

Mae'r cofnodion hyn yn amodol ar gymeradwyaeth yng nghyfarfod priodol nesaf y Pwyllgor

These Minutes are subject to approval at the next appropriate meeting of the Committee.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at the Council Headquarters, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale, on Monday, 10th December 2018.

PRESENT

County Borough Councillor S. A. Bradwick – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

A. Chapman	D. Owen-Jones
M. Fidler Jones	S. Pickering
E. George	W. Treeby
D. Grehan	M Weaver
W. Owen	

Officers

W. Edwards – Head of Community Services

Mr S. Humphreys – Head of Legal, Planning & Environment

J. Nicholls – Senior Democratic Services Officer

23. CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair advised Committee that Councillor A S Fox would replace Councillor M. Diamond as a member of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee. The Chair expressed his thanks to Councillor Diamond for his contributions to Scrutiny.

It was **RESOLVED** that a letter of thanks be sent to Councillor M. Diamond on behalf of the Committee.

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillors A S Fox, G. Hughes, G. Stacey and T. Williams.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

26. MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee held on the 15th November 2018.

27. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – MALADMINISTRATION & COMPLAINTS

The Head of Legal, Planning & Environment presented the report of the Director of Legal & Democratic Services in respect of the complaints of maladministration made to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) for the period 2017/18.

The Head of Legal referred Committee to the recommendations and asked Members to consider the information within the annual report specific to Rhondda Cynon Taf. It was confirmed that the total number of complaints received by the PSOW and taken into investigation in respect of RCT had decreased from 47 for the period 2016/17 to 36 for 2017/18 against the local authority average of 60. Of the 36 complaints and as reflected in the previous year, 10 relate to Children's Social Services, 5 to Environment & Environmental Health and 4 to Planning and Building Control. The Head of Legal confirmed that no public interest reports relating to the local authority were issued during the period.

In conclusion, Committee requested that a breakdown in respect of the complaints made to the PSOW relating to the Service areas of Environment & Environmental Health and Planning and Building Control is provided to the next Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED to:-

1. Acknowledge the information contained within the Annual Report and Annual Letter from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales in respect of complaints and cases of maladministration investigated by the PSOW for 2017/18; and
2. Receive a breakdown of the complaints made to the PSOW in 2017/18 relating to the Service areas of Environment & Environmental Health and Planning and Building Control to review at the next meeting of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.

28. TRANSFORMATION OF THE MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE

The Head of Community Services presented the report of the Director Public Health, Protection and Community Services in respect of the transformation of the Council's mobile library service with a view to providing Scrutiny with information

on the plans for implementation following approval by the Cabinet at its meeting held on the 22nd March 2018.

The Head of Community Services provided Scrutiny with an overview of the proposals, agreed by Cabinet, such as the reduction of the number of existing vehicles used for the delivery of the Mobile Library Service from three to two. It was clarified that the investment in two new purpose built vehicles, which includes on board access to Wi-Fi is a consequence of the original vehicles breaking down for a significant period resulting in an unreliable service for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. Likewise, the proposal to reduce the number of stops to 48 longer stops of 2.5 hours every three weeks is to maximise the use of the on board Wi-Fi facility and use the vehicles as outreach community hubs although it was stressed that the service will continue to offer access to many books, e-books and other printed material.

As over 70% of current users of the mobile library service are over 65 years old and many over 80 years old, an impact assessment was undertaken which determined that the eligibility criteria for the former Housebound Service should be extended so that the reduction in the number of stops would not have an adverse effect on those residents who need to use the service. The proposal to rebrand the current service to the @HomeLibraryService would reflect the changes and ensure that the service is accessible to all those housebound residents, anyone who is unable to leave their homes such as full time carers and any resident with a disability.

The Head of Community Services reported on the results of the eight week consultation, held between the 8th May and 3rd July 2018, which were received at the Cabinet meeting held on the 20th September 2018 and available to Scrutiny via the link within the report. A total of 389 consultation responses were received, the majority stating that they considered the mobile library to be a good service.

Scrutiny was informed that the Head of Community Services had contacted a number of other local authorities to establish how they have progressed their mobile library services; only fourteen other local authorities retain a mobile library service one of which is delivered wholly by volunteers. The Head of Community Services assured Scrutiny that Rhondda Cynon Taf is looking to retain its mobile library provision to provide access to a range of books and reading materials for people of all ages who do not live near a static library. It was reported that the new vehicles have disabled access to the rear, which will require consideration when taking the vehicles out to the community and identifying central stops.

