

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes** of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale on Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2015 at 5.00 p.m.

**PRESENT**

County Borough Councillor L. M. Adams – in the Chair

**County Borough Councillors**

J. Bonetto	B. Morgan
(Mrs) S. Jones	G. Smith
M. E. Davies	P Jarman
S. Evans	P. Wasley

**Members in Attendance**

M. Norris – Chair of Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee
(Mrs.)J.S.Ward – Vice Chair of Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee
G.R.Davies – Chair of Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
S.Bradwick – Vice Chair of Public Service Delivery & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
(Mrs.)C.Leyson – Chair of Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
S. Rees – Vice-Chair of Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
(Mrs) M. E. Davies
C.J.Willis – Scrutiny Performance Co-ordinator
(Mrs.)M.E.Davies
E.Webster

**Cabinet Member**

R. Bevan

Mr R. Hull – Chair of Audit Committee

**Officers in Attendance**

Mr. P. J. Lucas – Director, Legal & Democratic Services

Mr V. Hanly – Service Director Procurement Services

(Mrs) L. Davies – Head of Environmental Health, Trading Standards & Community Safety

J. Ellis – Housing Strategy & Standards Officer

**14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors W.J. David, A. S. Fox, R. Lewis, (Mrs) S. Pickering, S. Powderhill, S. Rees-Owen, M. J. Watts and R. Yeo

**15. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

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

**16. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to approve as accurate records the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015

Minute 11—Further to the previous meeting when Members resolved that the Chair of the Committee writes to the Leader of the Council in respect of the issues raised on the Work Programme, the Chair confirmed that he had received a response from the Leader of the Council in the form of a letter. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee read the contents of the letter to Members of the Committee. The Chair of the Committee confirmed that he would circulate a copy of the letter in due course.

Minute 13 – The Director of Legal & Democratic Services provided Members with an update in relation to the Public Service Boards and referred to the key message that Council takes the decision to designate the work of the statutory Public Service Boards to a particular Scrutiny Committee. Committee was advised that further consideration should be given to the guidance issued by Welsh Government in respect of the detail of the Statutory Public Service Boards such as Co opted members and joint scrutiny issues and it was agreed to defer any action until further clarity has been sought.

**17. FUEL POVERTY PROPOSED SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

Committee was presented with a PowerPoint presentation from the Service Director, Procurement Services and the Council's Housing Strategy and Standards Manager in respect of Overcoming Fuel Poverty. The presentation served to further inform Committee following the interim report of the Scrutiny Working Group set up to deal with 'fuel poverty' following the Notice of Motion considered by Council at its meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

PowerPoint slides were circulated at the meeting outlining information under the following headings:-

- Becoming an Energy Supplier

- Cyd Cymru – All Wales Collective Switching (Update and Background)
  - Fuel Poverty
  - Update on Switches
  - Customer Feedback
  - RCT Results
  - Marketing
  - Financing
  - Further Considerations
  - Barriers
  - Next Steps
- CHC Developments
- Raising the Bar on Fuel Poverty
- Possible Outcomes

Following the presentation Members of the Committee asked questions of the Officers in respect of the Cyd Cymru initiative and whether it was proving to be value for money considering the relatively low number of registrations it has received. It was confirmed that no further funding would be made available to Cyd Cymru following the initial 3 year scheme which was piloted in 2010, Cyd Cymru would need to be self financing for any future switches. It was highlighted that there will be a meeting between Cyd Cymru and the Local Authorities to ascertain whether there is any further funding to continue the work and ensure that a better deal is achieved in the marketplace.

Committee discussed those residents who are using pre payment meters (PPM) as they are in debt or have not been able to adhere to a pre payment plan originally agreed by the energy company. Pre payment meters are often more costly for the residents as there are fewer tariffs and deals available. However, it was confirmed that the RCT Housing Energy Efficiency Officer has been successful in assisting those residents to seek the best bespoke tariff.

