



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 18 January 2021 at 5.00 pm.

### **County Borough Councillors - Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-**

Councillor M Adams (Chair)

Councillor W Lewis	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor P Jarman	Councillor H Boggis
Councillor J Brencher	Councillor E Stephens
Councillor L Walker	Councillor G Caple
Councillor M Griffiths	Councillor A Cox
Councillor G Hughes	Councillor M Forey

### **Other Members in Attendance**

Councillor R Yeo

### **Co-opted Member in Attendance**

Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

### **Officers in attendance**

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Ms J Thomas, Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager.

#### **15 Apologies**

An apology of absence was received from County Borough Councillor W Jones.

#### **16 Welcome & Introductions**

The Chair of the Committee welcomed Members to this the first meeting of the New Year and introduced the Officers, the Service Director Democratic Services & Communications and the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager.

#### **17 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

#### **18 Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 and the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020 as an accurate reflection of the meetings subject to the following comments:-

- Mr Jeff Fish, Co-opted Member was in attendance at the meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020; and
- County Borough Councillor E Stephens corrected Councillor Webster's verbal account which should read 'Column Street' not 'Callum Street'

## 19 Matters Arising

**Matters Arising:** Minute 6 (011220)

### Residential Care

County Borough Councillor P Jarman raised concern regarding an FOI request which had been submitted to the Council asking for background papers relating to the matrix setting out the strengths and weaknesses of each of the 11 Care Homes. It had been suggested that the matrix had been compiled by officers of the Council with no formal record or background papers. The Member asked whether a report could be presented to the next meeting with an explanation.

Following consideration of the matter it was **RESOLVED** that an explanation would be included in the next report of the Modernisation of Residential Care and Day Care for Older People when it is next reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

## 20 Cabinet & Scrutiny Work Programmes 2020-21

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented his report which outlined the draft forward work programme for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2021 Municipal Year and providing opportunity for scrutiny to identify further items for pre scrutiny from the Cabinet work programme.

The Service Director advised that a focussed approach would continue with regards to the forward work programme as had been the case over the past few months with Overview & Scrutiny addressing a number of strategic matters. Members were reminded that the forward work programme priorities are subject to change should other specific business need to be considered by the Committee on this date. He also advised that the Scrutiny/Cabinet engagement sessions would be arranged over the next few weeks with the Overview & Scrutiny session held with the Deputy Leader, County Borough Councillor M Webber and the Chair and Vice Chair before the end of the month.

Members were informed that a position statement would be presented before the end of the municipal year to the Scrutiny Working Group, established to consider how future rail and transport infrastructure and services could develop and build on the early stages of implementation of the South Wales Metro in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Committee was reminded that this Notice of Motion had been referred to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and work had commenced on the matter prior to the Pandemic but had subsequently been put on hold.

The Service Director advised that an update would also be reported to Committee in respect of the ten recommendations submitted to Cabinet by the Scrutiny Working Group established to consider the development of Infrastructure to support Low Carbon Vehicle Ownership in Rhondda Cynon Taf following the Notice of Motion considered by Council.

In conclusion, the Services Director advised that as directed by the committee the 21 Century Schools and Colleges Programme – Mutual Investment Model would be considered by this scrutiny committee rather than the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee once the matter has been identified on the Cabinet work programme.

A Member asked when the Overview & Scrutiny Committee or Full Council can expect an update on the Cardiff Capital Region - City Deal and whether the Committee could consider undertaking pre scrutiny on the following items on the Cabinet forward work programme:-

1. The Processing of Mixed Kerbside Recycling
2. The Council's response to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation
3. Specialist Placements
4. Provision of Cemeteries within RCT

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications confirmed that the scrutiny arrangements for the Cardiff Capital Region - City Deal are now with RCT and are being taking forward in a robust manner and confirmed that a report to this scrutiny committee would be forthcoming and a further address by the Chief Executive of the Cardiff Capital Region - City Deal would be provided to Council before the end of this municipal year.

With regards to the other matters highlighted, it was agreed to include the Council's response to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation on the forward work programme of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee but it was confirmed that the other items raised were being considered by the other thematic scrutiny committees.

Members **RESOLVED** :-

1. To agree the contents of the draft Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme; subject to the 'Council's response to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation' being added for consideration when appropriate; and
2. That an update on the Cardiff Capital Region - City Deal would be reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee before the end of the municipal year (and for Members to note that a presentation to Full Council would be delivered by the Chief Executive of the Cardiff Capital Region - City Deal in due course).

## **21 The Council's Corporate Feedback Scheme**

The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications presented his joint report with the Group Director Community & Children's Services with the purpose of providing the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with the inaugural Annual Report relating to the operation and effectiveness of the Council's Corporate Customer Feedback Scheme ('CFS') between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020 prior to consideration by Cabinet.

The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager advised that the report before Members considers the Customer Feedback Scheme which differs from that which relates to Adult/Children's Services and has a different reporting mechanism.

The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager provided an overview of the operation of the Customer Feedback Scheme (CFS), how the quality of the reporting and the level of information available has improved which has developed the effectiveness of the service delivery within the individual service areas.

A total of 1155 feedback items were logged for 2019/20 which the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager advised is likely to be an underestimate of the actual amount of feedback received with compliments in particular being under reported. It was reported that a new reporting system is due to be implemented which will ensure that the feedback is better captured.

