

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, 4 December 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 D. Sammon Councillor J. Davies

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

Ms K Smith, Cwm Taf 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
Ms A. Lewis – RCT Citizen Representative

1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed Members to the first virtual meeting of the Cwm Taf Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

2 The 5 core statutory functions of the Cwm Taf Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Chair asked Members to note the 5 core statutory functions of the Cwm Taf Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3 Declaration of Interest

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

4 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 11th September 2020 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

5 Report of the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications RCTCBC - Governance arrangements for the Cwm Taf PSB Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications RCTCBC presented his report to Members and informed Members of the Governance arrangements for the Cwm Taf Public Service Board Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee and asked Members to agree a way forward for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

Members were reminded that following the agreement to establish the Cwm Taf Public Service Board Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council agreed to undertake the administrative arrangements on a joint basis and provide dedicated support and advisers for the JOSC for a period of one year each, on a rotational basis respectively.

The Service Director advised Members that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and due to unforeseen pressures on Council resources, a review was undertaken by senior officers from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council of the administrative arrangements of the Cwm Taf Public Service Board Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Members were told that following discussion amongst senior officers it was subsequently agreed that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council would continue the role as the Host Authority for the 2020-21 Municipal Year and for a further review of the Administrative arrangements to take place at the end of the Municipal year.

Members were therefore asked to consider and review the Cwm Taf Public Service Board Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference and to consider any further training requirements.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED**:

1. To note that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, as the host Authority, will undertake the Scrutiny arrangements of the Cwm Taf Public Service Board Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee during the 2020-21 Municipal Year; and,
2. To approve the Cwm Taf Public Service Board Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference

6 Chair and Vice Chair Appointment

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED**:

1. To appoint Councillor Bonetto as Chair of the Cwm Taf Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2020/21 Municipal Year; and,
2. To appoint Councillor Skinner as Vice Chair of the Cwm Taf Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

7 The Cwm Taf PSB Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme 2020/21

The Service Director of Democratic Services & Communications gave an overview to Members in respect of the Cwm Taf Joint Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/21.

The Service Director set out the context and pressures Council Services are currently operating within as it focusses on the impact of the pandemic and its associated plans for response and recovery. The Service Director went on to emphasise that the Committee will need to be mindful of these ongoing pressures and that Members are asked to acknowledge the balance required for a flexible and supportive scrutiny work programme.

Members were advised that the forward work programme sets out a manageable and realistic programme of scrutiny activity, allowing for the more pressing matters to be considered whilst having the flexibility to respond to emerging issues.

Members were reminded that given the current climate, the forward work programme priorities may be subject to change should other specific business need to be considered by the Committee.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the contents of the proposed draft Cwm Taf Joint Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/21

8 To receive the Chair of the Community Impact Assessment Group and Vice Chair of the PSB

The Chair welcomed Mr Mark Brace to the Committee and advised Members about his role as Chair of the Community Impact Assessment Group and Vice Chair of the Public Service Board (PSB).

Mr Brace thanked Members of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for inviting him as the new Vice-Chair to give a progress update on the PSB in terms of response and recovery and the work of the Community Impact Assessment.

Members were reminded that Councillor O'Neill gave an overview of the second year of the PSB at Scrutiny's last meeting, held on the 11 September 2020.

Mr Brace continued to remind Members that the planned delivery of the Well-being Objectives, ACEs and Live Lab development and broader work against the Well-being of Future Generations Act was obviously greatly impacted by the flooding following Storms Ciara and Dennis, and then the pandemic.

Mr Brace emphasised that key questions remain relevant:

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

The Board last met on 20 October, and the was mostly focused on work started or planned in context of Covid-19 and recovery particularly around the Community Impact Assessment, work with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) and grant funding opportunities from Natural Resources

Wales.

