasion when they are summoned before the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. To address this, the Chairs and Vice Chairs now sit on the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee also deals with all Call-ins and decides which Scrutiny Committees will deal with any Councillor Calls for Action under the auspices of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 or under the requirements of the Police and Justice Act 2006 following validation by the Council's Monitoring Officer.

**Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee** - This Committee is responsible for scrutinising financial and operational performance; treasury management arrangements; the annual revenue budget consultation process; statutory performance reporting requirements; and monitoring the implementation of medium term financial planning.

**Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee** – This Committee is responsible for scrutinising all education provision from 3 – 19 year along with children's social services.

**Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee** – This Committee is responsible for the services provided by the Council which support the health and wellbeing of our communities and includes working with our partners such as Health Services. This includes adult social services as well as leisure services and public health and protection related services.

**Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Committee (and Crime & Disorder)** – This Committee is responsible for scrutinising public service delivery across a range of Council and public sector services. This includes frontline and corporate functions of the Council and includes environment and sustainable development and areas which contribute to prosperity such as economic development, regeneration and skills. The Committee is also the Council's designated Crime & Disorder Committee (under Sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006) and is required to meet at least once a year in this capacity.

### **THE AUDIT COMMITTEE**

The Council also has a separate Audit Committee. The purpose of the Audit Committee is to monitor the adequacy of the risk management framework and associated control environment; provide independent scrutiny of the Authority's financial and non financial performance to the extent that it affects the Authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment; and to oversee the financial reporting process.

The Audit Committee membership will include at least one lay member and the Chair of the Committee is decided upon by the Committee. The Council's external and internal auditors also attend committee meetings.

The Audit Committee is not a Scrutiny Committee. However, there are close links between the Audit Committee and scrutiny and if deemed appropriate, the Audit Committee will refer issues to scrutiny for consideration and to further assist this close alignment, the Chairman of the Audit Committee is an ex-officio member of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee.

### **Work Programmes**

Each Committee is responsible for setting and agreeing its own work programme by identifying a list of themes and topics which fall under the remit of each individual Scrutiny Committee. There is also an improved transition between the work programmes of both Cabinet and Scrutiny which has helped to monitor the individual work programmes and assist in identifying areas for pre-decision scrutiny. Following discussion with the Chair, Vice Chair and Scrutiny Members a practical, realistic and timetabled programme can then be developed for the municipal year. Throughout the year, there are a number of ways in which additional issues can be considered for inclusion in the Scrutiny Work Programme and ideas for inclusion may come from a number of sources such as:-

- Individual Councillors;
- Performance or budget monitoring information;
- Inspection reports;
- Referrals from Council/Cabinet/Audit or other scrutiny committees;

- Service users; and
- Monitoring the implementation of recommendations previously made by the Committee.

The Cabinet is also required to produce forward work programmes and Scrutiny Committees should keep abreast of forthcoming items or topics which may enable scrutiny to be involved in the development of Council policy prior to its formal consideration by Cabinet. It is important to bear in mind that an element of flexibility is applied to each individual work programme that provides Committees with the capacity to scrutinise new / urgent issues that arise during the year.

In 2015, as a consequence of the new scrutiny arrangements and given the size of the scrutiny work programmes, it was considered that work programmes for each of the Scrutiny Committees should become rolling working programmes over a period of two years. This would not only add value to the work but enable some of the more intense topics to be addressed in greater detail.

### **Methodologies (or approaches) to scrutiny reviews:-**

Each year the Scrutiny Committees undertake several pieces of work (reviews) that focus on particular issues and consider them in greater detail which result in recommendations being formulated which propose to change or deliver more positive results. There are a number of different reviews which may be undertaken and possible approaches include:-

#### **Reviews:-**

These reviews are undertaken by Working Groups or can be undertaken by the whole Committee and may include a mixture of interviews with relevant officers, research of best practice, meetings with service users themselves and consultation with wider parts of the community. They will have an agreed scope and a detailed project plan regarding evidence gathering and compilation.

#### **Short Reviews:-**

These follow the same principles as above but are completed over one or two meetings. They will have briefer scope and project plan but are as effective if there is a specific topic or when the issue is time critical.

Whatever the chosen method, the Scrutiny Committees need to assess and demonstrate why they have decided to conduct a specific review: ultimately, the individual work programme is key to effective scrutiny.

## **WHAT HAS SCRUTINY ACHIEVED IN 2016/17**

The following information is intended to provide a summary of the contributions to the Council's policy development and governance arrangements made by the Council's Scrutiny Committees between May 2016 and April 2017. Where recommendations have been agreed, the progress made to implement them will be monitored by the respective scrutiny committees during 2017/18.

### **Recycling Rates**

The Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee was concerned that as a Local Authority we have no mandatory powers to make people recycle and at the same time recognised the initiatives undertaken by the Council to improve performance. The Scrutiny Committee also recognised that improving participation among the residents of RCT was crucial to meeting the 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 targets set by Welsh Government.

During this municipal year Scrutiny completed its work in conjunction with officers from the Council's Recycling Service to improve recycling rates in an area of low participation. The Scrutiny Committee submitted two recommendations to the Executive which were received and accepted in principle by the Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure & Culture. The recommendations agreed were:

- a) That all Elected Members of the Council undertake training on the Recycling targets, contamination and the recycling collection system so that they can fully understand the service; and,
- b) That the project to increase and maintain a high level of participation in both dry and food recycling is rolled out to other areas across Rhondda Cynon Taf to support the Council meet its legislative targets.

The recycling rate for the County Borough (as per the performance indicator) has increased from 60.49% in 2015/16 to 64.69% in 2016/17 against a 2016/17 target of 62%.

### **Council Office Accommodation Working Group**

In line with the agreed work programme and continuing its work from 2015/16 the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee undertook their review which aimed to identify opportunities for more effective and efficient use of Council accommodation, including flexible working and 'hot desking'. In addition, as part of its review the Working Group had a key role in producing a more effective pro forma for the Community Asset Transfers process as part of the RCT Together Approach. In conclusion the Working Group submitted a report to Cabinet to advocate that the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy is implemented.

Since completion of the review of the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy, 6 office accommodation premises have been vacated that equates to a reduction of approximately 14% of the total office accommodation footprint. Of the 6 premises, 2 have been leased to external parties and work is progressing on the occupancy arrangements for the remaining 4.

In parallel with implementing the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy, agile working arrangements have been introduced where, for example, 5 hot desk locations have been set up during 2016/17 to help officers work more agilely across the County Borough (with further locations planned to be created in 2017/18).

### **Mobile Library Service**

In line with its work programme Scrutiny identified the Mobile Library Service as an area for review to better understand usage and barriers to usage in light of the service changes in 2014 and 2016. Scrutiny focussed on many areas such as analysis of usage and played an integral part in establishing the new mobile library routes in conjunction with the Library Service, which were implemented from June 2016. A Library Satisfaction Survey was undertaken in July 2016 to assess the impact of the changes upon service users; of the 180 respondents, key feedback included:

- 83% of mobile library users considered their mobile library to be 'Very Good'.
- 96% of residents use the same mobile library stop each time demonstrating the importance of mobile library stops;
- 83% of users considered their location of stop to be 'very good'; and
- 90% of users considered the standard of customer care at their mobile library to be 'very good'.

In total five recommendations were put forward to the Executive and agreed in principle which will further improve the service which is valued by its customers. The agreed recommendations can be viewed [here](#).

### **Governor Support**

The Governor Support Working Group published its report which included 10 recommendations in September 2016 (click [here](#) to view the recommendations) It is hoped that the recommendations will further support the recruitment and retention of the school governors who provide crucial support to the leadership and direction of schools. The recommendations were welcomed and agreed in principle by the Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning. In addition, members of the Working Group also contributed to the Welsh Government consultation document "Reform of School Governance: Regulatory Framework".

