

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015-16

**PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY,
COMMUNITIES AND PROSPERITY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

14th MARCH 2016

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

Agenda Item No. 7

**PREPARATION FOR THE OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT
2015-16**

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Scrutiny Support Officer**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to consider its contribution to the annual Overview & Scrutiny report 2015/16.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members consider and comment on the proposed content of the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Procedure Rules for Overview & Scrutiny within the Council's Constitution requires that an annual report be submitted to Council on the work carried out during the year.
- 3.2 The proposed approach to the scrutiny annual report this year is that there should be an overview of the work undertaken by each of the scrutiny committees followed by a section which will set out more clearly the contribution made by scrutiny during the year in a range of areas such as policy review, performance monitoring and in depth review with recommendations and a plan of the report is set out at Appendix 1.
- 3.3 Appendices 2 & 3 attached attempt to set out in draft form an overview of the work undertaken by the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee since the Council's AGM in May and provides a summary of the ways in which Scrutiny has contributed to the operation of the Council. As scrutiny work is on-going a number of the areas referred to in the draft documents will need to be re-visited in the coming weeks to bring the information up to date and there will be additional information to add.

- 3.4 Members' views and suggestions on the content of the annual report are welcome and if you so wish these can be sent to the Senior Democratic Services Officer in advance of the meeting.
- 3.5 As this is the first year of operation for the new scrutiny arrangements Members' views are particularly welcome in relation to how the operation of the Committee can be improved and what the key priorities should be for the Committee going forward into 2016/17.
- 3.6 It is intended that each of the themed scrutiny committees will undertake this process with a draft complete annual report to be considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 20th April 2016 prior to submission to Council at the AGM in May 2016.
- 3.7 Attached as Appendix 1 is the proposed plan of contents for the Overview and Scrutiny Annual report, Appendix 2 sets out the draft summary of the work undertaken by the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee whilst Appendix 3 attempts to highlight the positive work undertaken by scrutiny as a whole.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972

as amended by

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

14th MARCH 2016

List of Background Papers

Report of the Director Legal & Democratic Services

Item - Preparation for the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2015/16

Freestanding Matter

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Appendix 1

SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

PLAN

1. Foreword – Cllr Adams
2. What is Scrutiny? Structure
3. Overview from each Chair
 - O&S
 - C&YP
 - F&P
 - H&WB
 - PSD
4. What have we achieved?
 - Policy Development/review
 - Pre-scrutiny
 - Monitoring
 - Inspection/Regulation
 - Recommendations/outcomes
5. Future Challenges – overview

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Appendix 2

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN'S OVERVIEW

Terms of Reference

The overview and scrutiny role in connection with scrutinising public service delivery across a range of Council services. The Committee considers areas which contribute to prosperity and also community safety issues. It is the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Committee (pursuant to Section 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006).

Overview from the Chairman



**County Borough
Councillor
G R Davies**

Membership of the Committee:

County Borough Councillors

G R Davies and S A Bradwick (Chairman & Vice Chair respectively)

County Borough Councillors: (Mrs) J Bonetto, J Bunnage, S Carter, (Mrs) A Davies, (Mrs) L De Vet, J Elliott, G Holmes, P Howe, W L Langford, (Mrs) S Pickering, (Mrs) A Roberts, M Weaver, D Weeks, T Williams, R Yeo

As Chair of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee the prospect of a new Scrutiny structure which would bring about a changing emphasis in the way it enhances the contribution of the Council services and its impact on the delivery of the priorities within the Single Integrated Plan as well as a shift towards a more outcome based focus was a challenging one. The Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising public service delivery across a range of Council and public sector services which includes frontline services delivered by the Council and the corporate functions of the Council. It also considers matters relating to the environment, sustainable development, economic development, regeneration and skills. Incumbent with the Council's move towards a more thematic approach the Committee is also the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Committee (under Sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act, 2006). With such a wide remit one of our challenges was to produce a work programme which delivered good outcomes from recommendations that are aimed at bringing about changes and improvements to Council services.