In respect of response and recovery, Members were informed that PSB Members were each invited to the Community Impact Assessment Group to give an update on how each organisation had been impacted and managed through the first wave of the pandemic and beyond. Mr Brace noted the following points:

- SPB had already identified some concerns around staff capacity, pressure on resources, the need for clear communication and promotion of behavioural changes. The group also expressed concerns over the rising number and risks of suicides, deteriorating mental health and well-being and how-to best harness and support community groups, created or re-purposed during the first wave, which were now unclear in their role.
- The Board expressed its thanks for the incredible effort made by staff across all organisations, and the speed at which systems had been put in place to move quickly and with purpose, particularly across the summer and being able to put in place the Test, Trace and Protect system.
- The group also acknowledged that any moves towards mass testing or vaccination would need to be sensitive to our communities and working with them would be crucial.
- The learnings from the Community Impact Assessment would be a valuable tool for teasing out the recommendations – based on data and insight – for immediate and future focus.

Members were reminded that they have had the link to the Sway document in respect of the Community Impact Assessment Group. Mr Brace highlighted the following points in respect of the Group's work:

- To better understand how communities across the entirety of Cwm Taf Morgannwg were affected by Coronavirus and lockdown, Cwm Taf PSB along with Bridgend PSB and Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board carried out a Community Impact Assessment.
- Support teams from each of the Boards, along with representation including South Wales Fire and Rescue, Natural Resources Wales and the third sector co-ordinated the work and pulled local information together.
- The document has not been written as a public facing document, nor are there plans to publish. Rather, it is intended to inform how public services could work differently to deal with the impact of COVID-19 and improve resilience should future peaks occur.
- Data Cymru were commissioned to undertake the analysis and draw in national data sets and research. They were also asked to explore more innovative ways of presenting data, specifically 'Sway' as it allows for a greater interrogation of and interaction with the information.
- It focused on the impact of the first wave, and so covered the period up to August/September, i.e. the first wave and lifting of restrictions in the summer.
- The pandemic exposed existing inequalities, with some communities being more adversely affected by others owing to factors including deprivation, population breakdown, health, people of BAME.
- Headline findings were around incidence, hospital admissions and death

rates of Covid, impact on specific groups of people (carers, children and young people) and the impact of Covid on mental health, finance and our use of green spaces.

- The challenge will be on how we collectively work, with services and our communities, to tackle these inequalities in the coming months and years.
- The Assessment went to Cwm Taf PSB's 20 October meeting, with Sam Sullivan from Data Cymru walking the Members through the Assessment. It has also been shared and discussed at Bridgend PSB and the Regional Partnership Board.

In respect of the Centre for Local Economic Studies (CLES) the following points were highlighted to Members:

- A regional workshop involving colleagues from across Bridgend, RCT and Merthyr Tydfil - both local authority and third sector, as well as colleges, Business in Focus and Wales Cooperative Centre – took place on 13 October looking at progressive procurement and community wealth building.
- The workshop was led by John Heneghan and David Burch from the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) following their offer of support linked to the foundational economy work developing under Lee Waters, Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport.
- Community Wealth Building has five principles: fair employment and just labour markets, plural ownership of the economy, making financial power work for local places, progressive procurement of goods and services and socially just use of land and property.
- The workshop looked at procurement spend by the Local Authorities (and Health Board), and leakage, i.e. spend outside of the area. This spending power can be a means through which greater economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits can be achieved.
- Delegates were asked to consider 2 or 3 possible themes they would like to develop for the implementation plan for the first phase of this work. Initial thoughts from the 3 breakout groups were around
 - Food;
 - working with social enterprises and barriers e.g complex contracts;
 - the need for more relationship-based working with a view to more understanding of and engagement with local suppliers; and
 - How we can work together, better differently.

Members of the JOSOC were advised that the work has been left with CLES to plan the next stage of workshops based on who would still like to be involved and the identified themes.

In respect of NRW Grant Funding, Mr Brace advised Members that:

- The PSB has been successful in its application to NRW's Strategic Allocated Funding for £25,000. This is being used to deliver the 'Great Outdoors' project looking at encouraging people to use and access green spaces, particularly children and young people and families as this was seen as important to well-being and of particular interest in the context of Covid and mental health. Consideration will also be given to promoting the use of green spaces across the collective workforce of the PSB.
- The project will seek to understand current provision and gaps, and look

to deliver specific projects with identified participants, led by community groups with Interlink RCT being in charge of delivery.

- The project is due to start in January, and scoping workshops are underway.
- It is understood that this will be an annual grant, available for until 2023/24 at the moment.

