

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, 23 April 2021 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 K. Gibbs
Councillor Isaac

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Councillors

Councillor G Caple Councillor W Jones
Councillor A Fox

Officers in attendance

Ms K Smith, Cwm Taf Senior PSB Support Officer
Mr M Crumbie, Head of Procurement Delivery, RCTCBC
Ms W Edwards, Service Director – Community Services, RCTCBC
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication, RCTCBC
Handy, Members Researcher' and Scrutiny Officer, RCTCBC
Ms J Nicholls, Principal Scrutiny Officer, RCTCBC
Mr Derek James, Service Director – Prosperity and Development, RCTCBC
Mr Alyn Owen, Interim Chief Executive, MTCBC
Mr Paul Davies, Procurement Manager, MTCBC

Co-opted Members in attendance

Mr Mel Jehu, Local Health Board Representative
Mr Maguire – Merthyr Tydfil Citizen Representative

Others in attendance

Mr Mark Brace, Chair of the Public Service Board

11 Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to the last meeting of the Cwm Taf Public Service Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting for the 2020-21 Municipal Year. The Chair also asked Members and Officers to introduce themselves to ensure ease of reference.

12 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.

13 Declaration of Interest

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

14 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 4th December 2020 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

15 Report of the Service Director, Democratic Services & Communication

The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communication provide an update for Members of the Cwm Taf Public Service Board Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee in respect of the agreed forward work programme, Annual report 2020/21 and proposals beyond the Councils' Annual General meetings.

The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communication informed Members that following the Councils' respective AGM's, the membership of the committee will be confirmed and a further governance report will be delivered to the first meeting of the 2021/22 Municipal Year, setting out the administrative arrangements and forward work programme resulting from the joint local authority discussions. Members were reminded that the agreed approach will ensure that Members of the JOSOC will continue to work together with shared responsibility for improved outcomes with the most appropriate support and resources in place.

Following discussion, Members acknowledge the content of the report and the update provided to Members by the Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications.

16 To Receive the Chair of the PSB

The Chair welcomed the Chair of the Cwm Taf Public Service Board (PSB), Mr Mark Brace, to the meeting and thanked him for his attendance.

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

The Chair of the PSB reminded Members of his presentation to Committee on the 4th December 2020. He reminded Committee Members that the JOSC was given an update on how the PSB had navigated and worked within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and asked the key questions:

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

JOSC Members were informed that the Board last met on 26 January and the first item of business was to confirm the role of the Chair. Members were reminded that the position of Vice Chair is currently vacant but the PSB welcomes the opportunities that sharing a Chair with Bridgend PSB presents.

The Board also approved the PSB Budget for 2021/22, as well as agreeing to continue the current support arrangements.

Mr Brace informed the Committee that the focus of the Board was mostly on the role of the PSB in Covid-19 response and recovery. At the time of the meeting, Wales was still in full lockdown with no information on how the restrictions would be eased. However, positive news was reported about sustained reduction in cases and rollout of community testing and the vaccination programme. Colleagues driving this work thanked the exceptional partnership working facilitating the achievements.

In respect of the PSB's Role in Recovery and it's future focus the following points were noted:

- PSB Members were each invited to give an update on how each organisation had been impacted and managed to date and all expressed its thanks for the incredible effort made by staff across all organisations.
- Themes emerged as common areas of concern for organisations as a result of Covid-19 such as homelessness, mental health and wellbeing, impact on children and young people / distance learning, employment and the economy and climate change.
- The Board noted the struggles that many staff are facing with regards to handling sensitive conversations when working from home, feelings of fatigue and managing wellbeing.
- It was acknowledged that the governance structures required by WG and the PSB aren't conducive to the speed at which organisations have had to work.
- Moving forward, consideration needs to be given to how the flexibility and responses can be built upon as a new approach to working. The Board needs to better understand what it can do, and then establish the governance to sort out the 'how', in line with the

5 ways of working.

- Clear focus on fewer, more targeted, priorities going forward to ensure the delivery of tangible results through existing mechanisms or addressing gaps.
- Chairs and Support Teams for PSBs collectively met with Julie James, Minister for Housing and Local Government in March to discuss the role of the PSB and the ongoing struggles the Boards face in terms of funding, unclear role and remit and lack of flexibility. We can share any notes from that meeting once released by WG.