Recycling- Participation Rates

In the first instance we received a report from the Director, Highways and Streetcare Services which informed us that in 2014/15 Rhondda-Cynon-Taf failed to meet its target around waste recycling; therefore improvements were needed to support the Council's priority of 'Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf Clean and Green' and also avoid financial penalties from Welsh Government. The full year performance for 2014-2015 represented

below Welsh average performance i.e. 53.82% compared to 56.24% so we felt it was crucial to review this item as part of our work programme and look at producing appropriate recommendations in response to the findings from our review which would make a positive contribution to improving the overall municipal recycling rate within Rhondda Cynon Taf to at least meet the 2015/16 target set by Welsh Government. At our meeting on the 14th September 2015 Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee resolved to consider participation rates in recycling across the County Borough as part of our work programme and subsequently deliver a project aimed at increasing recycling in a targeted area. We learned that by identifying an area with low recycling rates and raising awareness to encourage residents to participate in reuse and recycling initiatives we could influence behaviours towards recycling and improve the recycling figures within that area.

As a Local Authority we still have no mandatory powers to make people recycle although the Scrutiny Committee was very much aware of the initiatives going forward to try to improve performance such as a number of awareness campaigns, educational projects and marketing campaigns and whilst we accepted that this had resulted in an improvement in the recycling figures Committee further questioned what we could do as an Authority to progress this. Following evaluation of the proposals we identified an area in which to undertake a specific participation campaign (Cilfynydd) based on its recycling figures and a previous Recycling Participation Campaign which was undertaken there 2014.

During the week commencing 30th November 2015 Members of the Committee accompanied the Participation Teams on the door knocking exercise for a period of one week of the total four week campaign which continued up to the 25th December 2015. In that one week Members visited a large number of properties to understand the Council's role in improving recycling rates, to engage with the local residents and hold discussions relating to recycling. Following our involvement with the participation work Committee held a feedback session so that Members could discuss their own experiences and evaluation of the response from local residents. We found that the majority of residents were prepared to engage in discussions in respect of recycling, many were actively participating in the Council's recycling service with no reported incidences of negative responses.

Training

In advance of the participation work Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee together with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Culture and Leisure received Contamination Training which was held at Ty Glantaf, Treforest Industrial Estate on the 23rd November 2015. The training was delivered by Mr James Kay, South Wales Regional Waste Coordinator. Members found the training to be a valuable source of information in terms of understanding that contamination in recycling is an increasing problem for the local authority as recycling that is contaminated cannot be recycled and will be sent to a landfill. It is considered that in Rhondda Cynon Taf 20% of all household recycling is contaminated due to residents failing to recycle properly which undoubtedly has an impact upon the overall recycling rates. Committee agreed that this training would be beneficial to all Members of the Council.

Community Recycling Centres

Committee felt that addressing the under performing recycling rates could not be done in isolation and by restricting our review to the participation work so we considered the arrangements and impact of the new Community Recycling Centres in Llantrisant and Treherbert on the overall municipal recycling rate. The recycling centre in Llantrisant is the first of its kind operating as a 100% recycling facility with a view to increasing

recycling rates across the County Borough. We allowed the new arrangements to become embedded before considering a suite of evidence in conjunction with a site visit to the Llantrisant Community Recycling Centre, which was undertaken on the 15th March 2016 to consider the overall position and whether the new facilities could prove to be a contributing factor to the improving picture.

The final results of the project to increase recycling rates through a targeted approach which took place in Cilfynydd from the 30th November to the 25th December 2015 were reported back to Committee in March 2016, 3 months after the initial work had been undertaken. The results demonstrated that participation in dry recycling increased by 87.5% by the end of the four week period, from 48.4% in week one to 80.3% in week 4 and participation in the food waste initiative increased by 49.1%, from 17.6% in week 1 to 46.1% in week 4. From these results Committee.....

Mobile Library Review

As with all Local Authorities the library service in Rhondda Cynon Taf faces challenges in view of the reduction in funding to the service in 2014/2015. As a way of mitigating some of the adverse effects of the Medium Term Service Planning Review in 2014, specifically the impact of the reduction in the number of static libraries, the County Borough saw a rise in the number of mobile libraries from 3 to 4. We considered the service change in 2014 as an opportunity to review the mobile library service particularly the usage and barriers to usage by the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. As part of the review we were asked to factor in the financial aspect of the service change by our colleagues in the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee, to establish whether or not the savings identified as part of the service change have been realised.

In December 2015 we considered the feedback received from Welsh Government in respect of the Library Service's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) for the period 2014/2015. The report generated a substantial debate and highlighted some concerns for our Committee particularly in view of the proposed service changes for 2015/2016 and following discussions Committee wished to submit its views as part of the Council's Service Change Consultation process. The Committee's submission expressed concern that the book acquisition could be reduced by 25% and some of the Council's libraries could become single staffed libraries under the proposed changes. Committee also requested that the Council Library budget be considered favourably in light of the improved Welsh Government provisional settlement.

