



**CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL  
RHONDDA CYNON TAF  
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEE SUMMONS**

C Hanagan  
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council  
The Pavilions  
Cambrian Park  
Clydach Vale CF40 2XX

Meeting Contact: Ms J Nicholls - Principal Scrutiny Officer (01443 424098)

**YOU ARE SUMMONED** to a virtual meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held on **WEDNESDAY, 12TH MAY, 2021** at **5.00 PM.**

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Monday, 10 May 2021 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

**AGENDA**

**Page  
No's**

**SCRUTINY RESEARCH**

A scrutiny research facility is available within the Council Business Unit to support Members' scrutiny responsibilities and their roles as Elected Members. Such research strengthens scrutiny Committees work programmes to ensure outcome-based topics are identified. For any scrutiny research requirements please contact [Scrutiny@rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk](mailto:Scrutiny@rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk)

**1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when

they leave.

**2. MINUTES**

To approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

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**3. CONSULTATION LINKS**

Information is provided in respect of relevant [consultations](#) for consideration by the Committee.

**4. WALES AUDIT OFFICE: ANNUAL AUDIT SUMMARY 2020**

To consider the Wales Audit Office 'Annual Audit Summary 2020' presented to Council on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

**11 - 28**

**5. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

To receive the draft Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21

**29 - 52**

**6. CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE**

To reflect on the meeting and actions to be taken forward.

**7. URGENT BUSINESS**

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

**Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication**

**Circulation:-**

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (County Borough Councillor M Adams and County Borough Councillor W Lewis respectively)

**County Borough Councillors:** Councillor J Bonetto, Councillor P Jarman, Councillor H Boggis, Councillor J Brencher, Councillor E Stephens, Councillor L Walker, Councillor G Caple, Councillor M Griffiths, Councillor W Jones, Councillor A Cox, Councillor G Hughes and Councillor M Forey

Non Committee Member -Councillor M Webber

Christian Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

**Education Co-Opted Members for information:-**

Mr M Cleverley  
Ms A Jones, Representing UNITE  
Mr C Jones, Representing GMB  
Mrs C Jones, Representing the National Union of Teachers and Teachers' Panel  
Mr D Price, Representing UNISON  
Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative  
Mr A Rickett, Voting Diocesan Authorities' Representative  
Mrs R Nicholls, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative  
Mr L Patterson, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

Chair of the Audit Committee, Mr G Davies

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on  
Wednesday, 17 March 2021 at 5.00 pm.

### County Borough Councillors - Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor M Adams (Chair)

Councillor W Lewis	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor P Jarman	Councillor H Boggis
Councillor J Brencher	Councillor E Stephens
Councillor L Walker	Councillor G Caple
Councillor M Griffiths	Councillor A Cox
Councillor G Hughes	Councillor M Forey

### Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources  
Ms M Warburton, HR Advisor, Equality & Diversity Team

#### 30 Apology

An apology was received from County Borough Councillor W Jones and Mr Fish – Voting Parent / Governor Representative

#### 31 Welcome & Introductions

The Chair welcomed Members to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and introductions were made.

#### 32 Scrutiny Research Facility

The Chair advised Members of the Committee that the scrutiny research facility is available within the Council Business Unit to support Members' scrutiny responsibilities and their roles as Elected Members. Any requests should be directed to the scrutiny inbox as indicated on the agenda.

#### 33 Declaration of Interest

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

#### 34 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

#### 35 Consultation Links

Members acknowledged the information provided through the consultation links in respect of open consultations, Welsh Government consultations and those matters being consulted upon by the local authority.

In response to a query relating to the consultation links, whether the funding of the Community Cohesion Programme will continue, the Diversity and Inclusion Manager confirmed that the Community Cohesion Co-Ordinator post is hosted by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council but confirmed that the response to the consultation would be shared with the Committee in due course.

## **36 Annual Equality Report 2019-20**

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications outlined the pre-scrutiny opportunity provided to Members on the annual equality monitoring report 2019/20, thus providing Scrutiny with an opportunity to feedback its comments to Cabinet at its meeting held on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

The Diversity and Inclusion Manager presented the Council's annual equality monitoring report 2019/20 advising that the report contains progress made in year 2019/20 in meeting the equality objectives contained in Council's Strategic Equality Plan.