### **Number of Bids and Tenders Submitted by Local Businesses for Council Contracts**

Following referral from the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee due to performance being below target, the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee undertook a short review in 2015/16 to consider the 'number of local businesses submitting bid/tenders for Council contracts'. The Committee received a number of reports from the Council's Corporate Procurement Unit which enabled an assessment of the current provision of support for local businesses within the County Borough to be completed. As part of the review Scrutiny invited external stakeholders to their meetings.

The Committee identified that there are significant performance variations between reporting periods: performance was 55% for the period April to June 2015 and 76.42% for the full year (April 2015 to March 2016) against an annual target of 75%.

In 2016/17 the Public Service Delivery, Communities & prosperity Scrutiny Committee submitted one recommendation to the Executive which will revise the reporting frequency from quarterly to annual to provide a more meaningful picture of performance.

### **Supporting People to Live Independently at Home**

In 2015/16 the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee identified 3 key areas in need of further improvement, namely;

- Reducing the number of people aged 65+ that are placed in residential care homes;
- Delayed Transfers of Care; and
- Support for carers – Carers assessments.

It was agreed that this large piece of work would form part of a two year rolling work programme so as to broaden discussions with colleagues in Health and the Third Sector and to include the views of the representatives from OPAG (Older Person's Advisory Group) together with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Equality and the Welsh Language. During the first year Scrutiny assessed the Council's early intervention and prevention services and its long term care and support and home care services. Following on, consideration was also given to the Choice Protocol and invited representatives from the Cwm Taf UHB who delivered a presentation jointly with Local Authority Officers. This significant piece of work has culminated in a report which has produced 7 recommendations (to be submitted to the Executive in 2017/18 for its consideration).

### **Fuel Poverty**

The findings and three recommendations were reported to Council in June 2016 following the review which had been undertaken by members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee further to a Notice of Motion to Council at its meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2015. Members felt that the recommendations would strengthen the services available and opportunities to raise the profile of fuel poverty within Rhondda Cynon Taf, and help prioritise action on achieving an Affordable Warmth Strategy which would be explored by the appropriate Cabinet Portfolio holder.

Since the recommendations were agreed by Full Council on the 29<sup>th</sup> June 2016, the Welsh Government is scoping energy supply opportunities for Wales and on a local level a number of schemes have been delivered bringing approximately £3.4 million of external investment which relates to the following schemes:-

- Warm Zones 16-17 Tylorstown;
- Warm Homes (WG Arbed) 15-16 Glyncoch; and,
- Vibrant & Viable Places 'Heat & Save Ponty'.

### **Policy Development/Review**

Considering draft policy and providing Cabinet with the views of Scrutiny Members.

- 2017/18 Consultation on Revenue Budget Strategy;
- Understanding Our Communities: Draft Cwm Taf Wellbeing & Population Needs Assessment; and,



- Reform of School Governance: Regulatory Framework Consultation

### **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

Where scrutiny has commented on policy proposals prior to Cabinet's consideration providing an opportunity to influence Cabinet's decision making:

- Human Resources Policies;
- Digital Workplace – Agile Working;
- Discretionary Empty Property Grants Across RCT;
- Extra Care Strategy; and
- Director of Social Services Annual Report 2016/17.

### **Monitoring Performance/Progress**

Monitoring the Council's performance or monitoring the implementation of actions previously agreed:

- Director of Social Services Annual Report 2015/2016;
- Social Services Annual Representation & Complaints Report 2015/16;
- Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2015;
- Educational attainment at Foundation and Key Stages along with School categorisation;
- Esytyn Inspection Outcomes- Academic Year 2015/2016
- Quarterly budget & performance monitoring;
- Monitoring of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy;
- Rhondda Cynon Taf's Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Assessment Report 2015-2016;
- Children Looked After – Monitoring the educational outcomes of Children Looked After (CLA) in RCT during the academic year 2015/2016;
- Leisure Services Medium Term Strategy;
- Complaints of Maladministration made to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales during 2015/16; and,
- CSSIW Performance Review Meeting with the Chairs of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee (April 2017)

### **Call –Ins**

All Call-ins are dealt with by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and there were two during this municipal year:-

- 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016 - Provision of Dog Kennelling arrangements for Rhondda Cynon Taf: *“To request the Cabinet not to implement their intention to outsource the kennelling facility until all factors, including the delegated officer decision, consultation responses and the executive decision and reasons are the subject of proper scrutiny”*. The call-in was not upheld.
- 15<sup>th</sup> March 2017 - Call-In of the Key Officer Decision in relation to RCT Together Community Enabling Fund' - The reason for calling in the decision

was “Out of accord with Part 4 Rules of Procedure, Budget and Policy Framework rules 3a, 3b and 3c”. The call-in was not upheld.

## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### Terms of Reference:

To co-ordinate the work of the four thematic scrutiny committees and ensure that the work of each of these committees is effective. The committee is responsible for approving the work programmes developed by the four themed scrutiny committees to ensure deliverable, co-ordinated and outcome focused programmes of work. To fulfil the overview and scrutiny role in relation to “all Council” cross cutting themes which cut across the terms of reference of the four thematic scrutiny committees. The Committee is also responsible for dealing with all ‘Call-ins’ (under the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules).

### Overview from the Chairman



**County Borough Councillor  
L M Adams**

### Membership of the Committee:

County Borough Councillors  
L M Adams and G Smith (Chairman & Vice  
Chair respectively);  
County Borough Councillors J Bonetto, W J  
David, (Mrs) M E Davies, A S Fox, P Jarman,  
(Mrs) S J Jones, B Morgan, (Mrs) S Pickering,  
S Powderhill, S Rees-Owen, P Wasley and R  
Yeo.

I was pleased to be appointed as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the second year running, as it gave myself and Members of my Committee the opportunity to continue to challenge, not just the decisions made or to be made by the Executive but also the Members of the four themed Scrutiny Committees, as was the intention of the revised scrutiny arrangements in May, 2015 i.e. “Scrutinising the Scrutineer”.

### Call-In

The second and last meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were convened to consider Call-Ins.

The first Call-In was dealt with at a Special Meeting of the Committee convened on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2016 in respect of a decision taken by the Cabinet – Provision of Dog Kennelling Arrangements for Rhondda Cynon Taf. The reason for the Call-In being:

*“To request the Cabinet not to implement their intention to outsource the kennelling facility until all factors, including the delegated officer decision, consultation responses and the executive decision and reasons are the subject of proper scrutiny”.*

The meeting was attended by the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Wellbeing and Communities, each of whom responded to questions/queries raised by the three signatories of the Call-In and

Members of the Committee. The Call-in was unsuccessful i.e. not referred back to the Cabinet for reconsideration.

The second Call-In was dealt with at a Special Meeting of the Committee convened on the 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2017, which was the last meeting of the Committee held during the 2016/17 municipal year. The meeting was in line with the arrangements agreed at the Council's Annual General Meeting held on the 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2016 in that Chief Officer Delegated Decisions in respect of `Key Decisions` be open to scrutiny` and that they be subject to the same process in respect of `Call In` as any Cabinet Committee Decision. The Call-In was in respect of a Key Officer decision taken on the 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2017 - `RCT Together` Community Enabling Fund. The reason for the Call-In being:

“Out of accord with Part 4 Rules of Procedure Budget and Policy Framework rules 3a, 3b and 3c”

In my absence, the meeting was Chaired by my Vice-Chair, County Borough Councillor G.Smith and as with the previous Call-In, the Education Co-opted Members that sit on the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee were invited to the meeting. At the outset, the three Members making the Call-In made it clear that the `matter` that the decision was seeking to support was not the issue.

The Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Wellbeing and Communities was in attendance at this meeting to answer Members' questions regarding the subject matter of the Call-In.

Whilst the Call-In was unsuccessful, the Officers who were present acknowledged that the Decision Notice was poorly worded and could have been misinterpreted. The Officers also confirmed that the decision notice and accompanying report were not intended to trigger the release of any funds but were intended to support the request progressing to the next stage to enable the matter to be considered by the Executive during the 2017/18 financial year.