One Committee Member pointed out that although Cyd Cymru's ongoing scheme has had some success with an increase in the numbers of households registered and switching, if this Council looks at becoming an energy supplier residents won't need to switch. The example of Cheshire East Council which has offered its residents its own low-cost energy scheme as part of its fuel poverty initiative and has achieved better results was referred to. Members were informed that that particular local authority scheme has enabled anyone of its residents to buy their energy at a competitively low cost when compared to the Big Six energy suppliers and has resulted in 350,000 residents having benefitted from the scheme. As the Service Director Procurement Services pointed out, this is in partnership with a smaller, single supplier which could prove restrictive but agreed that this could be a consideration for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

There was a further query in respect of the original Notice of Motion and whether the essence of the motion has since been lost. In response the Chairman reminded Committee that this is an interim report of the Scrutiny Working Group which highlights the complexity of the options available, however, it was acknowledged that the work undertaken in Cheshire East should be given further consideration.

It was **RESOLVED** that:-

1. Committee acknowledge the work undertaken to date by the Scrutiny Working Group in respect of Fuel Poverty;
2. That the review in respect of Fuel Poverty continue to be undertaken by the Scrutiny Working Group and its findings be reported to this Committee and thereafter to Council;
3. Officers give further consideration to Cheshire East Council's own low cost energy scheme which may inform the evaluation report work and subsequent recommendations of the Scrutiny Working Group

#### **18. PROPOSED SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee presented the proposed work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. For information copies of the proposed shortlist of topic areas from the long list of possible areas for all the scrutiny committees were circulated.

The Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees who were present at the meeting were asked to provide their views on their respective work programmes following the first few months of the Scrutiny cycle. The view of the Chairs was that the new scrutiny process represented a more targeted approach although they agreed that it was still too early to make a more definitive judgement but the feeling was that this was a positive way forward.

A query was raised in relation to the issue of duplication and the worth of receiving historical reports at Scrutiny Committees such as the Treasury Management Report which was recently presented to the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee and previously presented to Council. It was acknowledged that in the early stages of the revised approach to the Scrutiny Work Programmes there would still be issues to address but that this issue would be taken on board.

Discussions focussed on the Overview and Scrutiny work programme and concern was raised by one Committee Member in respect of the lack of scrutiny which had been done to date, the Chairman agreed to approach the Leader of the Council outlining these concerns and invite him to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of the issues raised on the Work Programme. It was also highlighted that at the last

meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee it was agreed that the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee be requested to widen the scope of its Library Service review and include a 'financial dimension' i.e. to establish whether or not the savings identified as part of the service change implemented from June 2014 have been realised. In response the Chair of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee confirmed that the request would be put before Members of the Committee for consideration.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee sought the views of the Chairman of the Audit Committee on the new Scrutiny arrangements. The Chair of Audit acknowledged that the changes were considerable and although the referral process was still available to the Audit Committee he considered that it was too early to make an informed comment in respect of the changes as the Audit Committee had only convened on one occasion. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reminded Members that there was no longer a place for 'noting' reports as part of the recommendations which would ensure that all future work programmes are well thought out and outcome based. He added that any referrals from the Audit Committee should be actioned.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED:-**

1. To agree the proposed shortlist of topic areas as shown at Appendix 1 for inclusion on its work programme, namely:-
  - The Wales Audit Office Report – Good Scrutiny, Good Question?
  - Recommendations made by the external regulators
  - To continue to further review the work of the former Scrutiny Committee Working Group in relation to fuel poverty
2. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to a future meeting of the Council as to which Scrutiny Committee should be designated to undertake the scrutiny work in relation to the Public Service Boards as referred to in the Statutory Guidance for Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015 following its review;
3. That the Chair of the Committee invites the Leader of the Council to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss the Cabinet Work Programme

**L.M.ADAMS  
CHAIRMAN**

**The meeting closed at 6.25 p.m.**