A Member highlighted the importance of responding to recent events in the media, and the need to address the safety of women in public spaces. A motion was put forward that a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, sitting in its role as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee be convened to consider safety and equality for women in the community and to invite relevant partners to the meeting. The motion was unanimously agreed with a view to convening a meeting of the Crime & Disorder Committee at the earliest convenience.

Members discussed the Annual Equality Report and felt that the key reporting requirements in respect of employment monitoring reporting, compliance with the General duty and the Council's commitment to the principles of equality and diversity had been fulfilled. In response to a query regarding the impact of Covid-19 on issues such as hate crimes, the Diversity and Inclusion Manager advised that the next annual report would reflect any impact on this area as a result of the pandemic and acknowledged that providing local figures post Covid-19 would be useful for the committee to review.

Members sought assurance that work was being undertaken in respect of a number of areas to improve equality and diversity. The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications advised that the Democratic Services Working Group: Diversity in Democracy, had recently been established to support the Council in achieving diversity in democracy ahead of the 2022 local government elections to encourage participation in principal authorities and Community and Town Councils. It was noted that an action plan had been developed to further improve the diversity of the Council. The Service Director advised that this is a fast-moving agenda and a high priority for Welsh Government and referred to a paper which was due to be reported to the WLGA Council seeking cross party endorsement for changes to be realised post 2022.

The Diversity and Inclusion Manager outlined the issues of closing the gender pay gap and the council's new performance review process for staff which is being incrementally rolled-out to ensure effective implementation and understanding and also the ongoing work to develop an action plan which will support women in leadership programme, a particular strand of work which would be shared with the committee in due course.

The Committee raised concern regarding the long-term impact of emotional abuse and noted the actions contained within the report, which stated that as part of Education's Well-being Strategy a programme for schools would be developed which would raise awareness of emotional abuse in relationships.

Committee also raised issues in relation to the collection and analysis of data for bullying incidents in schools; it was reported that additional relevant guidance has now been circulated to all schools for monitoring to be undertaken in this area. Issues were also raised in relation to the Welsh Language and the barriers of awareness raising events given the large geographical area of the Borough.

Following discussion of the Annual Equality Report 2019/20 it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To acknowledge the contents of the Annual Equality Report 2019/21;
2. That Members' comments form part of the reported feedback the Cabinet will receive, at its meeting to be held on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021; and
3. That an Overview & Scrutiny Committee, sitting in its role as the Council's designated Crime & Disorder Committee, is convened at the earliest convenience to consider the safety and inequalities experienced by women in community spaces.

### **37 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021**

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications presented his joint report with the Director of Legal Services which summarised the various elements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 which received Royal Assent on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

The report requested that Committee consider the Council's position statement in respect of the requirements of the Act with particular regard to the actions that will need to be addressed to ensure RCT comply with the legislative requirements. The Service Director advised that several elements will be considered in many of the council's formal committees such as the Standards Committee, which will consider Members Codes of Conduct and the role that Group Leaders will play in the conduct of their members and Cabinet will also consider this report at its next meeting in March 2021.

The Service Director acknowledged that a large part of the discussions have, to date, focussed on the Corporate Joint Committees (CJC's) and extending the voting franchise to 16 and 17 years old in next year's Senedd elections and preparing for the extension of the franchise to this age group for the 2022 local government elections.

The Service Director was pleased to report that the Council has already laid many of the foundations for the promotion of democratic processes and public engagement which are considerations of the Act and will be taken forward by the Council. He drew Members' attention to the numerous other areas for which the Act provides provision, such as the general power of competence for principal councils and eligible community councils, powers for Welsh Ministers to instigate more consistent and

coherent regional working across Wales, more formalised performance and governance arrangements based around self-assessment and peer reviews. The Service Director advised that the proposals to make the role of scrutiny within a principal council more effective by strengthening the scrutiny arrangements is of particular relevance to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee by bringing forward the opportunity for scrutiny to engage and consider key decisions in advance of Cabinet determining those matters. It was noted that is an area that the Scrutiny Committee currently undertakes as a matter of good practice.