### **Cabinet Work Programme/Pre Scrutiny**

At its first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2016, Members were provided with the proposed list of matters requiring consideration by the Cabinet over the 2016/17 municipal year (which was presented to Members of the Cabinet on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2016) to ascertain if there were any topics that could undergo pre-scrutiny by this Committee or any of the four `themed` Scrutiny Committees.

The Chairs and Vice Chairs of the four themed Scrutiny Committees were invited to this meeting together with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee in order that they could contribute to this item of business. The Deputy Leader and the Director, Cabinet & Public Relations were also in attendance and both indicated that improvements had been made to the Cabinet Work Programme in the last year as shown by the revised scrutiny arrangements and the need for pre-scrutiny.











dedicating more time to each area, to properly consider the topics in depth, as well as making the best use of Officer and Member time (and that of the Education Co-opted Members, who were invited to all meetings).

With our new revised approach in place we set about implementing our work programme for the year ahead which included a number of topics which were carried forward from 2015/16 such as the 'Governor Support Working Group', the 'Children Looked After Scrutiny Recommendations Action Plan –update', 'The Seren Hub' as well as educational attainment and Safeguarding issues.

**Education** – I would like to deal with the education matters in the first instance:-

### **Education Attainment**

Throughout the year we have considered the educational attainment and school categorisation data for 2016 and have received reports and information on the Estyn Inspection outcomes. Alongside this, we have also received reports on the Central South Consortium's contribution to raising standards in schools throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf. I have continued to maintain close links with the education scrutiny chairs of the other constituent authorities of the Central South Consortium which will assist with our future work programmes. It has been encouraging to see that there has been an improvement in the education performance of our pupils for the third consecutive year across four key stages in a range of performance measures. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee will continue to monitor the educational attainment of our pupils in the future.

### **Free School Meals**

We acknowledged that this is a priority for the Council; however, we challenged Officers in respect of our concerns around closing the gap for those children eligible for free school meals (eFSM). In view of this we requested a further update relating to the gap in performance between pupils eFSM and those not eFSM. At that stage we were pleased to hear that the gap between the achievement of learners eligible for free school meals compared to those learners not eligible had reduced (albeit there were schools who were still performing below the three year rolling average target set by Welsh Government). We are committed to monitoring the progress of those pupils who are eligible for free school meals and will make this a priority for our Committee in the coming years. We also understood that the gender variation in performance that we highlighted last year has continued in 2016/17 and therefore we have also made this a priority area for future monitoring.

### **Estyn School Inspection Outcomes**

Following consideration of the Council's Year End Performance Report 2015/16 Members of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee raised concern in respect of the Estyn School inspections outcomes and requested that the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee investigate what support is being provided to the 11 schools out of 19 inspected in 2015/16 that required further monitoring and how this compares across Wales. We did just that and an additional report came before us on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2016 (Education Committee) which responded to our concerns. We agreed that having termly update reports to Committee,

particularly in respect of those schools categorised by the Consortium as in need of greater levels of support, would enable us to monitor our schools more efficiently.

### **Fixed Term Inclusions**

During the last academic year, the focus was to reduce the number of permanent and fixed term exclusions within secondary schools and this has been very successful. Focus within the service will now shift from secondary to primary schools, supporting and challenging primary schools on their rates of exclusion. With that in mind we requested that future reports include information relating to the tracking of pupils from Primary to Secondary schools so that we would be able to properly understand their progress. We had also previously requested that additional benchmarking information be included within the annual reports so as to better inform our understanding of performance, particularly within RCT. Scrutiny found this information a useful tool when considering the Local Authority's ranking across Wales. We welcomed the inclusion of case studies which served to highlight the focussed interventions which are in place to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions and the graduated responses which have been strengthened to facilitate re-engagement with pupils. We also requested contextual information to support the reported data. Once again we will continue to monitor this important area and continue to assess the reporting mechanisms in place.

### **Governor Support**

We concluded our review this year and the final report was considered and endorsed by the Children & Young People Scrutiny (Education) Committee in September 2016. We formulated ten strong and secure recommendations which we firmly believe will improve the challenges faced by the Governor Support Service in respect of recruitment and retention of school governors as well as suitable training for governors and the development of a new Service Level Agreement (SLA) between schools and the Governor Support Service. On the 1<sup>st</sup> February (Education Committee) we received an Executive response from the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning who recognised our efforts in producing this important piece of work and we were delighted that all ten recommendations were accepted in principle. The Working Group took great interest in this piece of work and of course we will continue to monitor the implementation of the recommendations in the next municipal year to ensure that they have been progressed.

In addition, the Working Group met in January 2017 to contribute to the Welsh Government's Reform of School Governance Regulatory Framework consultation. We formulated our response which has been incorporated into that of the Local Authority and together they were presented to Welsh Government in February 2017. It was a productive exercise and we look forward to receiving the outcomes of the consultation process to a future meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.

### **Children Looked After (CLA)**

In December 2016 (Combined Committee) we received an update in respect of our work which had been undertaken in 2015/16 regarding the educational

attainment of children looked after. A separate Working Group had explored issues around placement mix and the cost of out of county placements, and both were presented to the Executive where all recommendations were accepted. At that time it was agreed by the relevant Cabinet Members that the Committee would monitor the progress of the recommendations by way of an action plan. We understand that for 2016/17 the Children's Services Division aimed to continue the focus on reducing CLA and has set a target of safely reducing CLA numbers by 5%. We found that there has been further increase in the number of children and young people who are looked after per 10,000 population (aged 18 and under) within Rhondda Cynon Taf. Numbers have increased by 11% from 2015/16 to 2016/17 and therefore it remains crucial that Scrutiny is instrumental in ensuring momentum is maintained whilst assessing its progress. Following consideration of the action plan Scrutiny raised concerns in respect of data collection by Welsh Government which is released at different timescales to our local authority making it difficult to make comparisons. We requested that this issue be reported back to us at a future meeting to enable the Committee to reassess the position.

### **Seren Hub**

We were pleased to welcome students from Treorchy Comprehensive School and Hawthorn High School to our Education Committee in November 2016 to share their experiences of the Seren Network with us. The Rhondda Cynon Taf Hub is one of three initial pilot schemes funded by Welsh Government and aims to support Wales' brightest sixth formers achieve their academic potential and gain access to leading universities. We were inspired by the students' experiences of the Hub which has provided them with hands on support and advice in preparing for their UCAS Applications and rehearsing for University interviews. We look forward to receiving further reports in respect of this inspirational scheme.

The following section is dedicated to Children's Services:-

### **Safeguarding**

A large part of our work last year was around safeguarding and making sure that our children and young people were being cared for in the best way possible. We made a commitment then that this issue would remain on our work programme for this municipal year. In October 2016 (Combined Committee) Scrutiny received the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2015/16 including the Annual Plan 2016/17. At that meeting we were assured that we would be given the opportunity to undertake pre-scrutiny on all future reports prior to publication and that any comments in respect of the 2016/17 plan would be considered.

At our last Scrutiny meeting (Children's Services) in March 2017 we received information in respect of the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board's Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy and Action Plan. We learned that during recent years and months, high profile reports have provided RCT with the opportunity to re-assess its multi agency response to child sexual exploitation. We were pleased to hear that much has been achieved in this area such as 191 staff having received training in relation to child sexual exploitation since July 2016, publication of a leaflet for night-time vendors to provide information about how to raise concerns and processes are now in place for mapping cohort intelligence in a way that will maximise the potential to disrupt perpetrators in their tracks and provide

management information about the number of cases and outcomes, known as MACSE. There are still further developments to be made of course and we want to be kept updated with all of them at every step of the way.

