

**Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Friday, 11 September 2020 at 2.00 pm.

**County Borough Councillors - Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-**

Councillor J Bonetto (Chair)

**Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Councillors**

Councillor T. Skinner (Vice Chair)

Councillor D. Sammon

**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Councillors**

Councillor G Caple Councillor W Jones

**Officers in attendance**

Mr Christian Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services & Communications, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council

Mr Chris Hole, The Head of Community Wellbeing & Prevention, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Ms K Smith, Cwm Taf Senior PSB Support Officer

Ms L. Toghill, Senior PSB Support Officer

Mrs Sarah Handy, Members Researcher' and Scrutiny Officer

Ms Claire Hendy, Senior Democratic Services Officer

**Co-opted Members in attendance**

Mr Mel Jehu, Local Health Board Representative

Mr Maguire, Merthyr Tydfil Citizen Representative

**18 THE 5 CORE STATUTORY FUNCTIONS OF THE CWM TAF JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**19 Declaration of Interest**

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

**20 Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2020 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

## 21 Chair of the Cwm Taf Public Service Board (PSB)

The Chair of the PSB, Councillor K O'Neill, provided the Committee with an update in respect of the work of the Board during the 2019-20 PSB Year..

The Chair reminded Members that the second year has been about continuing and building on the successes of our first year, as well as incorporating and using what we have learned. Members were reminded that the Board is still taking an assets-based approach, meaning that the Board looks at what works well in Cwm Taf, what people are proud of and what it can do to strengthen and further develop these.

Members were told that the work has focused on two key questions:-

- How are we making a positive difference in our communities; and,
- Are our mechanisms for delivery right, and are they working.

In respect of the highlights and key achievements in the 2019-20 PSB year, the Chair of the PSB referenced the progress against the Well-being Objectives:-

- **Thriving Communities**

Members were told that across both areas, Neighbourhood Networks continue to thrive, and act as a way of the community being involved in the Hub and how they develop. The community coordinator roles carried out by Susan Jones and Louise Clement help to build and strengthen existing networks and improve access to services, and promote the hubs within the area.

Members were reminded about the site visit to the Ferndale Hub and were told that this work has enabled the PSB to work towards some of the 'Simple Changes' identified by the Future Generations Commissioner, such as enabling local people to improve unloved spaces; enabling local people to come together in communities to meet and build social networks and maximising the Board's work with community anchor organisations.

It was emphasised that over the last six months, the Hubs have been instrumental in supporting and coordinating community response.

During the COVID-19 crisis and the UK national lockdown, the RCT Hubs helped with local responses and meeting community needs, particularly the needs of the most vulnerable: coordinating volunteers, arranging and delivering food parcels, picking up shopping and prescriptions, ensuring contact was made with identified individuals – be it a friendly phone call, offering help, advice and understanding, dog walking, posting letters, using the internet.

Members were informed that the Hubs offered and signposted to Information, Advice and Assistance – initially online and through volunteers, including running and directing towards online courses and support for mental and physical well-being. The Hubs opened once it was possible and safe to do so and offered services that people needed, including support with accessing benefits and finding work, which has been particularly important in readiness for the impact of furlough scheme coming to an end. Members were told that 'The Little Ferns' nursery has also resumed in Hwb Glynrhedynog.

The Chair of the PSB also reminded Members about the use of the Hubs during Storm Ciara and Dennis and their help with the response to the flooding, and the coordinated response to the summer flooding events in Pentre.

In Merthyr, the Calon Las Community Hub in the Gurnos has been involved in the supporting the community in a similar way; working with volunteers, community groups and organisations to support and build resilience and help those vulnerable or shielding as well as supporting groups of people such as young carers. Information, advice and assistance has been offered, as well as running or signposting to training and learning opportunities, and ways of coping and managing well-being during lockdown such as tips on healthy eating on a budget.

The Chair of the PSB informed the Committee that Merthyr Valleys Homes Youth Team, amongst others, have been delivering books to local children as part of Merthyr's Reading Festival – packages that were put together with help from VAMT and the Stephens and George Charitable Trust as well as having been involved in distributing play packs.

- **Healthy People**

The Chair of the PSB advised the Committee that the focus for year two had been on our most vulnerable residents. As set out in the PSB Annual Report, progress was made in developing a 'vulnerability profile' in Cwm Taf so that we can identify and help vulnerable families before they reach crisis point. This has been supported by commissioning two bodies; 'SAIL' to carry out some analysis work for us and 'Insight' to investigate the benefits and feelings amongst a range of stakeholders about sharing data to identify pregnant women, children and young families who are vulnerable to poor outcomes. The findings of the two areas of work have been delayed owing to Covid-19. However, Members were assured that the work is resuming and that the Board will update the Committee in due course.

