

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, Clydach Vale on Tuesday, 5th July, 2016 at 5 p.m.

PRESENT

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

County Borough Councillors

J.Bonetto	(Mrs.)S.Pickering
W.J.David	S.Rees-Owen
(Mrs.)S.Jones	P.Wasley
B.Morgan	R.Yeo

Non-Committee Members in Attendance

County Borough Councillors

S.Carter and J.James
(Mrs.)C.Leyshon – Chair of Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
B.Stephens – Vice-Chair of Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
(Mrs.)S.Rees – Vice-Chair of Health & Well-Being Scrutiny Committee
(Mrs.)M.Webber – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Council Business & Human Resources

Mr.R.Hull – Chair of Audit Committee

Officers in Attendance

Mr.P.J.Lucas – Director, Legal & Democratic Services
Mr.C.Hanagan – Director, Cabinet & Public Relations
Mr.C.Atyeo – Director, Corporate Estates & Procurement
Mrs.P.McCarthy – Head of Property (Legal)
Ms.K.May – Head of Democratic Services

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs.)M.E.Davies, A.S.Fox, P.Jarman and S.Powderhill.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED – to note that there were no declarations of interest made at the meeting pertaining to the agenda.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 20th April, 2016 subject to County Borough Councillor S.Rees-Owen being listed within the apologies for absence.

4. CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

Members had before them the proposed list of matters requiring consideration by the Cabinet over the 2016/17 municipal year which was presented to Members of the Cabinet at its meeting held on the 23rd June, 2016.

The Director, Cabinet & Public Relations reported that many improvements had been made to the Cabinet Work Programme in the last year many of which had been made as a result of the new scrutiny arrangements and the need for pre-scrutiny. He also reported on the changes that had been made to the Leader's Scheme of Delegation which had been agreed at the Council's Annual Meeting on the 25th May, 2016 which brought about the new format of the Cabinet's Work Programme which now covers a six month period and gives greater opportunity for pre-scrutiny.

The Cabinet Member for Council Business & Human Resources stated that this matter had been discussed during the Business Meetings between the Chair of this Committee and herself and the new arrangements now gives a better degree of flexibility and affordability for pre-scrutiny.

The Chair asked Members to consider any items on the Work Programme that could undergo pre-scrutiny.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that unfortunately the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee were unable to attend this evening's meeting. Nevertheless, at the meeting held last evening, Members of that Committee looked at the topics on the Cabinet Work Programme that came within the remit of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Committee and wished to undertake pre-scrutiny of `HR Policies Update` and `Maximising Attendance`.

In the absence of the Chair of the Health & Well-Being Scrutiny Committee, the Vice-Chair of that Committee stated that as with all the Themed Scrutiny Committees the respective Work Programmes are rolling programmes and that following the Council's AGM this year, each of the Committees would be revising the items that were to be scrutinised and she outlined the topics from the current Work Programme of the Cabinet that she would like Members of the Health & Well-Being Scrutiny Committee to look at.

The Chair of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee informed Members that a report is to be presented to that Committee on the 14th July, 2016 on the proposed new arrangements in respect of the frequency of meetings to reflect the need to apportion equal consideration to the areas of

Education and Children's Social Services, whereby there would be a three weekly cycle i.e. week 1 would consider items relating to Children's Social Services, week 3 would look at Education and week 6 would be combined. It was felt that separate meetings dedicated to the individual service areas of both Education and Children's Social Services would be better, in terms of being able to dedicate more time to properly consider the topics sitting within each service area and the best use of Member and Officer time (and that of the Education co-opted Members).

In response, the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee indicated that he was concerned that this new approach could result in low attendance by Members, when it was stated by the Chair of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee that the proposed new way of working would need to be subject to Member/Officer reflection and if agreed by Members of the Committee on the 14th July, would be subject to review at the Combined meeting scheduled for the 19th December, 2016.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** –

1. That the following topics from the Cabinet's Work Programme undergo pre-scrutiny by Members of the Scrutiny Committees as shown below and that the Director, Cabinet and Public Relations be informed in writing:-
 - Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee:
 - HR Policies
 - Maximising Attendance
 - Health & Well-Being Scrutiny Committee
 - Director of Social Services Report (for 2016/17)
 - Extra Care Strategy
 - Discretionary Empty Property Grant Across RCT
2. That Members of the Finance & Performance and Overview & Scrutiny Committees scrutinise the Wales Audit Office reports and associated action plans that were presented to the Cabinet on the 23rd June, 2016 in order that feedback can be provided to the Cabinet thus ensuring that the proposals for improvement are sufficient and that the Cabinet will have assurance that the recommendations of the Wales Audit Office are being addressed.
3. That Members of the Democratic Services Committee be asked to look at the `Document Management Proposals` and to be advised of the outcome of the pilot in respect of a `paperless Cabinet`.
4. That Members of this Committee receive an update on progress with the proposed arrangements for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee following the review in December, 2016.

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, CORPORATE & FRONTLINE SERVICES

5. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC APPROACH TO ASSET MANAGEMENT IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Director, Corporate Estates & Procurement gave his observations on the report that was presented by the Wales Audit Office to the Audit Committee at its meeting held on the 31st March, 2016, and he indicated that it was now opportune for Members of this Committee to consider the progress made in response to the one proposal for improvement arising from the WAO report namely: *“The Council should develop mechanisms for reporting a comprehensive picture of the management of its assets to senior managers and elected members to enable ongoing oversight and to inform decision making”*.

Attached at Appendix 1 to the report was a progress update, and at the meeting in response to questions posed by Members, the Director, Corporate Estates & Procurement clarified the following work plans within the Council's Asset Management Plan for Property Assets 2013-2018:-

- Rationalisation of the Property Portfolio
 - The proposal to reduce Council office accommodation floor space by 20% by 2020 was on target.

Members raised concern that when staff are relocated Members are not immediately informed, e.g. the closure of the Housing Advice Office where staff were transferred to Sardis House and the relocation of the Parks Department from Llwyncastan, Pontypridd to Coedcae Lane. When it was indicated by the Chair that the Global email should be updated in such circumstances and Members advised accordingly. In response the Director, Corporate Estates and Procurement stated that he would raise this at a meeting of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

- Disposal Programme and Reduction in Leasehold Premises
 - The disposal programme has generated a significant amount in capital receipts for the Council from the sale of a number of properties – in 2014/15 it generated approximately £4.5M (net) from the sale of over 50 property assets, and also during 2014/15 financial year, 9 leasehold premises were removed from the property portfolio. More recently, the Director reported on the disposal of Blaengwar and the redevelopment of the rugby ground at Llantrisant.

- 21st Century School Programme
 - The Director reported that this Authority had received the largest amount of funding in Wales for improvement/refurbishment works at education establishment which had been invested in Y Pant and Tonyrefail High School.
- Partnership Arrangements
 - RCT Together programme had received many expressions of interest from community and voluntary groups to apply for the use of premises, once the Council services withdraw an example of which was the Muni Arts Centre.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** – that Members formed the view that the progress made in respect of the recommendations arising from the Wales Audit Office was robust and no further information was required.

**L.M.ADAMS
CHAIRMAN**

The meeting closed at 5.55 p.m.

These minutes are subject to approval at the next scheduled meeting