During 2014 the Wales Audit Office undertook a review of the assurance and accountability arrangements of the Council for ensuring that it has in place adequate safeguarding policies and procedures. We subsequently received a progress report in the form of an action plan which responded to the four recommendations made by the Wales Audit Office. In March 2017 (Children's Services) we received an update in respect of progress made by the Council in response to the Wales Audit Office report 'Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding Children Follow Up'. We acknowledged that the Wales Audit Office reports are key to ensuring that scrutiny plays an integral part in supporting improved outcomes and we agreed that the actions implemented to date by the Council are continuing to address the four recommendations made by the Wales Audit Office. We do however wish to be kept fully informed of progress and will look to have a further update during the next municipal year; it being appropriate that safeguarding remains a top priority for this Committee.

### **National Transfer of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers Children in Wales**

At our Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services) in September 2016 we had the opportunity to contribute to the report of the National Transfer of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers Children in Wales before its presentation to Cabinet. Scrutiny formed a view that I, the Vice Chair and one other Member from the Committee would hold an additional meeting with the relevant Officers so that our views, representing those of the Scrutiny Committee, would be captured and incorporated into the report. We considered numerous issues that face our Local Authority when supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children such as the availability of specialist services and safeguarding concerns as well as the practical considerations such as appropriate translators and finding placements. We agreed that due consideration should be given to ensuring that the appropriate capacity and support is in place to support these vulnerable young people and we endeavour to participate further in these discussions as they arise in the future.

### **Focussed Inspection of Fostering Services 2016**

We had the opportunity to consider the progress made in response to the proposal arising from the CSSIW report following its inspection of Fostering Services in January 2016 and were asked to form a view as to the adequacy of progress in respect of the recommendations arising from the CSSIW report. We questioned key officers and found a number of improved areas such as the process of matching of children with foster carers and better consultation and engagement with children and were pleased to see that although there were areas that required further attention, there were none the CCSIW felt needed immediate attention. At the meeting in February 2017 (Combined Committee) we agreed that we would continue to monitor arrangements for Fostering Services within RCT.

### **Monitoring**

We have continued to monitor important documents which have come before us this municipal year such as the Director of Social Services Annual Report

2015/2016, the Social Services Representations and Complaints Report (April 2015-March 2016), the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service Audit Report, the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative Annual Report 2016 and Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan.

### **Tackling Poverty**

We received a progress report in respect of the implementation of Tackling Poverty Review Recommendations to our Committee in November 2016 (Children's Services) which was to update Members on the progress made since the report to Cabinet on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015 that set out the recommendations following a strategic review into the Council's approach to tackling poverty. The review found that better integration of 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. We learned that 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. We look forward to receiving further updates in respect of the work during the next municipal year.

### **Training**

As a Committee we are always looking to improve our skills and knowledge so that we can further strengthen our ability to undertake effective scrutiny of the issues which fall within the remit of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. Last year we undertook training on the Children's Services functions so that we could improve our understanding of it; this year we received training in respect of delivering effective scrutiny for positive outcomes and different ways of working in accordance with the Wellbeing and Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015. The session was jointly delivered by Local Authority Officers and the WLGA.

### **Conclusion**

As we have progressed the Scrutiny Committee has grown in confidence and I feel we have become an effective tool in helping to improve outcomes for our children and young people. I would like to thank all Members and Co-opted Members who have brought enthusiasm and commitment to Scrutiny this year.

## HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### Terms of Reference:

The overview & scrutiny role in connection with scrutinising services which support the Health & Wellbeing of our communities. The Committee considers adult social services as well as other factors which contribute to the health & wellbeing of the County Borough such as Leisure Services, Housing and Public Health & Wellbeing.

### Overview from the Chairman



**County Borough Councillor  
R W Smith**

### Membership of the Committee:

County Borough Councillors

R W Smith and (Mrs) S Rees (Chairman & Vice Chair respectively)

County Borough Councillors: (Mrs) A Calvert, W J David, C Davies, J Davies, (Mrs) M E Davies, A S Fox, I Pearce, (Mrs) A Roberts, G Stacey, (Mrs) M Tegg, L Walker, and D H Williams

In 2015/16 we committed to undertaking a two year rolling work programme so that we could closely monitor and scrutinise the 'Supporting People to Live Independently at Home' agenda which we acknowledged would be a significant undertaking. We had previously identified the following three key areas which we considered warranted scrutiny, as they were in need of further improvement, namely:

- *Reducing the number of people aged 65+ that are placed in residential care homes;*
- *Delayed Transfers of Care; and*
- *Support of Carers – carers' assessments.*

### Supporting People to Live Independently at Home

During the first year we focussed our work on the primary health care support services which include GP's, Community Nursing, Community Pharmacists and the third Sector. This tied in with the regular updates we received (and will continue to receive in 2017/2018), in respect of the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the primary focus being to increase the preventative services so as to minimise the escalation of need to a critical level. During this municipal year, as intended, we invited representatives from Cwm Taf University Health Board to further our discussions around the Choice Protocol for patients requiring placement in residential or nursing care. We conducted a rigorous line of questioning in relation to issues relating to Primary Health Care to our colleagues in Health as well as Officers from the Local Authority who presented jointly. Scrutiny considered the principles of the choice of

accommodation protocol which had been developed jointly with the Council and analysed Delayed Transfers of Care data provided as part of the presentation.

### **Delayed Transfers of Care (DToC)**

As part of the joint presentation in November 2016 Scrutiny considered Delayed Transfers of Care which is measured in terms of the numbers of patients delayed and by the number of hospital bed days which they occupy. We learned that it is a problem in its own right and also a consequence of other issues such as:-

- Care homes – the availability of places, top-up fees and closures;
- Effective engagement of Primary Health Care;
- Availability of supported accommodation;
- Patients with complex needs; and,
- Families and expectations.

The proportion of Delayed Transfers of Care for social care reasons (per 1,000 population aged 75 or over) reduced to 6.79% in 2015/2016 compared with 9.44% in 2014/15, although DToC increased to 7.10%. As per previous quarters, we learned that performance was adversely affected by ongoing high levels of demand along with high levels of staff absence resulting in assessment delays. However, we were pleased to learn that the implementation of the new regional Stay Well @ Home Team is progressing well and will significantly improve patient flow and discharge leading to improved outcomes and future performance. In view of the drop in performance Scrutiny agreed that further consideration should be given to the issue of Delayed Transfers of Care in the next municipal year, which has been reflected in the recommendation going forward to the Executive in 2017/18 as part of our review.

### **Stay Well @ Home Service**

We learned that Rhondda Cynon Taf has been working in collaboration with the Cwm Taf Health Board and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council to develop the new Stay Well @ Home Service which will be fully implemented in the Spring 2017. The Service will create a multi disciplinary team of staff, including Rhondda Cynon Taf social workers based at two acute hospital sites of Prince Charles Hospital (Merthyr Tydfil) and the Royal Glamorgan Hospital (Llantrisant). This model supports the Council's priority of 'supporting independent lives for everyone' as people will be cared for as much as possible in their own homes therefore avoiding unnecessary hospital admissions and discharging people home from hospital as early as possible. We welcomed information regarding this new model of care and will be monitoring its development.

### **Extra Care Housing Strategy**

As part of our work to scrutinise the transfer of residents from Maesyffynnon Care Home to other care home facilities (our review commenced in 2015/16 with the final report published to Cabinet in 2016/17), Scrutiny was made aware of the Council's move towards a more enabling culture which was looking to develop alternative models of accommodation, including extra care housing schemes. With this in mind, we were keen to visit the Council's first extra care housing scheme which is located in Talbot Green and in October 2016 we did just that. We were impressed by the level of care which allows residents to live more independent

lives and furthermore, we are determined that progress made in this area will be followed up and we will look to further assess the Extra Care Housing Strategy in 12 months time.

### **Support for Carers**

As part of the review, scrutiny focussed on the need to improve the Council's performance in respect of carers' assessments and support for carers in general. We considered the Annual Carers Strategy Report in October 2015 which provided us with an understanding of the work being undertaken to identify and support carers. We considered the report to be positive and highlighted the collaborative work undertaken by Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf Councils, together with the Cwm Taf University Health Board to improve support, information and recognition of carers. We recognise the need to continue to monitor carers' performance in relation to statutory performance measures and wider carer related matters in general.

