



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday,
23 February 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 G Caple
Councillor M Griffiths	Councillor W Jones
Councillor A Cox	Councillor G Hughes
Councillor M Forey	

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mrs N. Kingham, Business Manager, Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Mr R Waters, Service Director – Frontline Services

Others in attendance:

Mr J Fish – Co-opted Member

23 Declaration of Interest

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

However, County Borough Councillor J Brencher declared the following personal declaration of interest later in the meeting (minute ** refers) - "My son works for Transport for Wales".

24 Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors E Stephens and L Walker.

25 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 18th January 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

26 Consultation Links

Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the information provided through

the consultation links in respect of open consultations, Welsh Government consultations and those matters being consulted upon by the local authority.

27 Cardiff Capital Region City Deal

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication advised Members, that following discussions at the Overview & Scrutiny's Committee meeting on the 18th January 2021, a report in respect of Cardiff Capital Region City Deal was provided for Members for pre-scrutiny in advance of its consideration at Cabinet on the 25th February 2021.

The Chief Executive presented his report to the Committee which provided an update of the progress of the Cardiff Capital Region ('CCR') Joint Cabinet (the 'Regional Cabinet' - a joint committee), to oversee the Region's economic growth and to deliver the commitments set out in the CCR City Deal.

Members were provided with the background to the creation of the CCR City Deal in 2016, with the Chief Executive advising that this was an agreement between the UK Government, Welsh Government and the ten leaders of the CCR. Members were provided with a summary of the City Deal programme which consisted of:

- a £1.2 billion investment in the CCR's infrastructure through a 20-year Investment Fund;
- The creation of a non-statutory Regional Transport Authority to co-ordinate transport planning and investment, in partnership with the Welsh Government;

The Chief Executive continued by advising that the £1.2bn CCR investment comprised of two distinct elements with £734m for a METRO scheme and £495m for a Regional Cabinet Wider Investment Fund. Members were referred to section 5 of the report which provided an update on the progress made and the Gateway Review that needed to be undertaken on a 5 year cycle. Members were advised that SQW had been commissioned by UK Government to undertake an evaluation of the impacts of the investments made to date by the CCR. Details of the progress made and the major investments made to date were provided for Members information.

The Chief Executive concluded his report by advising of the positive work the ten local authorities have made to develop a coordinated, economically focused, and well organised City Region providing an excellent foundation to deliver the next fifteen years of the City Deal funding programme, with doubling of the available grant funding and creating a series of sustainable evergreen funds that can support economic growth for many years to come.

Both the Service Director – Frontline Services and Director of Prosperity & Development provided Members with updates in respect of the work of the regional transport authority and regeneration and housing impact and the benefits that all of these have for the County Borough.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their report and commented on the positive development of electrical infrastructure to support charging points for taxis, which had been highlighted during the working group review set up to consider development of infrastructure to support low carbon vehicle ownership.

County Borough Councillor P Jarman asked a series of questions to officers to which they responded to. The Member was advised that over 10 meetings of the CCRD Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been convened, with RCTCBC now supporting the scrutiny arrangements in place. In respect of Councillors Jarman's query with the Gateway Review, the Chief Executive advised that the appointment of SQW was undertaken as a standard process across the UK, by the UK Treasury, commenting that the formation of SQW was through a competitive framework across the UK, and therefore Welsh academics were able to compete for this work.. The Member was referred to the SQW report contained within the appendix to the report and the comprehensive and positive feedback that had been provided.

In respect of the query to the number of new jobs created through the programme, the Chief Executive advised that he was unable to provide the exact number of jobs created to date but confirmed that the programme had a target for creation of 25,000 new jobs by 2036.

The Service Director Frontline Services provided Councillor Jarman with details of the investment work already being undertaken on the railway lines across the County Borough, which was providing improvements not just to mitigate against the flood damage but also to assist with the developments of the Metro system, with more extensive works being undertaken than planned taking advantage of this lighter travel period due to the Covid pandemic. The Service Director advised that the Council were working with Transport for Wales to resolve the issues seen in respect of the Cynon Valley line. The Service Director also referenced the WelTAG reports that would be coming forward to Cabinet related to proposals to extend rail services beyond Aberdare to Hirwaun, the development of the park and ride scheme at Upper Boat, Treforest, and spoke of the outline business case being submitted in respect of the extension of the Northern West Cardiff - RCT Mass Transit study. In response to a further query it was confirmed that the feasibility of extending rail services beyond Treherbert to Tynnewydd would be considered as an element of a Mid-Valleys Connectivity study currently being initiated.

The Director of Prosperity & Development commented upon the tourist attraction of 'Zipworld' and the beneficial return that was projected from

the tourist attraction. The Director spoke of the need to build upon this attraction to ensure tourists remained within the County Borough. The Director also addressed Councillor Jarman's question in respect of the housing investment fund and the need for robust development appraisal from Developers.

The Chair queried the potential for 'through tickets' on the railway line and the costs of such a service and the Service Director advised that discussions were being held with Transport for Wales to scope integrated ticketing systems with single tickets for multi model transport.

County Borough Councillor J Brencher questioned officers on the Shared Prosperity Fund, querying how officers were securing better funding for RCT, and commented on the important role of the University of South Wales. The Chief Executive advised of the uncertainty of the Shared Prosperity Fund commenting that the UK Government were keen to push the funds to the City Deal Region rather than via Welsh Government. The Chief Executive agreed that the University of South Wales played a key role within the City Deal programme and spoke of the contributions made by the Vice Chancellor of the University and the active engagement of the principals of the Colleges within the region within the growth partnership.