The Service Director acknowledged other key areas of interest for future discussion by this committee, such as the reforming of public participation and the determination which will enable Members to attend and participate virtually. He explained that the council will soon be able to formerly broadcast its meeting via the introduction of a webcasting solution provided by Public 1 which will fully integrate with the current virtual arrangements and will allow the provision of a hybrid approach for meetings whilst still being able to live stream online.

With regards to the diversity agenda, the Service Director advised that there are changes to the family absence arrangements and formalising the provisions for job sharing opportunities for Cabinet Members and Chairs of Committee. Enhancements to the role of the Head of Democratic Services to strengthen and support the role of non-executive members and the influence of scrutiny across the council. The Service Director continued to outline the many changes to executive arrangements, information sharing between the regulators, changes to the Fire & Rescue Authority arrangements, changes to the Boundary Commission and how the Public Service Boards will operate. He advised that further information in relation to how the Act will come into force and what elements will need to be taken forward from the Council's AGM this year and onwards from the 2022 Local Government Elections.

In conclusion, the Service Director reported that the Council has been requested to participate in a working group on the participation agenda to be able to inform the regulations.

Following the presentation, the Service Director Democratic Services & Communication responded to a number of queries such as STV voting system post 2022, the role of Corporate Joint Committees, the definition of politically restricted posts in relation to campaigning and standing for office and the status of the Head of Democratic Services and strengthening of the statutory role.

In line with an earlier query, the Director of Human Resources responded to a concern regarding the protection afforded to junior members of staff should they stand and be unsuccessful in an election. The Director advised that there are a number of policies in place such as the whistleblowing policy which serve to protect individuals as well as seeking support through their trade unions.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to note the Council's position statement outlined within the report in respect of the requirements of the Act.



The Chair thanked Members for attending and for their contributions during the meeting. He summarised the key points to have arisen from the two reports considered and the recommendations to include the additional recommendation that a Crime & Disorder Committee is convened at the earliest opportunity.

**This meeting closed at 6.20 pm**

**Cllr M Adams  
Chairman**

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**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2020/21**

<p><b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b></p> <p><b>12 May 2021</b></p>	<p><b>AGENDA ITEM: 4</b></p>
<p><b>REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION</b></p>	<p><b>AUDIT WALES – ANNUAL AUDIT SUMMARY 2020</b></p> <p><b>COUNCIL PROGRESS UPDATE</b></p>

**Author: Christian Hanagan** (Service Director for Democratic Services and Communication)

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To consider the Audit Wales ‘Annual Audit Summary 2020’ presented to Council on [10 March 2021](#) and Audit Committee on [26 April 2021](#), and the progress made to date by the Council in implementing proposals for improvement.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise the progress update (Appendix 1)
- 2.2 Consider the progress made by Council Services to date in implementing proposals for improvement/recommendations made by Audit Wales and determine whether further information and/or further progress updates are required.
- 2.3 Consider whether there are any matters of a governance, internal control or risk management nature that require referral to the Council’s Audit Committee.

### **3. ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING AUDIT WALES PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT/RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 The Council recognises the important role that Audit Wales plays in supporting on-going improvement to governance and service delivery and uses the oversight of Scrutiny Committees and Audit Committee to oversee the arrangements and the monitoring of progress. This work also forms part of the Council's Corporate and Service Self-Assessment processes which provide a robust reflection of the Council and its services. In 2022, as required by the [Local Government and Election Act \(Wales\) Act 2021](#), this work will also evidence the extent to which:

1. The Council is exercising its functions effectively.
2. The Council is using its resources economically, efficiently, and effectively; and
3. The Council's governance is effective for securing the above.

#### **Scrutiny Committees**

3.2 The Terms of Reference of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function is to, amongst other things, have responsibility for all Council cross cutting themes. In line with this, the Committee oversees reports issued by Audit Wales i.e. to review and challenge the progress the Council is making toward implementing agreed actions.

3.3 In addition, where the Committee determines there are matters of a 'governance', 'internal control' or 'risk management' nature that require further review, it is able to refer these to Audit Committee for consideration.