### **Supporting People to Live Independently at Home Review- Conclusions**

Reflecting our commitment to involve external witnesses in our review, we invited representatives from the Older Person's Advisory Group (OPAG) as well as the Cabinet Members for Adult Social Services and Children's Services, Equalities and the Welsh Language to our meeting in March 2017, as reflected in our terms of reference. Their feedback was instrumental in formulating our final report. At the end of our two year rolling work programme we acknowledged the enormous amount of work that we, as a Committee, have undertaken and therefore concluded that we should continue to monitor and review many of the headings which are interlinked and which we felt warranted further scrutiny. Some of these areas include the preventative services in conjunction with key partners, the delayed transfer of care performance, the carer's performance in relation to statutory performance measures and wider carer related matters in general. We will continue to monitor the implementation of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 which has influenced the processes, systems and procedures which have been revised to meet the requirements of the Act. In conclusion, we formulated seven recommendations which will be reported to the Executive for its consideration in 2017/18; they reflect our desire to continue to drive required improvements forward in these hugely important areas.

### **Maesyffynnon**

As mentioned earlier, our review to oversee the process of the transfer of residents of Maesyffynnon Residential Care Home to alternative appropriate placements in accordance with CSSIW care home closure guidance commenced in 2015/16. A small working group was established consisting of the Chair, Vice Chair along with the local Members for Aberaman North which was tasked to oversee the transfer of 19 residents from Maesyffynnon to Tegfan or Troedyrhiw Residential Care Homes or to other care homes of their choice. On the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2016, Cabinet took the decision to initiate a six week consultation process regarding the preferred option as identified in the report which was to 'Permanently close the Home and develop alternative Extra Care housing provision either by redeveloping the existing site or on an alternative site in the Cynon Valley area.' The working group was informed that as part of the



consultation process all residents in the area of Aberaman North had received a mail drop and all staff, residents and their known representatives had also been notified. Throughout the process we were pleased to note that staff who had worked at the Maesyffynnon Care Home held regular meetings with the Service Director, Adult Services so they could be fully briefed on progress. Staff, carers and residents were also afforded the opportunity to undertake visits to an Extra Care facility (at that time in a neighbouring authority) so as to fully understand the diverse model of care which could be provided. Having followed the transfer of residents into their alternative accommodation, the working group concluded that the transfer had gone smoothly and that all residents had settled into their new homes. We noted that residents had been complimentary with regards to how they had been treated throughout the process and one resident had returned home following an eighteen month stay in residential care. In taking forward learning from the experience, the working group formulated three recommendations for submission to the Executive in 2016/2017 which were accepted in principle.

Despite the substantial workload which arose from our review into Supporting People to Live Independently at Home, there were also a number of other areas we identified as requiring on-going attention from our 2015/16 work programme, namely the MASH evaluation and the contribution Leisure Services makes to health & wellbeing.

### **MASH Evaluation**

At its Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2016, we received the Cwm Taf MASH Annual Report 2015/16 which demonstrated that the service has made significant progress in its first year of operation, that all Cwm Taf MASH partners are committed to building upon those early achievements and that the service has received positive feedback from stakeholders. The report highlighted areas for further development and improvement for 2016/17 and Scrutiny agreed that there would be value in receiving regular quarterly updates to further evaluate the progress of MASH against its initial strategic aims and objectives.

### **Leisure**

Following on from our pre-scrutiny of the draft Medium Term (2015-20) Strategic Plan for Leisure Services for Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2015/16, we were keen to review the strategy to ensure regular oversight of the pressure points within the strategy. We wanted to ensure that its vision was still providing opportunities to the residents of RCT to be able to undertake regular exercise, as part of a healthy lifestyle, to maintain and improve their health and well being. With that in mind we received an update in February 2017 which outlined the Health & Wellbeing journey from 2012 to date. Over £5 million capital investment has improved facilities and the customer care experience which in turn has resulted in a 19% increase in the monthly membership. The number of health & fitness users has increased by 18%, from 498,000 users in 2012 to a projected 585,000 users in 2017. We also learned that there have been a number of health developments across the County Borough such as;

- 20 sessions per week for customers leaving the exercise referral;

- Promotion of leisure centre programmes to doctor surgeries and Cwm Taf Health Board;
- Development of an in-house training arm to qualify staff to exercise referral level;
- Partnership with Communities 1<sup>st</sup> offering intervention programmes in hard to reach communities with fully supported training sessions;
- Development of Chair Based Aerobics Sessions, Splash STARS, Relax Children's sessions and Multi Sport Sessions; and,
- Introduction of additional Back Care, Joint Care and Cardiac Rehabilitation sessions therefore catering for more residents with specific medical conditions normally excluded from physical activity.

Scrutiny welcomed the developments and felt encouraged by the range of activities currently in place to support our citizens to remain healthy and improve their wellbeing.

### **Pre-Scrutiny**

In February 2017, we undertook pre scrutiny on the discretionary empty property grants across RCT which provided us with an opportunity to contribute to this hugely important issue of helping to bring long term empty properties back into use. We received a comprehensive presentation in respect of the grants which compliment a number of other approaches and products available such as the Houses into Homes Loan Scheme. However, we had concerns in respect of the Council's website which we felt needed improving in order to ensure that information relating to the discretionary empty property grants can be disseminated to as many of our residents as possible. Our views have been fed back to the Executive so that we can help to further increase the number of empty properties brought back into use and also better promote the wider Empty Property Strategy.

### **Consultation**

We were afforded the opportunity to feed into the consultation relating to the Learning Disability Joint Statement of Strategic Intent. For this piece of work we felt that a Working Group would be better placed to deal with the topic in greater detail and report back to the Scrutiny Committee with its views. The Working Group welcomed the positive report but felt that more resources could be invested at the early intervention stage to help identify individual needs sooner and provide appropriate support to families. We also suggested that our colleagues on the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee should have the opportunity to comment on the draft report. The views of the Working Group will be reported back to the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in 2017/18.

### **Social Services Annual Representations & Complaints Report**

We formed a Working Group to consider the Social Services Annual Representations & Complaints Report which provided us with an overview of the operation and effectiveness of the Council's statutory Social Services complaints procedure between April 2015 and March 2016. The Working Group met on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2016 with a view to reporting our findings back to the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. We considered the report and data relating to the summary, nature and number of complaints and compliments for both Adult and

Children's Services and requested that we have sight of the all Wales comparison data so that we could better understand the Council's performance in a wider context. We concluded that Social Services has in place a robust and effective complaints procedure which informs future developments and improvements and helps meet the needs of its service users. Both the complaints and compliments received within the period provided valuable feedback regarding the quality of the service and serve to identify the areas of under performance as well as those areas that perform well. It also tells us how service users are receiving the information relating to the implementation of the Social Services & Well Being (Wales) Act. We reported our findings back to the Scrutiny Committee in December 2016.

### **Commissioned Services – Home Care**

At our meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2017, Scrutiny learned that a Domiciliary Home Care Project Board had been set up to oversee the retender process of the Council's independent sector domiciliary care contracts which had expired in September 2016. The new contracts have brought with them a number of advantages including a greater focus on promoting people's independence and moving away from the traditional approach to home care which may have promoted increased dependency. Scrutiny was advised that during the transition period, some concerns were raised regarding service provision in relation to late calls, missed calls, and medication issues. All concerns had been investigated and appropriate action taken and Scrutiny requested regular updates on the current performance of the Home Care Providers and assessment of potential risk to future meetings of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

### **CSSIW Performance Review Meeting**

In April 2017 I met with officers from the CSSIW to discuss the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's progress in meeting quality standards during this municipal year. Overall I received positive comments regarding our work programme, particularly in respect of the Supporting People to Live Independently at Home review. The CSSIW was particularly pleased to note that the 7 recommendations we formulated reflect the medium to long term nature of the programme of work and support the requirement for continued Scrutiny. In essence we have set the forward work programme for 2017/18.