County Borough Councillor M Griffiths queried when RCT would see the impact of the projects coming into fruition, if the gateway reviews were only undertaken on a 5 year cycle. The Chief Executive advised that the major economic delivery being undertaken would take time to deliver and referenced previous projects that had been delivered upon by the Council and the timescales involved, referencing the Taff Vale project.

Three questions were highlighted by County Borough Councillor Cox in respect of effectiveness of the City Deal to date and the implications of the Covid pandemic, implications on the economy of RCT and governance arrangements of City Deal.

The Chief Executive responded by referring Members to page 113 of the report which advised of the governance arrangements in place through a joint cabinet arrangement and spoke of the positives of a potential future CJC arrangement would make to enhance and improve governance arrangements.

In respect of the Covid pandemic, the Chief Executive advised that numerous applications had been made to the UK government for funding detailing the fibre networks investment to enhance digital services. The Chief Executive commented that although travel patterns had altered due to the Covid pandemic there would still be a demand on the rail network.

The Co-opted Member, Mr J Fish queried officers on the European funding committed to the programme and also the education links and career paths within the Fintech sectors. The Chief Executive confirmed that the European funding was guaranteed and advised that the Shared

Prosperity Fund would replace the funding provision going forward. In respect of the career path the Chief Executive referred to the work with the University of South Wales to develop a graduate and Masters programmes in areas where there was a skill shortage. Following on from an additional question from the Chair the Chief Executive confirmed that the Council already promotes career opportunities across secondary schools.

A number of Members highlighted aspects of the report and spoke of the positive benefits that would be witnessed across the County Borough through the City Deal programme, referencing the notable improvements that would be made to travel for residents of the County Borough through the metro and the tourism industry for the County Borough.

Following detailed scrutiny of the report the Committee **RESOLVED**:

1. To acknowledge the contents of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal report which had been brought to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at Committee's request; and
2. That Members comments are taken forward to the Council's Cabinet meeting on the 25th February by the Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications.

N.B At this juncture in the meeting County Borough Councillor J Brencher declared the following personal declaration of interest "My son works for Transport for Wales".

28 Local Authority Arrangements to Safeguard Children and Adults at Risk

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services provided Members with an update on the progress made in respect of the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements in the last 12 months. Reference was made to the Wales Audit Office review conducted in 2019 which had found that the Council had met, or partially met, most of the previous recommendations and proposals for improvement. However, the Group Director added that some further proposals for improvement were made to strengthen aspects of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements and details of the six proposals were provided.

The Group Director continued by advising of the current position and the further work to be taken forward in respect of safeguarding arrangements, referencing suicide prevention and Child Sexual Abuse and Contextual Safeguarding.

Members of the Committee commented upon the importance of such

safeguarding arrangements for children and vulnerable adult. Both the Chair and County Borough Councillor Jarman reflected on the heartache left following incidences of suicide for family members and the Group Director was questioned on the support provision available to support relatives during such tragic times through the multi-agency strategy. The Group Director commented that the Board had taken forward a strategic oversight group which were looking to draft a suicide prevention strategy, following recognition that no regional co-ordinating board was in existence and due to the increase in suicides within the region. The Group Director spoke of the additional arrangements in place in respect of a review group looking at 'lessons learnt'. The Business Manager, Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board provided further information in respect of the single regional strategy for suicide prevention that has been developed and the strategic objective contained within relating to improvement of the provision of information for those bereaved or affected by suicide. The Manager advised that it had been acknowledged that this needed to be improved upon. Members were advised of the appointment by Welsh Government of Suicide Prevention Co-ordinator's and the Manager advised of the close working the Board had with the Co-ordinator for the region and also referenced the National bereavement pathway that was being undertaken in this area.

County Borough Councillor Cox queried whether there had been an impact on the safeguarding arrangements due to the covid pandemic, with children not being physically seen within school settings and therefore the potential for less referrals. The Member queried the long-term plans to ensure children and vulnerable adults were not missed during these unique times.

The Group Director agreed that this was a principal challenge for the service and lots of efforts were provided by the service to ensure vulnerable children and adults were not overlooked, by utilising virtual meetings whenever possible and conducting socially distanced physical meetings when essential. The Group Director advised that all working practices had been adapted in line with the covid regulations and essential services maintained. All safeguarding board partnership groups were now back up and running after an initial suspension of meetings due to the first lockdown arrangements. The Group Director confirmed that the pandemic had added pressure to the service and spoke of the potential for this pressure to increase as lock down restrictions were eased over the next few months which the service will react upon to meet such demands.

County Borough Councillor J Brencher queried the safeguarding measures in place in respect of 'online bullying'. The Group Director confirmed that this was an emerging priority for the Board. The Business Manager, Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board reiterated the importance of addressing this safeguarding area and referred to the work the Board were taken forward with South Wales Police to deliver virtual training in respect of online abuse. The Manager also advised of contact with covid

operations within SWP to take forward engagement with young people about the dangers involved with online platforms.

Councillor W Jones spoke positively of the collaborative approaches taken forward between schools and various council departments for the benefit of young people and vulnerable adults.

The Chairman queried if there was any impact to 'County Lines' and queried how this was being addressed through lockdown. The Group Director advised that intelligence was provided through SWP. He advised that the impact of County Lines to date had been relatively limited but the threat remained and the services were working with partners to protect vulnerable children and young adults from exploitation.

29 Chair's Review and Close

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee extended his thanks to Members and Officers for their attendance and for a constructive and challenging meeting. The Chair confirmed that Members comments on the reports considered would be reported to the Cabinet by the Service Director, Democratic Services and Communications.

This meeting closed at 6.59 pm

**Cllr M Adams
Chairman**