In respect of the Well-being Assessment and Regional Working, the Chair of the PSB informed JOSC Members of the following points:

- *The PSB needs to undertake an assessment of well-being to be published in May 2022. This will be a joint assessment with Bridgend PSB, resulting in one Cwm Taf Morgannwg Wellbeing Assessment.*
- *As previously mentioned, we also intend to collaborate with the Regional Partnership Board as much as possible. They need to undertake and publish a Population Needs Assessment by April 2022 so resources, intelligence, information and opportunities for involvement will be shared as much as possible.*
- *WG have confirmed they are resuming the PSB support grant for 2021-22 to assist with the Wellbeing Assessment. This will be paid regionally, and the intention is to use the funds to support with involvement and analysis work.*
- *This is being further discussed at PSB on 27 April where we will also be discussing examples of regional working that has been successful and looking at how and what has worked for us to build on.*
- *PSB continues to work within the structures of the Regional Strategic Oversight Group. To this end, the PSB Support Team has undertaken a food sufficiency review (November 2020) and has just completed the first part of a mental health scoping review. This is with the Protect Tactical Group for review and being shared with PSB on 27 April. It will also be shared with the RPB with a view to informing commissioning practices and understanding gaps in provision / struggles facing our communities.*
- *Owing to Covid and capacity, we have had to pause the plans we had to hold the Joint Strategic Conference with the Health Foundation. We hope to be able to arrange something for late spring / early summer and an invitation will be extended to JOSC members.*
- *The intention is still to have one PSB covering Cwm Taf Morgannwg, mirroring the footprint of the Regional Partnership Board. The Assessment will be a useful vehicle for doing this, and we know that we must be one PSB by the time of publishing a joint Well-being Plan.*

In respect of the PSB's ongoing work, Members were informed that:

- *Regional working with the **Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) on progressive procurement and Community Wealth Building**. A spend analysis has been completed as well as a commencement workshop and an implementation planning workshop resulting in actions needed to progress the work. These are around:*
 - *developing a more comprehensive understanding of local suppliers,*
 - *reviewing 'leakage contracts' of spends outside of Wales and potential to use local suppliers, and*
 - *Streamlining and developing contract procedure rules and practice in relation to lower value contracts (below £25k / £50k).*

Capacity within CLES has been flagged as an issue but they are expanding their support team.

- *'**The Great Escape**' project using Natural Resources Wales Strategic Allocated Funds has concluded and final reports have been submitted. Led by Interlink RCT, the project provided socially distanced outdoor activities for targeted groups of people (children and young people, young families) to improve physical and mental well-being. One group that received funding to deliver work was featured on BBC Wales: 'Cynon Valley Organic Adventures'.*
- *The PSB will be publishing its **Annual Report** in July 2021 covering the work of the Board over the last year. A draft is going to the PSB meeting on 27 April and can be shared with JOSB prior to publication for comment.*
- *Cwm Taf PSB were approached to take part in a **Best Practice Xchange** held in mid-March to discuss the Live Lab work on preventing and mitigating the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Simon James of Interlink and Charlotte Waite of Plattform gave an update and overview of the approach, the findings and the resulting recommendations and progress to date. Their presentation was very well received and will be part of an article on the next PSB Bulletin.*
- *The next meeting of the PSB will also see partners receive an update and presentation from our CVCs, Interlink and VAMT, who have been working with the Bevan Foundation to review what has worked over the last 12 months from a community perspective based on action research undertaken. This is linked to the ongoing **community development** work and the actions that came from the Live Lab.*

To conclude, the Chair of the PSB thanked Councillor Bonetto for welcoming him and allowing him to present the update to Committee.

Following the update from the Chair of the PSB, the PSB Support Officer, Ms Kirsty Smith, provided Committee Members with a further update. Members were advised that discussions are ongoing in respect of the Board's future work programme and joint working strategy. The relationship with the Regional Partnership Board was also emphasised and that the future plan will be to merge to create one central PSB.

Following discussion, Members were furnished with the opportunity to ask questions.

Mr Mel Jehu, Co-opted Member representing the Local Health Board, queried when Committee Members of the JOSOC would be in a position to receive a strategic/operational plan from the PSB. Mr Jehu emphasised the importance of the JOSOC Members being able to scrutinise the Board's delivery plan and its outcomes. The Chair of the PSB referenced the Board's upcoming Annual Report, which will include the Board's plans for the future. Mr Brace also referenced issues around the Board struggling for its role and purpose, and assured JOSOC Members that going forward there will be a clear focus on fewer priorities. Mr Jehu raised his concerns in respect of annual reports being retrospective and noted the need to have a report that outlines the Board's future work and its target outcomes. The Chair of the PSB noted his agreement and noted that this will be something that they aim to achieve in the annual report and beyond. Kirsty Smith, the PSB Senior Support Officer, referenced elements of under-funding and under resourcing and emphasised that time constraints, staff capacity within the partnership and the volume of work has been a difficulty.