### **Public Health & Protection and Trading Standards**

This year we learned more about our Public Health & Protection and Trading Standards divisions of the Council, specifically their roles in protecting our vulnerable consumers and enforcing our food laws:-

At its meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2016, we welcomed a presentation in respect of the Draft Food Standards Agency (FSA) following the full audit of the Council's Food Law Enforcement Service, carried out in April 2016. Twenty four individual recommendations were made by the auditors in relation to 10 specific areas of the service. A detailed response to the Draft Report and a Draft Action Plan had been prepared to address the 24 recommendations identified in the audit report and Scrutiny was invited to comment on the recommendations. We felt that the recommendations made by the auditors were constructive and acknowledged that the draft Action Plan prepared by the Public Health & Protection Service

adequately responded to the recommendations, many of which had already been addressed by the Local Authority.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> February 2017 we considered the four aspects of the Trading Standards role that protect vulnerable consumers:-

- Doorstep Crime
- Age Restricted Sales and Illicit Tobacco
- Anti-Counterfeiting
- Scams and Safeguarding

In conclusion, we found that Trading Standards plays an important role in protecting vulnerable persons and disadvantaged communities and is continually searching for new ways of operating which will provide the best outcome to support both reputable traders and the consumers within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

### **Conclusion**

This year has been an incredibly busy year for the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee but a fulfilling one. We have seen a range of scrutiny work being undertaken and progressed so that we can challenge some of the Council's most important public facing issues. I am very grateful to my Vice Chair for her support and dedication throughout the year as too the Members of the Scrutiny Committee and officers for the contribution they have made to scrutiny in 2016/2017.

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

### **Terms of Reference**

The overview and scrutiny role in connection with scrutinising public service delivery across a range of Council services. The Committee considers areas which contribute to prosperity and also community safety issues. It is the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Committee (pursuant to Section 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006).

### **Overview from the Chairman**



**County  
Councillor  
G R Davies**

**Borough**

### **Membership of the Committee:**

County Borough Councillors

G R Davies and S A Bradwick (Chairman & Vice Chair respectively)

County Borough Councillors: (Mrs) J Bonetto, S Carter, (Mrs) A Davies, (Mrs) L De Vet, J Elliott, G Holmes, P Howe, W L Langford, (Mrs) S Pickering, , M Weaver, T Williams, R Yeo

The past year has proven to be a very busy and exciting one for the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee since the Council revised its scrutiny structure, moving away from a structure which reflected the directorates of the Council to a more thematic approach. The Committee has responsibility for scrutinising such areas as frontline services and corporate functions delivered by the Council. The Committee has been diligent and thorough in scrutinising an array of topics this year.

In particular I would like to highlight a few areas of work which I believe have positively contributed to the work of the Council. We have continued to monitor the Council's recycling performance to ensure that the overall municipal recycling rate within Rhondda Cynon Taf met its target set by Welsh Government. As a Local Authority we have no mandatory powers to make people recycle and in view of the Recycling target of 58% set by Welsh Government for 2015/16 the Scrutiny Committee realised that improving participation amongst its residents was crucial to improving the overall municipal rates.

In October 2016 we arranged for our Committee meeting to coincide with a tour of the integrated waste management facility in Bryn Pica as well as undertaking a safari style tour of the Landfill and recycling site. The facility provides a variety of waste recycling and disposal services to the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. In November 2016 the Committee Members were invited to undertake a tour of the facilities at Viridor in Cardiff which aims to 'transform' waste into the items and

energy that society will need tomorrow. Both tours were informative and insightful and represent services which have a significant impact on the residents of the County Borough. Members felt that all schools within RCT would benefit from visiting the Education Centre at Viridor.

At our meeting held on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2016 we were pleased to receive the response from the Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure & Culture in person to the recommendations made following our review into recycling participation rates across RCT. The Cabinet Member formally thanked members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee for their report and recommendations which she considered would positively impact upon service delivery in this area. Both recommendations were accepted in principle and their implementation will be monitored throughout the next municipal year. We hope that our recommendations will continue to contribute to achieving further improvements over the next twelve months.

This year the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee completed its review of the Council's mobile library service which it commenced during the last municipal year. As part of our review we received briefings, reviewed the mobile library stops, undertook an analysis of use and assessed the customer satisfaction survey which was carried out in July 2016. I believe that our findings and recommendations will support the development of the mobile library service at a time when it has undergone significant changes, as well as responding to the feedback of the residents who regularly use the service. As a result of the review Committee endorsed the findings of the customer feedback survey which demonstrated a high level of customer satisfaction amongst the users of the mobile library service and formulated five recommendations which were accepted in principle by the Executive.

The Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee plays an important role in assessing performance across a range of Council services such as Highways, Waste Services, Economic Development and Community Safety. The Committee considered the following areas during 2016/17:-

### **Reviews**

We identified the following reviews during the 2015/16 municipal year and were finalised this year as part of our rolling two year work programme. They were conducted by the whole Scrutiny Committee over a number of meetings resulting in formal reports being submitted to the Executive for its consideration:-

- Participation Rates in Recycling across RCT –. Our review involved Members undertaking joint work with officers from the Council's Recycling Service in Cilfynydd (the chosen area of low participation) to improve the overall recycling rates for the County Borough. Our review culminated in 2015/16 with a report being published in 2016/17. Since the review the recycling rate for the County Borough has increased from 60.49% in 2015/16 to 64.69% in 2016/17 against a National target of 62%.
- The Number of Local Businesses Submitting Bids/Tenders for Council Contracts – In 2015/16 we undertook a review in this area following referral from the

Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee of the key performance exception which had underperformed. The performance was 55% for the period April to June 2015 and 76.42% for the full year (April 2015 to March 2016) against an annual target of 75%. We met with a number of key stakeholders from the local business community and Business Wales in order to assess the current provision of support from the Council's Corporate Procurement Unit. Scrutiny identified the significant performance variations between reporting periods and concluded that by revising the reporting timescale to an annual reporting frequency would reflect a more meaningful picture. The final report and recommendation were submitted and accepted by the Cabinet;

- Rhondda Cynon Taf Mobile Library Service Review – In February 2016 we commenced our review into the Mobile Library Service to better understand useage and barriers to useage following the service change in 2014. We were instrumental in reviewing and agreeing the new mobile library stops which were implemented from June 2016. We also received the results of the Library Satisfaction Survey which had been undertaken in July 2016 and provided feedback from 180 respondents in respect of key points relating to the current Mobile Library Service. We found that:-
- the importance of the mobile library stops as 96% of residents use the same mobile library stop each time;
- 83% of users considered their location of stop to be 'very good';
- 90% of users considered the standard of customer care at their mobile library to be 'very good' and,
- Taking everything into account 83% of mobile library users considered their mobile library to be 'Very Good'.

Scrutiny has completed its review and formulated five recommendations which have been accepted in principle by the Executive.

### **Pre-Scrutiny**

Whilst considering topics for inclusion on its Scrutiny Work Programme for the municipal year 2016/17 the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee referred to the Cabinet Work Programme and identified 'HR Policies Update' as an area in which they wished to undertake pre-scrutiny. This would provide the Committee with the opportunity to comment on its content before it being presented to the Council's Cabinet.

The meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2016 provided the Committee with the opportunity to scrutinise and comment on the Council's Dignity at Work and Grievance policies, which had been subject to a review by the Human Resources Review Team but required further consideration by the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee. The Cabinet Member for Council Business and Human Resources also attended the meeting and was supported by the Council's HR Advisor. In conclusion Members of the Scrutiny Committee were able to influence its content prior to its consideration by Cabinet.

## **Monitoring**

This year we requested regular updates from the Director, Highways & Streetcare Services in respect of recycling data and targets which have served to strengthen our monitoring role in overseeing the Council's recycling performance. At our meetings held on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2017 we received detailed progress reports which prompted questions and comments from Members. We have also continued to receive updates in respect of the Community Recycling Centres within the County Borough which contribute to the overall municipal recycling rate. Members welcomed the clear improvements that emerged from these sessions which demonstrate that RCT is achieving and exceeding the nationally set target of 62% (actual performance for 2016/17 64.69%). It was reported that the Community Recycling Centres within RCT greatly contribute to the overall municipal recycling figures and reached a target of 88.51% for 2016/17. However, we recognise the importance of continued awareness campaigns.