A response to our submission was received on the 15th February 2016 from County Borough Councillor J Rosser, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Libraries & Heritage stating that following careful consideration of the consultation feedback from the public and from Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee the following decisions had been taken. It was decided not to approve the proposal to introduce single staffed libraries at 5 branches and further to Committee's request to look again at the proposed reduction of 25% in the Book Fund now that a better than anticipated settlement has been received from Welsh Government, the reduction in the Book Fund will be 15%.

In February 2016 the Committee began its review of the mobile library service since the service change in 2014 and at this stage we considered and agreed our Terms of Reference, scope and methodology for this piece of work. ...(Ongoing)

Bids & tenders for Council Contracts

At its meeting on the 7th October 2015 the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee resolved to refer the following key performance exception to the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee for review in more detail:- *'The no. of local business submitting bid / tenders for Council contracts'*. In response to the referral the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee received a detailed report setting out the reasons behind the Council's underperforming Quarter 1 and 2 figures (Financial Year 2015/2016) in respect of the number of bids and tenders submitted for Council contracts by local businesses which had fallen below target and the mechanisms in place to support local businesses. However, at that stage committee felt they wanted to explore their lines of enquiry in more detail and expressed concern at the underperforming PI therefore resolved to undertake a short review over one or two meetings with the aim of developing evidence based recommendations at the end of this piece of work.

We received a number of reports from the Council's Corporate Procurement Unit to assist us with our review into the Council's current procurement procedures and contract specifications and to enable us to assess the current provision of support for local businesses within the County Borough. As part of our review Committee was keen to hear from the local and wider business community and so, in March 2016 we invited representatives from local businesses and Business Wales to our Committee. We wanted to hear first hand how the Council was supporting local businesses and whether it is meeting its objectives.

At the meeting the local businesses informed us that.....

Committee identified the following recommendations for the Executive to consider and where necessary implement.

Crime & Disorder Committee

As the Council has moved towards a more thematic approach in its new scrutiny arrangements the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee is now the Council's designated Crime & Disorder Committee (under sections 19 & 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006) and is required to hold at least one meeting per year. The Committee met on the 11th January 2016, also in attendance was the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, Councillor R. Smith and the Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Libraries & Heritage, Councillor J Rosser. At the meeting the Crime & Disorder Committee had the opportunity to question Sally Burke, the Chief Superintendent and Divisional Commander, South Wales Police, Committee on a number of issues such as the strategic projects and priorities for delivery during 2015/16 and 2016/17. Committee acknowledged the considerable change programme for services such as domestic abuse, substance misuse, tackling extremism and offender management as well as consideration of a future review of the community safety partnership landscape across Cwm Taf which will explore opportunities for integration of services and put in place more robust governance arrangements. Having considered the report and subsequent responses by officers to rigorous line of questioning the Committee concluded that it was satisfied that at this time there were no areas of concern or areas they wished to scrutinise in greater depth. However we will continue to monitor and review these topic areas.

Committee has since extended an invitation to the Police Crime Commissioner to attend a future Crime and Disorder Committee and we are currently awaiting a response

Conclusion

It has been a busy year but we have seen some positive outcomes:-

Recycling? –

Bids & Tenders? -

We recognise that this new approach to scrutiny is an evolving one and many topics within our work programme will continue into the next Municipal Year. We are already looking to arrange a site visit and hold a future Committee meeting in Bryn Pica, the integrated waste management facility in Aberdare so that we can continue to monitor the recycling facilities within Rhondda Cynon Taf to ensure that we meet our the 2015/16 target set by Welsh Government. I would like to thank my Vice Chairman and all Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee for their valuable input and continued support and I look forward to further developing our work programme to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

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APPENDIX 3

WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

The following information is intended to provide a summary of the contributions to the Council's policy development and governance arrangements made by the Council's Scrutiny Committees between May 2015 and April 2016

Policy development/review -

Considering draft policy/impact of policy change/providing Cabinet with the views of scrutiny members.

- Consultation on Home to School Transport – new policy
- Consultation on Revenue budget strategy
- Welsh Government Consultation – Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill
- Impact of service change – Meals on Wheels Service
- Library service
- The draft Corporate Performance Report for 2015/16?