Members were informed that the categories are determined by the Ombudsman and have been categorised as 'Upheld' or 'Not Upheld' but there is an intention to elaborate on these categories to enable service areas to log upheld/not upheld as well as categorising the nature of the complaint and outcome. It was advised that 70% of Stage 1 complaints were dealt with within 10 working days with 59% of Stage 2 complaints dealt with within the designated 20 working days which is a positive result and evidence that frontline staff are responding and resolving complaints.

The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager reported that 39 complaints were referred to the Public Services Ombudsman, 14 complaints referred to the PSOW related to Social Care. Members were referred to the section which set out the examples of complaints and service improvements which demonstrates good progress made over the past 12 months by detailing how the service intends to make improvements. examples of comments and compliments were also included within the report.

In conclusion the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager reported on the future developments and priorities for the service in 2020/21 such as improved complaints training, improved reporting, public facing information and improved customer feedback.

The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager responded to the following questions:-

- What constitutes a complaint?
- Does the Council capture the issues raised by residents through social media?
- Does the data include issues raised by Elected Members?
- Is there any performance data relating to the responses back to the complainant.

The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager clarified that a complaint needs to have been previously logged and reported on the system for follow up. It was confirmed that social media platforms are commonly used as vehicles for complaints however the coordinators within the social media teams will encourage residents to formally log the complaint. Officers monitor the social

media channels with a view to following up any complaints, comments or compliments.

Unlike the social services complaints process, the data reported does not include issues raised by Elected Members (unless they raise their comment, complaint or compliment via the formal link on the council website). The individual service areas are responsible for responding to the complaints, comments or compliments which come to their service area and they will respond directly to the customer. All service areas are monitored to ensure they do feedback directly to the complainant.

A Member asked whether there were any indications that next year's data will be improved or whether expectations had changed since the data was published pre Covid. In response to a comment raised by a Welsh Government Minister who claimed that members of RCT council who supported the call for an independent inquiry into the floods had brought into question the professional integrity of Officers of the council who are preparing the section 19 flood report, the Member wanted it formally recorded that the Plaid Cymru Group has never called into question the professional integrity of officers working on the reports.

Another member of the committee congratulated staff dealing with queries under the current restrictions and asked whether the council is responding to more queries and whether sufficient resources are available and in place to deal with any increase. The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager advised that the number of complaints are monitored and early indications show that next year, recording complaints and those dealt within timescales may be affected because of the impact of the pandemic on the service area where staff have been redeployed.

In response to a query regarding the cross-service cases across multiple service areas, set out on page 79 within the report, the Complaints Manager explained the process for dealing with cross-service cases which may cover two or more service areas and it was advised that in these instances, the Customer Feedback team coordinate one overarching response on behalf of the Complaints Manager.

The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager explained that the compliments received are now being recorded in a more efficient way and staff are becoming more accustomed to logging the positive comments, but added that there is still a tendency to under report the compliments. A Member suggested that compliments properly recorded and captured could have a positive impact on staff morale.

Another Member suggested that it would be of value to receive a further report to committee setting out how the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager's team is working with and training other service areas to respond in an appropriate manner to any comments and complaints.

A member raised a query with regards to what are the future plans to improve good practice, which is part and parcel of a good customer feedback system, to ensure it is disseminated in the proper manner and whether the use of case studies could enhance the system and give residents confidence in the complaints procedure. Will the number of unspecified, unallocated complaints reduce with the introduction of a new system?

In response the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager referred to the new system which would bring a level of flexibility to the process and would benefit the frontline services. A benchmarking exercise has been undertaken, measuring complaints from this county borough against those of other local authorities to establish quality control. The Complaints Manager added that this is an area that needs improving in line with the comments of Audit Wales to better inform customers what the council has done in response to their queries.

The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager clarified the Corporate Complaints scheme with both stages being dealt with internally, with cases being referred to the Ombudsman if necessary.

The Co-opted Member sought clarification regarding the charts on page five of the report (Complaint Categories/Complaint Outcomes), particularly with regards to those identified as 'not a complaint' which sit in both charts (totalling 13%). He also asked how the category 'resolved by frontline staff' fits into the three categories set out by the Ombudsman. The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager provided an explanation to the categories, particularly those that sit under the heading 'not a complaint'. The Complaints Manager described, by means of examples, how some complaints will require further investigation, as determined by the co-ordinators, to establish whether they are complaints and whether they relate to council business. There is now a further separation into partially upheld, upheld and not upheld for staff to be able to categorise the complaints.

Following consideration it was **RESOLVED**:-

1. To acknowledge the contents of the inaugural Annual Report relating to the operation and effectiveness of the Council's Customer Feedback Scheme (Comments, Compliments and Complaints) ('CFS') between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020;
2. To receive a follow up report in six months' time on the reporting mechanisms subsequently agreed by Cabinet in relation to the operation of the CFS scheme, including an update on any suggested changes taken forward, in addition to receiving the CFS Annual Report as part of its work programme;

## **22 Chair's Review and Close**

The Chair extended his thanks to Members for attending the meeting and advised the next virtual Overview & Scrutiny Committee would be held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021.

**This meeting closed at 6.25 pm**

**Cllr M Adams  
Chairman**