The Chair also informed Members that a new service has been set up for vulnerable women facing the risk of repeated, unplanned pregnancies. This service will provide outreach sexual health workers in identified areas to break down the barriers to engagement and offer women sexual health advice in their own communities

- **Strong Economy**

Members were told that this had been launched the 'Employability Pledge' in February 2020 and that it commits the PSB and member organisations to develop and share best practice when it comes to improving routes into employment, opportunities for development within our workforces, volunteering and work experience. The Chair of the PSB informed the Committee that the Board started to work with schools and colleges to find out what interests our young people. It was emphasised that this is linked to the ACEs agenda. The Board has also been working to raise aspirations and held a 'Have a Go' day with Merthyr Tydfil College and Year 8 pupils from Pen Y Dre High who had a chance to try out different interactive equipment from across a range of sectors, whilst also exploring the College and seeing what it has to offer. The PSB Chair informed Members that in 2020/21 the Board will continue to look at the foundational, or local, economy as an additional method of community development, including working with the Centre for Local Economic Studies

(CLES) and WG on a Community Wealth Building and progressive procurement at a regional level with Bridgend.

- **Tackling Loneliness and Isolation**

The PSB Chair emphasised that working to address and mitigate loneliness and isolation will be key in recovery planning for the coming months in the context of recovery of Covid-19, lockdown, shielding and the long-term impacts of things like furlough and managing anxiety in the 'new normal'.

Committee Members were reminded that the Board has continued to use what was learnt in the review undertaken in 2019/20 to work together to tackle challenges and identify and promote the critical success factors that might work locally, particularly around social prescribing, befriending and developing community assets. It was emphasised that social prescribing a key area for Cwm Taf Morgannwg and the partnerships that operate in the area. RPB money was used to employ a 'loneliness and isolation development officer'. Members were told that the PSB began to look at supporting befriending services in a more sustainable way so that services people need and use are not at risk. A befriending network had a preliminary meeting in January, and the PSB has included in its Terms of Reference work to develop a Preventative Strategy to address needs, not just now to help prepare for the future.

Committee Members were told that Cwm Taf had been asked to lead a workshop on the way in which we are working to tackle loneliness and social isolation through wellbeing strategies and joined up services at the Welsh Centre for Public Policy's event on the topic. However, this event has had to be postponed as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. The PSB Chair advised the Committee that it was recently announced that Ian Davy, Chief Officer at VAMT and the PSB Champion for this cross cutting theme will be retiring at the end of September. The Chair wished to place on record his thanks to Ian and wishes him well in the future. Sharon Richards has been announced as his replacement at VAMT; the PSB is yet to consider its new lead for the work.

The PSB Chair also noted that the PSB published an interim Annual Report by 4 July, in line with the reporting deadline. The decision had been made that it wouldn't be appropriate to discuss successes or planned work in the context of such uncertainty and without having opportunity to involve our communities and citizens. A full report is planned to be published this autumn, which will also draw upon the learnings from the Community Impact Assessment, carried out jointly with Bridgend PSB and Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board, which will be discussed in the progress of the update.

It was emphasised that the PSB has increasingly explored how it can collaborate and integrate with other partnerships working in Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM), particularly the Regional Partnership Board and Bridgend PSB. This is also re-affirming our commitment to a strong preventative agenda and a Cwm Taf Morgannwg Joint Strategic Partnership Conference was held in January 2020. Members from both Bridgend and Cwm Taf PSB, and Cwm Taf Morgannwg RPB came together to discuss future working arrangements and opportunities to integrate and collaborate. The Boards know that the 'big issues' need the biggest commitment to change, best use of collective resources and minimal risk of duplication of efforts. Since then, there's been ongoing discussions about implementing changes, reviewing how the delivery mechanisms for all Boards can be integrated and exploring opportunities to work together, setting a strategy regionally that can be implemented and designed around meeting local needs –

now more important than ever in the context of Covid-19 and needing shared strong strategic vision and understanding when planning for recovery.

JOSC Members were reminded about the report received in February outlining the work of the Live Lab on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Members were told that this work has halted in the past six months due to COVID-19, but the commitment to drive this forward remains central for the PSB.

The Chair of the PSB noted the recent barriers that the Board have had to overcome. Members of the Committee were informed that as a result of the RCT flooding the launch of the Employability Pledge was delayed. In respect of the COVID-19 pandemic, the PSB stood down for its June meeting. The impact of Covid-19 cannot be underestimated but it was emphasised that the Board remains committed to improving the well-being of the people in Cwm Taf. It has also renewed the commitment to collaborative working, particularly with the RPB and Bridgend PSB on key areas that the Board believes can make the biggest difference, such as mental health, homelessness and climate change.

It was noted that the Board received a letter from Julie James, Minister for Housing and Local Government informing the PSB that there would be no grant money available for PSBs for 2020-21. For Cwm Taf Morgannwg, this is a loss of £55,844 – the only money made available to the Board. The Chair advised the Committee that a subsequent letter from the Minister set out expectations around the PSBs and it was noted that this letter was included in the agenda pack as an information document for JOSC Members.

The PSB Chair emphasised that Julie James' letter sets the tone with which the Board will now approach its work, and building back better in the 'new normal'. To that end, the Community Impact Assessment is a collaborative effort between the partnerships operating in Cwm Taf Morgannwg and will be a valuable tool for teasing out the recommendations – based on data and insight – for immediate and future focus. The Chair advised Members that a first draft is underway and emphasised that the Board recognises the need for speed when it comes to this work in terms of quickly learning lessons in readiness for the approaching second wave.