Discussion continued and in respect of regional working Mr Brace informed Members that;

- As Members may remember, we brought Bridgend and Cwm Taf PSB, and the Regional Partnership Board together at a Joint Strategic Conference in January 2020.
- 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.
- It has also renewed our commitment to collaborative working, particularly with the RPB and Bridgend PSB on key areas that we believe can make the biggest difference, such as mental health, jobs and skills and climate change.
- There is an intention to hold a similar conference this January. We have been approached to work with The Health Foundation who have been holding sessions around the UK on 'Building Healthier Communities' and how Health Boards, and by extension the partnerships they are involved with, can look at the contribution they could make to their local communities and economy by changing how they employ people, procure and commission goods and services, make use of their estate and work to increase environmental sustainability.
- This is still very much in the planning stages, but an invitation will be extended to JOSC Members as plans become finalised. It is also hoped this work will dovetail into the work started with CLES.

To conclude, Mr Brace thanked Members of the JOSC for welcoming and allowing him to present the update.

Members were then provided with the opportunity to ask questions.

Councillor Caple thanked Mr Brace for the report and questioned what plans are in place to deal with the economic consequences of the pandemic. Mr Brace advised Members that 58,000 employees across the partnership have been furloughed and acknowledged that there is a lot of uncertainty about the future. Members were advised that the Community Impact Assessment work shows the potential impact of the pandemic on economic depression and mental health, particularly for young people and disadvantaged learners. The PSB has the opportunity to harness partnership working and to be a real benefit to the community. However, Mr Brace also acknowledged that the Board cannot do everything and the focus of the Board needs to be on work that can make a real impact in the community. Mr Brace emphasised that the conference in January will allow the Board to identify key areas in which it can help residents across the partnerships.

Discussions continued and Mr Mel Jehu, the Local Health Board co-opted

member, praised the leadership across all Local Authorities during the pandemic and praised communities coming together and the community spirit that has been shown throughout the pandemic. Mr Jehu also acknowledged the economic fallout from the pandemic, particularly in terms of mental health. Mr Jehu emphasised the importance of organisations working in partnership going forward.

Kirsty Smith, Senior PSB Support Officer, noted that the Board has been extremely fortunate to work with the Centre for Economic Strategy and commented that collectively partnerships can come together to support local jobs, local supply chains and improve resilience.

Discussions ensued and Councillor Jones reminded Members about the devastation of Storm Dennis and Storm Ciara in February this year and commented that the economic fallout from the pandemic and the storms will potentially have a huge effect on the economy in the future. Councillor Jones also noted the extreme pressure on employees who have been working throughout the pandemic, particularly in terms of health and wellbeing. Councillor Jones also wished to place on record his thanks to all three Local Health Boards and all Councillors and officers across the board.

Mr Brace commented that volunteering is an untapped resource and noted that each organisation has a volunteering initiative and noted that the PSB has a role to play in co-ordinating that approach. Mr Brace also acknowledged the extreme pressure on the unemployed but also on staff who are still working. It was emphasised that the PSB can play an important role in helping and co-ordinating to train young people in jobs for the future and that the pandemic has changed the way we look at work.

Councillor Caple commented that whilst working from home has its benefits, many people want to get back to work and to go to the workplace. Councillor Caple raised his concern in respect of the impact of working from home on mental health and wellbeing. Mr Brace acknowledged the difficulties of working from home and noted that working from home has added a new cohort to the work of the PSB in respect of loneliness and isolation. Mr Brace acknowledged that people who are working from home are often isolated from colleagues, friends and family. Mr Brace emphasised the importance of social interaction and its impact on health and wellbeing.

Following discussion, the Chair thanked Mr Brace for providing Members with a detailed overview of the Community Impact Assessment Group and extended an invitation for Mr Brace to attend future meetings of the JOSC.

Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the update from the Chair of the Community Impact Assessment Group and Vice Chair of the PSB.

9 Any Other Business

No other business to report.

10 Chairs review and close

The Chair thanked Members for attending and for engaging in a constructive discussion. The Chair reminded Members that the date of the next meeting will be on the 5th February 2021.

This meeting closed at 2.43 pm

**Cllr J. Bonetto
Chair**