Currently, other Council services such as Communities for Work Plus or the One4All Centres are being contacted to establish whether they would like a presence on the mobile libraries and marketing of the new model of delivery is underway and the new model of delivery will be in place by the 11th February 2019. With regard to the suitability and practicality of the new timetable, consultation has taken place with the Unions (who have been involved with the process to date), Elected Members (via email) and the drivers themselves who understand the needs of the local community.

In conclusion, the Head of Community Services assured Scrutiny that compulsory redundancies will not be necessary, as there are currently vacancies available in other areas of the library service and where volunteers are involved in the service they add value to the work of the permanent staff such as collating the obituaries rather than replacing staff. In the future, a training programme will up-skill staff who remain in the mobile library service.

A Member felt that Scrutiny had already discussed some of the issues raised and questioned the purpose of the consultation process as it appeared that the proposals differ from the views of the residents and mobile library users. They also raised concerns at the reduction and irregularity of the stops, which may exclude some existing customers. They suggested that a more consistent timetable could benefit the residents of RCT. In response, the Head of Community Services acknowledged that the proposals may differ from the consultation responses in some cases, however, stressed the importance of creating a mobile library service that is sustainable for the future and will attract new customers; changing the model delivery will ensure the service moves forward. The Head of Community Services assured Scrutiny that a number of factors have been taken into consideration to devise a timetable and identify the most appropriate stops, such as the numbers of those residents currently using the system, those using the @home service, the location of the static libraries (there won't be a mobile library service within one mile of a static library) and the local knowledge of Elected Members and drivers. Members were reminded that they would shortly receive a timetable of the mobile library stops for their information.

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

1. Acknowledge the information contained within the report;
2. As Elected Members, receive a timetable with confirmed locations in due course; and
3. Continue to receive progress updates in respect of the Council's mobile library service to inform the future Scrutiny work programme.

29. WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

The Head of Community Services advised Scrutiny that it was not possible to publish Rhondda Cynon Taf's draft Welsh Public Library Standards Assessment for 2017/2018 due to a delay on the part of Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales who administer the Welsh Public Library Standards reports. Although information in respect of the Rhondda Cynon Taf assessment is available, a comparison with other local authorities would not be until the New Year when it is anticipated the full report would be brought before this Scrutiny Committee.

By means of a power point presentation, the Head of Community Services outlined the sixth framework, which consists of 12 core entitlements and 16 quality indicators, of which 10 have outcome targets. The results relating specifically to Rhondda Cynon Taf were presented, all 12 core entitlements were met, 5 quality indicators were met in full, 1 was partially met and 4 the local authority no longer meets.

In conclusion, the Head of Community Services stated that the results had reflected a mixed performance but reminded Scrutiny of the key aspects of the library service which have been retained such as Schools Library Service as well as the mobile and housebound service (@homelibraryservice). There has been investment in community hubs and new buildings in Rhydyfelin and Taff Vale, the latter opening in 2020; the long-term benefits of the investments would be realised in due course.

A Member asked whether there was opportunity for local businesses to support the Library Service in terms of offering financial assistance or purchasing books for the book fund in return for advertising their business. In response, the Head of Community Services welcomed the idea of local businesses supporting the service, buying books and renting out rooms in the libraries but advised that the Public Libraries Act would prevent any form of advertising in return for business sponsorship.

A number of 'Friends of Library' groups have been set up with further promotion of the library service to encourage new members. Committee learned that as part of the Welsh Government initiative, all Year 6 pupils are provided with their library cards although it was discussed that perhaps this could be done earlier to encourage younger readers. The Schools Library Service works closely with Primary School aged children with engagement via the SLA's and recently the service has employed a graduate officer who is looking at the digitalisation of collections.

Following a request for information, the Head of Community Services confirmed that the numbers of children under the age of 18 years who are members of the RCT libraries would be provided to all Committee members following the meeting.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:-

1. To acknowledge the Rhondda Cynon Taf's draft Welsh Public Library Standards Assessment 2017/2018 with a view to the full position being reported in January 2019; and
2. To receive information in respect of the numbers of children under 18 years who are members of RCT libraries.

Chair
S. A. Bradwick

The meeting closed at 6.40pm