#### **Audit Committee**

3.4 Members will note that the Council's Audit Committee has a different, albeit, linked role in overseeing reports issued by the Audit Wales in line with its Terms of Reference i.e.

- 'To receive and consider reports of the External Auditor in relation to matters of financial probity and corporate governance and providing the opportunity for direct discussion with the auditor(s) on these' and
- 'Consider national reports, for example, from [Audit Wales](#), of relevance to the work of the Authority'.

3.5 To discharge the above requirement, the Council's Audit Committee has responsibility for:

- Providing independent assurance that there are adequate controls in place to mitigate key risks; and
- Determining whether there are any matters of a governance, internal control or risk management nature that require further action or attention.

- 3.6 As part of discharging its Terms of Reference, Audit Committee should also take account of the conclusions and findings from each Audit Wales report when forming an opinion on the adequacy of internal control/governance arrangements in place.
- 3.7 Similar to the information set out above for Scrutiny Committees, where Audit Committee considers there are performance related matters that require further review, it is also able to refer these to the designated Scrutiny Committee for review.
- 4. AUDIT WALES – ANNUAL AUDIT SUMMARY 2020 (FORMERLY ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT)**
- 4.1 At the meeting of [Council held on 10 March 2021](#), Members received the Audit Wales [Audit Summary 2020](#). The Audit Summary contained proposals for improvement/recommendations from published reports that were specific to Rhondda Cynon Taf and national reports that relate to local authorities more generally, other public bodies and Welsh Government. Table 1 provides a list of the published reports covered by the Audit Summary together with electronic links to each of these reports.

**Table 1 – Published reports covered by the Audit Summary**

Type of Report	Report Title	Proposals for Improvement/ Recommendations reported
<b>Audit Wales - RCT Specific Reports</b>	Audit of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough <a href="#">Council's 2019-20 Accounts</a>	<b>No</b> Compliance confirmed
	Well-being of Future Generations Examination – Investment in Leisure Facilities ( <a href="#">published March 2020</a> )	<b>No</b>
	<a href="#">Annual Improvement Plan Audit of 2020/21 Plans</a> contained in the Council's annual Corporate Performance Report 2020/21	<b>No</b> Compliance confirmed
	Financial Sustainability ( <a href="#">published March 2020</a> )	<b>No</b>
<b>Reviews by other Inspectorates</b>		
<b>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)</b>	Local Authority Performance Review April 2019 – March 2020 ( <a href="#">published August 2020</a> )	<b>Yes</b> findings being used to inform service planning and delivery
<b>Estyn</b>	In January 2021, Estyn wrote to the Council's Chief Executive outlining the outcome of their review of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's work in supporting their learning	<b>Yes</b> recommendations being used to inform

	communities in schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) during the period from March to October 2020. Also relevant is Estyn's National report, ' <a href="#">Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19</a> '. Update report from June to November 2020, published in January 2021.	service planning and delivery
<b>National Studies for local consideration</b>	National Fraud Initiative 2018-20 ( <a href="#">published October 2020</a> )	Recommendations reported have been considered by Council Services, agreed in principle and where relevant to Rhondda Cynon Taf will be taken account of as part of service planning and delivery
	The 'Front Door' to Social Care ( <a href="#">September 2019</a> )	
	Review of Public Services Boards ( <a href="#">October 2019</a> )	
	Progress in implementing the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act ( <a href="#">November 2019</a> )	
	Rough Sleeping in Wales – Everyone's Problem; No One's Responsibility ( <a href="#">July 2020</a> )	
	Better Law Making ( <a href="#">September 2020</a> )	
	Commercialisation in Local Government ( <a href="#">October 2020</a> )	

- 4.2 An update of the progress made by Council services, to date, to implement the proposals for improvement/recommendations made by Audit Wales, where applicable to Rhondda Cynon Taf, is set out in Appendix 1.
- 4.3 In line with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Terms of Reference, the Committee is requested to scrutinise the progress update and, in addition to Members own lines of enquiry:
- a) Consider the progress made and determine whether further information and / or further progress updates are required; and
  - b) Consider whether there are any matters of a governance, internal control or risk management nature that require referral to the Council's Audit Committee.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Audit Wales reports play an important role in supporting on-going improvement to the Council's governance and service delivery arrangements, and as part of this process, the Council utilises its Scrutiny Committees and Audit Committee in line with their Terms of Reference, to oversee the arrangements and the monitoring of progress.