We will also continue to monitor the Key Performance Indicator (LPRO107 % of bids/tenders submitted by local businesses for Council contracts) which had initially been referred to us by the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee.

In December 2016 the Committee welcomed the Chief Executive Officer and Director of Homes & Communities of Trivallis (formerly RCT Homes) to our Committee so that we could discuss with them their involvement in the Council's recycling initiatives. Committee sought assurance from the Officers that they will further support the current partnership arrangements between Trivallis and Rhondda Cynon Taf to ensure that everyone contributes to the municipal recycling rates. The session was positive and encouraging and covered many topics. Members of the Committee and Trivallis agreed to meet again in the future with a view to maintaining existing relationships between officers and Elected Members.

Other areas where the Committee has undertaken monitoring of the Council's performance during 2016/17 has been in relation to RCT's Welsh Public Library Standards Assessment Report and the Maladministration Complaints Investigated by the Ombudsman's Office 2015/16 both of which had produced positive overall results for this Council.

## **Briefing Information**

The Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee has received information/updates on specific topics relevant to our scrutiny committee. This has enabled Scrutiny to remain focussed on the range of service areas/functions within its remit:-

- Maintenance of Grass Areas in RCT;
- Streetworks: Skips & Scaffolding;
- Highways/Transportation infrastructure Investment Programme;
- Implementation of the Tackling Poverty Review Recommendations; and,
- Review of Car Park Charges in RCT.

(Following its meeting in October 2016, Committee requested that a fact sheet is compiled by the Parking Services and Streetworks Manager to assist them identify



and report incidents of non compliance regarding skips and scaffolding in their communities).

Throughout the year we have also responded to important issues as they arise, for example, we received an update in respect of Amgen Cymru which had been the subject of publicity. We requested urgent clarification on several matters and following a question and answer session with the relevant Officer we felt satisfied that our concerns had been addressed. We will continue to maintain an element of flexibility towards our future work programme so that Scrutiny can respond to issues as they arise.

### **Consultation**

Scrutiny contributed to the Council's Dog Fouling consultation at its meeting in March 2017. The issue of dog fouling is a nationwide problem and one that the Council of RCT is looking to address by clamping down on irresponsible dog owners. Scrutiny considered the proposal to introduce a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) as well as seeking resident's views on a number of other areas which are important matters for our local communities. Members welcomed the consultation which will have a direct input from the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf as well as many other stakeholders. Scrutiny supported the proposals and formulated a response which has been incorporated in to the Council's formal consultation process.

### **Crime & Disorder Committee**

The Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee is the Council's designated Crime & Disorder Committee (under sections 19 & 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006) and is required to hold at least one meeting per year. The Committee met on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and we invited Sally Burke, the Chief Superintendent and Divisional Commander, South Wales Police and Mr Lee Jones, Assistant Police & Crime Commissioner to the meeting who were supported by officers from the Public Health & Protection Division of the Council.

The Committee was very pleased to be able to hold its Crime & Disorder Committee at the new Aberdare Community School where we received an update in relation to the strategic projects and priorities of the Community Safety Partnership (CPS) in Cwm Taf following the review of the Community Safety Partnership landscape in 2016. Members also considered the policing priorities for South Wales through the Police & Crime Reduction Plan.

Once again Scrutiny conducted a vigorous line of questioning to all those present in respect of the thematic priorities and in light of concerns raised by the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee in relation to the evaluation of performance of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub being undertaken by the Police Service in September 2016:-

- Quality of Life (Crime Reduction, Anti Social Behaviour);
- Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence;
- Integrated Offender Management;
- Community Cohesion & Contest; and,
- Substance Misuse.

In conclusion Scrutiny acknowledged that the Cwm Taf Community Safety Partnership has undergone considerable change in 2016/17 and work has been undertaken to streamline the organisational arrangements to create a more sustainable model. Members have asked for the Crime & Disorder Committee to meet on a more frequent basis so that we can scrutinise performance and monitor the joint services in greater detail at a time when changes to the Cwm Taf Community Safety Partnership are progressing.

### **Conclusion**

I am pleased to say that we have, once again, worked closely with the relevant Cabinet Members this year who have welcomed our reviews and subsequent recommendations and I am confident that our work has made a difference. Over the year we have held 8 committee meetings and Members have attended a number of other scrutiny events such as work programming meetings, pre-meetings prior to Committee and several off site meetings/visits. I would like to thank all Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee, including my Vice Chairman, for their valuable contribution this year.

## FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Terms of Reference:** This Committee is responsible for scrutinising financial and operational performance; treasury management arrangements; the annual revenue budget consultation process; statutory performance reporting requirements and monitoring the implementation of medium term financial planning decisions.

### Overview from the Chairman



**County Borough Councillor  
J Watts**

#### **Membership of the Committee:**

County Borough Councillors

J Watts and (Mrs) J S Ward (Chairman & Vice Chair respectively)

County Borough Councillors: S Bradwick, G R Davies, S Evans, P Griffiths, (Mrs) C Leyshon, (Mrs) S Rees, R W Smith, B. Stephens, P Wasley, E Webster, C J Willis and R Yeo.

Ex-officio Member: Mr R Hull, Co-opted Member and Chairman of the Council's Audit Committee.

I am privileged to have been appointed Chair of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee for this municipal year as the former Chair of this Committee, County Borough Councillor M. Norris, joined the Cabinet with responsibility for Corporate Services. The membership of this Committee consists of the chairs and Vice Chairs of the other three themed Scrutiny Committees with regular attendance by the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee as well as the Council's Audit Committee. I hope I have managed to build on the excellent foundations laid by the Committee last year with the support of my Vice Chair County Borough Councillors (Mrs) J. S. Ward.

Integral to the effectiveness of this Committee's work programme has been the regular oversight and challenge of the Council's budget proposals and expenditure, and scrutiny of Council performance every quarter.

#### **Draft Corporate Performance Report**

The first task for the Committee was to scrutinise the draft Corporate Performance Report before presentation to Council in June. Members considered the Council's draft Corporate Performance Report which sought their views on whether it presented a fair and balanced assessment of performance for 2015/16 and whether the Council's ambitions for 2016/17 had been presented in an understandable way so as to enable progress and impact to be measured and scrutinised. Committee agreed the overall conclusions drawn from the Scrutiny Working Groups which undertook pre-scrutiny of the three draft priority action

plans set up to deliver the Corporate Plan 2016-2020 subject to minor amendments.

### **Office Accommodation Strategy**

The Scrutiny Working Group which was tasked with identifying opportunities for more effective and efficient use of Council Accommodation presented its final report to our meeting in July 2016. As part of its review the Working Group considered agile working and digitalisation in conjunction with the rationalisation strategy, acknowledging that they both play a part in helping to reduce the requirement for fixed office space and should be progressed. The Working Group was instrumental in streamlining the process for voluntary groups in applying for Community Asset Transfers as part of the RCT Together Approach. They felt that the procedure should be as clear and easy to follow as possible to encourage as many community and voluntary groups to submit their proposals. Following endorsement by the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee, the recommendation to Cabinet, that it considers the implementation of the Council's office accommodation strategy was accepted. A formal response was received by the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in April 2017 from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.

Since the review, the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy has progressed and to date 6 office accommodation premises have been vacated which equates to a 14% reduction in the total office accommodation footprint. In addition to implementing the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy, agile working arrangements have been introduced where, for example, 5 hot desk locations have been set up during 2016/17 to help officers work more agilely across the County Borough (with further locations planned to be created in 2017/18).