Pre-decision scrutiny –

Where scrutiny has commented on policy proposals prior to Cabinet's consideration providing an opportunity to influence Cabinet's decision making:

- Draft Corporate Plan for 2016-2020
- 2016/17 Revenue Budget Proposals
- Draft Medium Term Strategic Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf Leisure Services 2015-2020
- 2016/17 action plans to deliver priorities

Monitoring performance/progress

Monitoring the Council's performance or monitoring the implementing actions previously agreed:

- Director of Social Services Annual Report
- Social Services Annual Representation & Complaints Report 2014/15
- Cwm Taf Carers Information & Strategy Annual Report 2014/15
- Cwm Taf Safeguarding Adults' Board Annual Report 2014/15
- Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report 2014/15
- School Attendance Performance
- Educational attainment at Foundation and Key Stages along with School categorisation;
- ESYN Inspection Outcomes
- Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative
- Quarterly budget & performance monitoring;
- Monitoring of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy
- Rhondda Cynon Taf's Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Assessment Report 2014-2015

Inspection/regulation

- CSSIW Annual Council Performance Evaluation Report 2014/15
- Estyn Inspection Outcomes
- WAO review - Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children

Call-in

- Home to School Transport: Maintaining the Existing Service but Reducing the Subsidy for Discretionary Travel – a Public Consultation on a Proposed New Policy. The Call-in was unsuccessful. However, as a result of the debate it was agreed that Scrutiny should play a role in the consultation process on the proposed new policy.

Scrutiny Reviews

- 'Zero Hours' contracts - completed
- Governor Support - ongoing
- Maesyffynnon Residential Care Home – ongoing (should conclude shortly)
- Council Accommodation – ongoing
- Fuel Poverty – ongoing (should conclude shortly)
- Participation rates in recycling across the County Borough
- Mobile Library Service
- The number of bids and tenders submitted for Council contracts by local businesses

Outcomes

In total Scrutiny has sent ??? recommendations/requests to the Cabinet during 2015/16

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Empty Properties

The Empty Properties Scrutiny Review led by Councillor Geraint Davies considered not only the current work of the Council in tackling the issue but also considered the external factors that can influence the numbers of empty properties and the extent to which these can be address. As well as visiting those parts of the County Borough particularly affected by the blight of empty properties Members met with renowned architect Jonathan Adams who contributed to the BBC Wales programme 'How Green is my Valley: a Future for the Valleys'. In total **9 recommendations** were identified which it is believed will further strengthen the services available to bring back into use empty properties. The Cabinet responded positively to these recommendations accepting them all in principal and the Cabinet Member in conjunction with officers presented their action plan to the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee setting out how they aimed to implement these recommendations. Amongst this work will be the launch of a specific and targeted campaign to raise awareness of the issues caused by empty properties and the benefits of bringing them back into use to include: -development of a brand; use of various media eg website, radio, posters; improvements to the Council's website and reporting mechanisms and to improve and update the Council's empty property pack.

Carers

The percentage of carers of adult services users who were offered an assessment in their own right during the year has improved from a bottom quartile position in 2014/15

Looked After Children

The findings and recommendations of the two scrutiny working groups in relation to children looked after by the Council were presented to Cabinet on 24th November 2015. The working group focusing on educational attainment was led by Councillor Christina Leyshon whilst the working group which focussed on placements costs was led by Councillor Margaret Davies. As part of these reviews Members visited schools and met with the Regional Commissioning Manager for the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru and Dr Claire Ball the Clinical Director for Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services. In total, 15 recommendations were made which were all accepted and an action plan put in place which includes reviewing the current Pupil Education Plan system, developing a training programme for designated teachers for LAC, education staff and foster carers on the needs of LAC, improve the collation and interrogation of data to track and monitor outcomes of LAC (education) and Children's Services will produce a LAC Reduction Strategy as part of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014.

Educational attainment

Our work on governor support should help develop the leadership of schools therefore driving improvement???

Aim to close the Gap on the performance of FSM children – challenge??

Community Infrastructure Levy

Scrutiny recommended a **6 point process** to Cabinet for the formulating, monitoring and revising the Regulation 123 List and these were considered and accepted by Cabinet on the 23rd July 2015.

'Zero Hour' Contracts

This Scrutiny Working Group made 3 recommendations to Cabinet which were accepted. Principally the working group developed and recommended the introduction of a policy which commits contractors to ethical practices and supports the ethical management of 'zero hours' contracts.

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