- 5.2 In line with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Terms of Reference, the Committee has responsibility for reviewing and challenging the progress the Council is making toward implementing agreed actions and forming a view on the adequacy of progress being made.
- 5.3 Lastly, where the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider there are matters of a 'governance', 'internal control' or 'risk management' nature that require further review, these can be referred to Audit Committee for consideration.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972**  
**as amended by**  
**THE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT, 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**  
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**12 May 2021**

**REPORT OF: Service Director for Democratic Services and Communication**

Author: Christian Hanagan

Item : 4. Council Progress Update: Audit Wales - [Annual Audit Summary 2020](#)

**Background Papers**

Report to [Audit Committee 26 April 2021](#)

Contact Officer: Christian Hanagan – 01443 424005



## [Audit Wales – Annual Audit Summary](#)

NB Audit Wales was formerly known as Wales Audit Office

### Local and National Reports – Recommendations/Proposals for Improvement

#### Progress to date

Compliance	
<b>Audit of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council’s 2019-20 Accounts</b>	The Auditor General gave an unqualified true and fair opinion on the Council’s financial statements on 26 <a href="#">November 2020</a>
<b>Annual Improvement Plan Audit of 2020/21 Plans contained in the Council’s annual Corporate Performance Report 2020/21</b>	The Auditor General certified that the Council has met its legal duties for improvement planning and reporting, and believes that it is likely to meet the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 during 2020-21 in <a href="#">January 2021</a>
Other Regulators	
<b>Care Inspectorate Wales Local Authority Performance Review April 2019 – March 2020 - Annual Letter <a href="#">published August 2020</a></b>	
<b>Estyn</b> “In January 2021, Estyn wrote to the Council’s Chief Executive outlining the outcome of their review of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council’s work in supporting their learning communities in schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) during the period from March to October 2020. Also relevant is Estyn’s National report, ‘ <a href="#">Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19</a> ’ Update report from June to November 2020, published in January 2021”.	The findings from the Estyn report will form part of the ongoing Self Evaluation and the recommendations have been used to inform the 2021-22 Delivery Plan for the service.

## Local Reports

### Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 examination

*An examination the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle in the delivery of the priority investments for leisure facilities to increase participation in exercise and contribute to residents' health and well-being*

**Published: March 2020**

Proposals for Improvement	Next Steps
There are clear examples of how the Council is applying the sustainable development principle to its investment in leisure facilities, but there are opportunities to develop longer term planning and involve people in shaping future leisure provision. <a href="#">Report is here.</a>	The examination findings will be used to continue to ensure that the Council and its services are acting in accordance with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act including the Sustainable Development principles when developing and implementing its Service Delivery and Priority Plans and also plans for key projects. This includes the Council's new Leisure Strategy 2021- 2026 which is currently being developed.

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### Financial Sustainability Assessment

*The project sought to assess the sustainability of councils' short to medium-term financial position. This included a focus on the financial strategy of each council as well as reviewing financial 'indicators' of each council's financial position in relation to Performance against budget; Delivery of savings plans; Use of reserves; Council tax and Borrowing*

**Published: 27 March 2020**

The Council is well placed to manage its financial sustainability over the short and medium term. <a href="#">Report is here</a>	<b>Noted</b>
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## National Report Recommendations

[The National Fraud Initiative in Wales 2018-20](#) This national report contained four recommendations for public bodies.