In terms of the year ahead, the PSB Chair advised the Committee that the Strategic Partnership Board (SPB) is taking place on 15<sup>th</sup> September and will be reviewing the priorities and the focus for this year for the Well-being Objectives. The Public Services Board meets again on 20<sup>th</sup> October.

To conclude, the PSB Chair extended his thanks to Professor Marcus Longley for his service as Chair of the PSB over the last few years and extended his congratulations to the new Vice Chair, Mark Brace, who also Chairs the Bridgend PSB. Councillor K O'Neill also thanked the Scrutiny Chair for welcoming and allowing him to present the update to Committee Members.

Following the update, Committee Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions. Councillor Caple began by thanking the Chair of the PSB for providing the Committee with such a detailed update. Councillor Caple continued by stating the recent flooding events caused by Storm Ciara and Storm Dennis together with the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered an increased appreciation from the public in public services. Consequently, Councillor Caple queried whether all Hubs should provide basic public services in their communities and if so, could the PSB compare

the Hubs as the process develops.

The Chair of the PSB advised Members that the development of the Hubs will be based on capacity and referenced the 'Early Years' programme in the Gurnos Hub in Merthyr Tydfil and the 'Stay Well at Home' programme in RCT as an example of recent success in this area.

The Head of Community Wellbeing & Prevention, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council advised Members that it's been about how partners were able to contribute into the Hubs and he emphasised that the development of the Hubs has been driven locally by the local community needs and what local partners can contribute. Kirsty Smith, Senior PSB Support Officer, also emphasised that it's about looking at the wider assets in the community. Councillor Caple informed the Committee that in Porth, the department for Employment is working with the Hubs and the GP's and that it's about making them all work in conjunction with each other. The Head of Community Wellbeing & Prevention, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council agreed that it's about developing an integrated approach and that it should be a network of organisations working together making sure that there are no overlaps. Lisa Toghil, Senior PSB Support Officer, emphasised the use of the neighbourhood networks and the community involvement in terms of the five ways of working.

Discussions ensued and Mr Mel Jehu, the local Health Board representative, wished to congratulate Councillor K O'Neill in his appointment as the new Chair of the PSB and extended his praise to all the hard work of public servants during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr Jehu sought reassurance from Councillor K O'Neill that a record will be kept of the positive collaborative work that has been achieved during the pandemic and of 'lessons learned'.

Discussions continued and Councillor W. Jones emphasised the importance of the voluntary hubs and organisations and wished to place on records his gratitude to them for all their hard work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Councillor Jones also emphasised the importance of ensuring that voluntary hubs are included as part of the recovery programme going forward. The Chair of the PSB agreed that this must be the way forward and also emphasised the conduit of Local Elected Members and their links within the community. The PSB Chair emphasised the vital role that Elected Members play in supporting the COVID response. Furthermore, the Chair agreed that it is important to keep a record of the 'lessons learned' and to ensure that any positive outcomes are driven forward as part of our future work.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to note the update from the Chair of the PSB.

## **22 Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2019-20**

The Service Director of Democratic Services & Communications (RCTCBC) introduced the Cwm Taf JOSOC Annual Report 2019-20, which details the work undertaken by the Committee during the 2019-20 Municipal Year.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the Annual report and work of the Cwm Taf Public Service Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## 23 Any Other Business

There was no other business to be reported.

## 24 Chairs review and close

The Chair began by extending her thanks to all Members and Officers of the PSB Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee during the 2019-20 Municipal Year. The Chair noted that unprecedented times have brought changes and different ways of working, particularly in respect of virtual Council meetings.

The Chair reflected on the 2019-20 Municipal Year and the work of the Committee and noted the decision of the Committee to focus on one area: Thriving Communities. The Chair reminded Members of the successful visit to the Ferndale Hub and emphasised the importance of the Hubs in adapting to the needs of our residents and our communities. The Chair extended her thanks to Professor Marcus Longley and Dr Kelechi Nnoaham for attending Scrutiny meetings and for the updates that they presented to Members throughout the 2019-20 Municipal Year. The Chair extended her congratulations to Councillor K O'Neill as the new Chair of the PSB and welcomed him to future Scrutiny meetings.

To conclude, the Chair thanked all Officers for their hard work and diligence over the past year and thanked Members for providing a constructive and challenging discussion.

## 25 Information Reports

The Chair referenced the information reports (as listed below):-

- [Minutes of the Cwm Taf Public Service Board](#);
- Interim [PSB Annual Report](#);
- Draft PSB July 2020 minutes (not yet approved by the Board);
- Natural Resources Wales 'Green Recovery Letter' to the Minister for Environment, Energy & Rural Affairs;
- Letter from the Minister for Housing and Local Government to the Chairs of Public Service Boards;
- [Powys Public Service Board Summary of the Future Generations report 2020](#); and,

- [The Future Generations Report 2020](#)

**This meeting closed at 2.42 pm**

**Councillor J. Bonetto  
Chair**