

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale on Wednesday, 2nd September, 2015 at 5.00 p.m.

PRESENT:

County Borough Councillor R.W.Smith – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

(Mrs.)A.Calvert	(Mrs.)S.Rees
(Mrs.)J.Cass	(Mrs.)A.Roberts
W.J.David	G.Stacey
C.Davies	(Mrs.)M.Tegg
J.Davies	LWalker
S.Evans	D.H.Williams
I.Pearce	

Other Members in Attendance

County Borough Councillors

G.R.Davies - Chair of Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity
M.Forey – Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Services
M.J.Watts - Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Officers

Mr.G.Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children’s Services
Mr.A.S.Wilkins – Head of Legal, Corporate & Democratic Services
Mr.P.Mee – Service Director, Public Health & Protection
Mr.P.Griffiths – Service Director, Performance & Improvement
Mr.N.Elliott – Service Director, Direct Services, Business & Housing
Ms.L.Davies – Environmental Protection Officer
Ms.J.Ellis – Housing Strategy & Standards Manager
Mr.P.Howells – Head of Community Housing
Ms.L.Lawson – Service Improvement Officer, Strategic Planning
Ms.K.May – Head of Democratic Services

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs.)M.E.Davies and D.Weeks.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in relation to the agenda.

13. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on the 7th July, 2015 were approved as a correct record.

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN SERVICES

14. HOUSING (WALES) ACT 2014

In his report, the Group Director, Community & Children's Services updated Members on the Housing (Wales) Act, 2014 which received Royal Assent on the 17th September, 2014 and he referred to the following Sections of the Act that are relevant to this Council and which may have implications:-

- Part 1 – Regulation of Private Rented Housing
- Part 2 – Homelessness
- Part 3 – Gypsy and Travellers
- Part 7 – Council Tax
- Part 8 – Amendment of Leasehold Reform

A Member raised a question in respect of what systems are in place to ensure that all private landlords register themselves and the addresses of their rental properties in Wales with the designated licensing authority, to which the Environmental Protection Officer indicated that the legislation requires landlords to list all of their properties to make sure the system is comprehensive as checks can be made in respect of Council Tax and those in receipt of Housing Benefit etc. She further stated that there are approximately 180,000 properties (rented) and 130,000 landlords across Wales and many of these properties could 'slip the net'. However, the tenant can check if the landlord is registered and in many cases the onus is on the tenant to make a complaint about the property without fear of reprisal. There will be a resource issue in view of the number of rented properties within the County Borough, but it was hoped that if the landlord is a fit and proper person then the property itself should be in good order. In respect of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) these properties are proactively inspected.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** – to acknowledge and accept the report.

15. DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services in his role as Director of Social Services within Rhondda Cynon Taf and in accordance with the

statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Assembly Government in June, 2009 regarding the duties and accountabilities of Directors of Social Services in Wales, attached to his report at Appendix 1 the Director of Social Services Annual Report 2014/15.

At the meeting the Director, Social Services informed Members that during the CSSIW inspection of the work supporting his Annual Report, they would also wish to meet the Chair and Vice-Chair of this Committee and also the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to seek views on areas that could be looked at in the future to avoid any duplication of any scrutiny work.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** – to accept the report.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

16. PROPOSED SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

With reference to Minute No.10 of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on the 7th July, 2015, the Director, Legal & Democratic Services set out in his report a proposed work programme with a short list of topic areas as shown at Appendix 1 to the report for the consideration of Members.

A discussion ensued when it was indicated by the Vice-Chair that whilst there is a lot of media coverage during the Winter months in respect of the increase in delays in people being discharged from hospital, the figures for Rhondda Cynon Taf does not correlate. The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Adult Services agreed with this statement and commented that this had been recognised by the Minister for Health and Social Services, Mark Drakeford, AM, who had thanked the Authority for the systems put in place to deal with pressures during the Winter period.

It was further stressed by the Vice-Chair that the problems associated with discharge of individuals from hospital does not always lie with the Authority as for elderly people who need to be transferred to residential homes have a choice which until such time as there is a vacancy can result in hospital beds being occupied by patients who are not acutely ill.

RESOLVED –

1. To include in the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme "what can we do to improve the assessments for Carers" as one of the topics shown at Appendix 1, starting with a review in the number of assessments offered to carers, the aim being to assess how

many have been accepted/rejected during a six month period and the overall objective being to achieve 100% of offers being made to carers for assessments.

2. That the Chair and Vice-Chair of this Committee together with the appropriate Officers undertake a more detailed review of the proposed list of topics as shown at Appendix 1 with a view to producing further items for inclusion on the Committee's Work Programme for consideration at the meeting on the 14th October, 2015.

REPORT OF SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP

17. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – A REVIEW OF EMPTY PROPERTIES WITHIN THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN RCT

The Committee received County Borough Councillor G.R.Davies, Chair of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee, who was the Chair of the former Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee and the Working Group that undertook the review into the number of empty properties within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Councillor G.R.Davies wished to place on record his thanks to Members of the Working Group and in particular to the Officers, namely, Mr.P.Mee, Ms.L.Davies and Ms.J.Nicholls.

Councillor G.R.Davies gave his observations on the report of the Working Group which Members had before them and indicated that during the review the Working Group examined the emerging issues which contributed to the high numbers of empty properties, which as at April, 2014 totalled 3,375 across the County Borough, resulting in citizens feeling disillusioned and disenchanted with maintenance costs, utilities charges, lost rent, council tax bills and reduced value in properties that are deteriorating or in an area where house prices are falling. This further exacerbates the problem of anti social behaviour, graffiti and vandalism,

He outlined the findings of the Working Group which were detailed in section 4 of the report which assisted Members in making the nine recommendations to the Executive.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Davies in presenting the report to Members and it was **RESOLVED** – to commend the report and the recommendations of the Scrutiny Working Group to the Cabinet.

**R.W.SMITH
CHAIRMAN**

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.