Councillor Gibbs noted his agreement with the points raised by Mr Mel Jehu and emphasised his admiration for the work of the public service areas during the pandemic. Councillor Gibbs also referenced the latest data of zero COVID cases in Prince Charles Hospital and queried how this compared with other hospitals within the region. The Chair of the PSB informed Members that he didn't have the figures in front of him but that this is something he would raise during the next PSB meeting. Mr Mel Jehu informed JOSOC Members that during a briefing yesterday he was informed that it's the lowest case rate so far and that Merthyr Tydfil has had the lowest reductions.

A further comment was made by Councillor Caple and the aftereffects of COVID. Councillor Caple noted that the next few years will be extremely resource intensive and queried what plans are in place to deal with this going forward. The Chair of the PSB noted that this question highlights the Board's attempt to focus on specific priorities and the need for the Board to work closely with the Regional Partnership Board. The Chair of the PSB noted the issues such as vulnerability will be key issues for the Board going forward and he emphasised the need for the Board to be a

co-ordination point in the future. The Chair of the JOSC welcomed the fact that the Board are looking to focus its priorities going forward.

Councillor Jones noted that prioritising work will be very difficult and he noted the problems ahead of us such as long Covid and long NHS waiting lists.

Councillor Isaac noted the effect of Covid on staff wellbeing and referenced a piece of work by the Welsh Government titled 'A healthier Wales: Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care' and queried where this fits in with the Future Generations Act and whether this is something that the Scrutiny Committee should be looking at in conjunction with the Board going forward. The Chair of the PSB noted his agreement and the need to take into account the work of the Welsh Government as well as the Future Generations Act to be able to make sure that we are well appraised of all the approaches. Kirsty Smith, the PSB Senior Support Officer, informed Members that the 'Healthier Wales' strategy by Welsh Government is more aligned to the work of the Regional Partnership Board but that it is something all support teams are considering.

Following discussion, the Chair of the JOSC thanked the Chair of the PSB and the PSB Senior Support Officer for the informative report and thanked them for their attendance.

17 Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan Objective- Strong Economy

The Head of Procurement Delivery RCTCBC provided Members with a summary of the expenditure on 'goods works and services' that takes place locally by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

Members were informed that in order to deliver the range of services that the Councils are responsible for, contracts are put in place with a large number of external organisations. In addition to delivering contracts that are compliant with the law, the Procurement Service(s) has a key role in supporting and enabling service areas to deliver economic, social, environmental and cultural outcomes through the contracting process.

The Head of Procurement and Delivery provided Members with a brief overview of the regulatory requirements that Contracting Authorities are legally obliged to follow and provides a summary of spend that has occurred for the financial year 2020/21.

In conclusion, Members were advised that high level monitoring provides assurance that there is significant public spend directly with businesses within our local communities. Through active engagement and appropriate procurement practices, we believe there is scope to improve local spend levels further.

Following the update, Members **ACKNOWLEDGED** the contents of the report, in particular the financial values spent with local suppliers across both Councils.

Following on from this, The Service Director Community Services RCTCBC provided Members with a presentation and a short video overview in respect of employment and skills in the county.

Following the presentation and video, Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions.

Councillor Isaac welcomed the scheme to get people back into work and queried whether feedback was being provided by employers to applicants who were not successful in obtaining the role. He noted that any feedback given by employers could do a lot to boost the applicant's confidence in the future. The Service Director RCTCBC noted her agreement and assured Members that employers on the scheme always provide feedback to the applicant and in particular about how the applicant could improve. The Service Director RCTCBC also noted that this responsibility also falls on to large organisations such as the Council and assured Members that the Council will provide feedback to every applicant (who requests it) as part of its HR process.

Councillor Caple queried whether the scheme monitors vacancies in both the private and public sector. The Service Director advised Members that they do receive data updates from Data Cymru in both RCT and Merthyr Tydfil and assured Members that those updates are received through on a regular basis. Members were advised that this also links in with the work being done with our Regeneration service and that an Employment Liaison Officer will work closely with partners to see any future developments in respect of employment opportunities in the region. The Service Director also assured Members that a Local Authority cluster group meets every two months to consider any employment opportunities in the region and that knowledge is shared between partners.

Following the presentation, Members **ACKNOWLEDGED** the update from the Service Director Community Services and the Chair thanked her for providing the Committee with a comprehensive update.

18 Chair's Review & Close

The Chair thanked Members for attending and for engaging in a constructive discussion. The Chair also thanked Members and Officers for contributing to the work of the JOSc throughout the 2020-21 Municipal Year. The Chair reminded Members that the date of the next meeting will be scheduled shortly following both Councils respective AGM meetings.

This meeting closed at 3:32pm

**Councillor J. Bonetto
Chair**