**Published: 12 October 2020**

Recommendations	RCT Comments
All participants in the NFI exercise should ensure that they maximise the benefits of their participation. They should consider whether it is possible to work more efficiently on the NFI matches by reviewing the guidance section within the NFI secure web application.	<b>Agreed</b> The guidance is always followed and is helpful in prioritising the match outcomes.
Where local auditors have identified specific areas where improvements could be made, the public bodies should act on these as soon as possible.	<b>Agreed</b> Any significant aspect of improving the internal control environment is prioritised and audit recommendations are also followed up. Audit Committee also receives regular updates in respect of the service progress in implementing Internal Audit recommendations. This includes the number of recommendations implemented, for those yet implemented a revised implementation date.
Audit committees, or equivalent, and officers leading the NFI should review the NFI self-appraisal checklist. This will ensure they are fully informed of their organisation's planning and progress in the 2020-22 NFI exercise	<b>Agreed</b> The checklist has been reviewed by the Council's Fraud Service. NFI updates are provided to Audit Committee at relevant intervals. The next update of the 2020/22 NFI exercise is scheduled to be provided to Audit Committee in the first half of 2021/22.
All participants should be aware of emerging fraud risks e.g. due to COVID-19 and take appropriate preventative and detective action.	<b>Agreed</b> The Council is signed up with the relevant fraud sharing bodies and has received and shared Covid and other related threats. These threats have been reviewed and disseminated to relevant Services and residents, to provide necessary mitigation.  At the outset of Covid, consideration was given to the potential for fraud to emerge as a result of Covid support measures e.g. Business Support Grants, Free School Meal payments etc.  Audit Committee is updated on Corporate Fraud at regular intervals throughout the year, which includes any Covid related matters.

## Local Government Studies

**The 'Front Door' to Adult Social Care :** This national report contained two main recommendations. These recommendations contained actions for Local Authorities and the Welsh Government.

**Published: September 2019**

Recommendations for Improvement	RCT comment
<p><b><u>Improving access to the front door</u></b></p> <p><b>R1</b> - Part 1 of the report sets out how authorities promote access to the 'front door' and provide information, advice and assistance to help people to improve their wellbeing and prevent their needs from deteriorating. To improve awareness of the front door we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Authorities:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- review their current approaches, consider their audience, and ensure that good-quality information is made available in a timely manner to avoid needs deteriorating and people presenting for assistance in 'crisis';</li> <li>- work in partnership with public and third-sector partners to help ensure people accessing via partner referrals, or other avenues, are given the best information to help them;</li> <li>- ensure that advocacy services are commissioned and proactively offered to those who need them at first point of contact; and</li> <li>- to take local ownership and lead on the co-ordination and editing of local information published on Dewis Cymru locally.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Welsh Government:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- improve carers' awareness and understanding of their rights to be assessed for their own care and support needs, aimed at generating demand for local authorities' preventative services; and</li> <li>- undertake a full evaluation of the role of Dewis Cymru in the wider implementation of the Act and use the data gained to build on its potential as a national information sharing portal.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>RCT continuously reviews its Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) service to improve access to the 'front door'. This includes what we offer, what, when and how best to communicate information so that people get the help they need to prevent their needs getting worse leading to a request for assistance in 'crisis'. Advice and Assistance is offered following assessment by the Single Point of Access (SPA) service. SPA is able to directly commission services from a range of preventative services available, this includes Advocacy services.</p> <p>Advocacy services are commissioned from a variety of sources including third sector. The offer of this service is repeated to ensure that those people in need of longer term care who have not previously needed advocacy can be identified and supported. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) recognised the work we have undertaken to improve our provision of advocacy services for older people in their <a href="#">Annual Letter</a> published in August 2020.</p> <p>The Council is the lead for <a href="#">Dewis Cymru</a> across the County Borough. To date, RCT has 617 resources registered on the Dewis website, a combination of both local authority and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations. Information on the resources that are available is required to be updated every 6 months to ensure information is up to date. Independent organisations update their own pages as designed by Dewis, but oversight is maintained with the Council.</p> <p>We agree with the recommendations for Welsh Government and welcome a national information sharing portal across a single online platform for all partners.</p>