I am pleased to add that Members of the Office Accommodation Strategy Working Group who were present at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in December 2016, which undertook pre-scrutiny of the Council's Agile Working and Digital Workplace, were able to contribute greatly to the feedback and inform a recommended way forward to be reported to the Cabinet.

### **Performance Monitoring**

Following the changes to the scrutiny framework in 2015 this Scrutiny Committee has continued to receive quarterly performance presentations which provide information on revenue and capital budgets as well as performance and key exceptions. Committee has once again taken its role in this area seriously and has requested supplementary information and calls to officers to explain areas of underperformance. In July 2016 we considered the Year End Council Performance Report for 2015/16 and as a result of our line of questioning the following issues were referred to and considered by the other themed scrutiny committees, namely:-

Children & Young People:

- Estyn School Inspection Outcomes – that further information is provided to the relevant Committee on what support is being provided to the 11 schools out of 19 inspected in 2015/2016 that require further monitoring and how this compares across Wales. (A report presented to Members of the Children and Young People

Scrutiny Committee in November 2016 specifically aimed at responding to the concerns raised. In addition, reports on Estyn outcomes for education providers across all sectors are presented to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee annually and a summary provided in the annual performance report).

Health & Wellbeing:

- The percentage of clients that reported feeling safer as a result of Independent Domestic Violence Advisor Intervention (85% against a target of 85%) (An update response provided to the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee).

Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity (sitting as the Council's Crime & Disorder Committee)

- Evaluation of performance of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub being undertaken by the Police Service. (This has been considered by the Crime & Disorder Committee meeting held on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

The issue of Contact Centre average queue time – 105 seconds actual queue time against a target of 90 seconds was raised and considered at the meeting of the Finance & Performance held in September 2016. We received a comprehensive presentation in respect of the Customer Care Services which satisfied our concerns relating to the underperformance.

Committee felt that, in order to fulfil its responsibility to monitor the Treasury Management arrangements in a more meaningful way, further training would be useful to strengthen the process in which we conduct our work. Committee therefore attended a specialist training session with the Council's appointed Treasury Advisors in October 2016. We also provided feedback in respect of the new format of the Council Performance Reports that were presented to us. We welcomed the new Executive Summary style of reporting which has added value to the way we receive and consider the information. The inclusion of electronic links has also improved the accessibility of more detailed information whilst helping to ensure an overview of financial and operational performance is kept as concise as possible.

### **Service Change Evaluation**

Further to the work of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee in 2015/16 when it considered service change evaluation in respect of libraries, meals on wheels and day centres and youth/e3 services (following the service change introduced in 2014), the Committee received further updates in respect of these issues going forward. We held a special meeting in November 2016 to receive update reports and monitor progress in respect of meals on wheels and day centres and youth/e3 services. It was felt by Committee that both areas have supported the delivery of positive outcomes and are effective services, therefore, no further scrutiny in these areas was considered necessary this year.

### **Consultation & Pre-Scrutiny**

In January 2017 the views of Members of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee formed part of the pre-scrutiny process which contributed to the draft 2017/2018 Revenue Budget Strategy to Cabinet. Following questioning, the

Committee accepted the initial views of the Senior Leadership Team together with their comments and Scrutiny's feedback was incorporated into the draft report which was presented to Cabinet in February 2017.

**Conclusion**

I would like to thank all Members of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee who have worked hard this year to support improvements in performance.

## FUTURE CHALLENGES

As we come to the end of the 2016/2017 municipal year we now look ahead to the next 12 months with a view to further improving Scrutiny's effectiveness. We feel that good progress has been made since the new scrutiny arrangements were implemented in 2015/16 and a consistent rate of progress has been achieved within each of the Scrutiny Committees. With that said there are still areas for improvement.

In a recent publication 'Good Governance when determining significant service changes – Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council 2016/17', two key issues were raised as a concern by the Wales Audit Office in respect of our scrutiny process:-

*'There is a lack of visibility of the overview and scrutiny committees' forward work programmes and a lack of clarity around arrangements for public involvement in scrutiny. The forward work programme for overview and scrutiny committees currently only exists within the scrutiny meeting papers so is difficult to access by members of the public. The openness and transparency of scrutiny would be enhanced by the Council publishing the forward work programme(s) for overview and scrutiny as a stand-alone document on the website, in the same way as the Cabinet work programme is now published''.*

Our proposal for improvement is that the Council clarifies and promotes the arrangements for public participation in its overview and scrutiny process in order to encourage and promote public involvement. The involvement of local residents, community organisations and partners is an important part of the scrutiny process and councillors are committed to responding to the views and concerns of residents. We understand that getting involved in scrutiny is one of the best ways to influence decision making at the Council. Therefore, moving forward it is essential that we consider new ways to engage with residents to ensure they are informed about key decisions being taken which impact upon Rhondda Cynon Taf. There are a number of ways in which we can do this, namely:-

- As **contributors** to items on the Overview and Scrutiny agenda;
- As **participating spectators** at scrutiny meetings;
- As **co-opted members** of Committees; and,
- As **experts and witnesses** invited to assist Members in exploring particular issues and to provide evidence to scrutiny meetings.

We are aware that formal Committees can appear daunting and therefore we will look to break down those barriers by using different methods particularly to promote public involvement. We will endeavour to identify opportunities for receiving evidence outside of the formal Council Headquarters, for example, at schools or other more informal settings which are accessible to the community. We could look to hold our meetings at different times, other than in the evening, so as to engage with a wide range of residents and stakeholders. In accordance with Chapter 1, Part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (*Duty to Conduct a Survey*), the survey to be undertaken with Members following the Election in May 2017 will assist in achieving this.

We have also included a section at the end of this Annual Report so that members of the public and stakeholders are able to request issues/topics to be included on Scrutiny Work Programmes.

After the appointment of Members to the Scrutiny Committees at Council on 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2017, work programmes for 2017/18 will be discussed and developed. Suggestions for review topics will be invited from a range of stakeholders and these will be discussed at the first scrutiny meetings of the new municipal year to prioritise which subjects should be reviewed.

The Council will look to publish its Overview & Scrutiny Committees' forward work programmes as stand-alone documents on the Council website so as to increase openness and transparency.

Learning lessons is important to us and we will strive to develop those areas which have been highlighted as in need of improvement. However, it is also important to acknowledge the good work which has been achieved by scrutiny this year, building on our performance from last year and addressing comments made in previous years.

It is vital that scrutiny remains a powerful and effective force, and continues to have a positive impact on the work of the Council.



## **Suggestions for Scrutiny**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees would welcome suggestions from members of the public, businesses or any other organisations who wish to put forward issues which feel could warrant review.

## Getting Involved

### ***How can I get involved?***

There are a number of ways in which the public and interested organisations can get involved.

- Attend a meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

All scrutiny meetings are held in public and anyone is welcome to attend to listen to proceedings. Meetings are usually held in the Rhondda Cynon Taf Council Headquarters at Clydach Vale. Only on rare occasions, when certain confidential information is being discussed, are members of the public not allowed to attend.

- Raise issues with your Councillor and request Overview and Scrutiny to consider them as part of their forward work programme,
- Give your feedback to inquiry meetings as part of evidence gathering, or
- Complete the form below and tell us what you would like Scrutiny to consider

Details of forthcoming scrutiny meetings, agendas, reports and minutes can be obtained from the Council's website:

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Committees/Committees.aspx>

## **Suggestions form**

If you would like to make a suggestion you can:

- Complete the form below and return it to the address stated or,
- E-mail your suggestions to the Scrutiny Team at [Scrutiny@rhondda-cynon-taf.gov.uk](mailto:Scrutiny@rhondda-cynon-taf.gov.uk)

**Please tell us below about the subject you would like to be reviewed.**

Suggested Topic:

Why do you feel this should be reviewed?

Name:

Address (including postcode):

E-mail address:

Thank you for completing this form.

Please return to:-

Democratic Services  
Legal & Democratic Services,  
Block E  
The Pavilions  
Clydach Vale  
Rhondda Cynon Taf  
CF40 2XX