Recommendations for Improvement	RCT comment
<p><b><u>Investing in prevention and understanding impact</u></b></p> <p><b>R2</b> - Part 2 of the report highlights weaknesses in authorities' assurance of the availability and quality of third-sector, preventative, community based services that they signpost people to. We recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- map the availability of preventative services in their area to better understand current levels of provision and identify gaps and duplication;</li> <li>- involve third-sector partners in co-producing preventative solutions to meet people's needs and ensure people have equitable access to these services;</li> <li>- work with third-sector partners to tailor and commission new services where gaps are identified; and</li> <li>- work with partners to improve data to evaluate the impact of preventative services on individuals and the population more generally.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Welsh Government: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- improve the cost evaluation in relation to the impact of the Act in a national context, and support local authorities to ensure that the desired impact of prevention on overall social-care expenditure becomes a demonstratable reality.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The Council regularly maps the availability of preventative services across the RCT area to better understand current levels of provision and to identify gaps and duplication. This information is accessible via <a href="#">Dewis</a>.</p> <p>Interlink also maintains a database of local services across the County Borough and ensures connections between Social Care and Community Services.</p> <p>Interlink and third sector services are represented on various regional forums such as Regional Partnership Board and Transformational Leadership Board where new developments and funding of services to meet identified needs are discussed and agreed. This provides the forum for third sector representation to influence decision making across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region.</p> <p>Over the last year organisations and volunteers have worked together to support those most in need in their communities during the pandemic which has been described in a <a href="#">Cabinet report</a> in May 2020 on the Council's response to the pandemic. This experience has strengthened joint working and has demonstrated that it is possible to identify vulnerable residents, refer them for support and provide ongoing input including befriending, preventing loneliness and isolation, that is available within the communities through voluntary sector and community groups. We will build on these positive experiences as a platform for sharing new service developments, highlighting pressure points and areas for further development, as we emerge from the pandemic.</p> <p>We agree with the recommendation for Welsh Government.</p>

**Review of Public Services Boards: This national report contained recommendations for Public Services Boards, Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association**

**Published: 7 October 2019**

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Recommendations for Improvement	Cwm Taf PSB comment for information
<p><b>R1</b> - In Part 1 of the report we set out that understanding the impact of choices and decisions requires public bodies to fully involve citizens and stakeholders and undertake comprehensive Impact Assessments. However, we found that current practice is insufficient to provide assurance that the needs of people with protected characteristics are fully considered when reviewing choices and the voice of citizens is not sufficiently influencing decisions.</p> <p>We recommend that PSBs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conduct formal assessments to identify the potential impact on people with protected characteristics and the Welsh language and review agreed actions to ensure any adverse impacts are addressed;</li> <li>• improve transparency and accountability by making PSB meetings, agendas, papers and minutes accessible and available to the public;</li> <li>• strengthen involvement by working to the guidance in the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales; and</li> <li>• feed back the outcome of involvement activity identifying where changes are made as a result of the input of citizens and stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed</b></p> <p>The Audit Report was considered by the Cwm Taf Public Services Board at its meeting on <a href="#">22 October 2019</a> and concluded that the PSB could do more to focus on ‘wicked’ issues and strengthen involvement with residents and communities.</p> <p>The recommendations will be addressed in more depth within the Well-being and Population Assessments.</p>
<p><b>R2</b> - In Part 2 of the report we review arrangements for PSB scrutiny and conclude that there are shortcomings and weaknesses in current performance and practice. To improve scrutiny, we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PSBs and public bodies use the findings of the Auditor General for Wales’ Discussion Paper: Six themes to help make scrutiny ‘Fit for the Future’ to review their current performance and identify where they need to strengthen oversight arrangements and activity; and</li> <li>- PSBs ensure scrutiny committees have adequate engagement with a wider range of relevant stakeholders who can help hold PSBs to account.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed</b></p> <p>The Cwm Taf Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee has taken steps to strengthen scrutiny arrangements and to bring scrutiny closer to communities and have held meetings in Hwb Glynrhedynog (Ferndale) and Calon Las (Gurnos)</p> <p>However, there is more that can be done including refreshing the Scrutiny Work Programme to support the closure of the current Well-being Plan and the development of the new Well-being Assessment and Plan.</p>
<p><b>R3</b> - In Part 3 of the report we summarise the difficulty of developing, implementing and resourcing PSBs and the challenges of managing multiple partnerships that can often have overlap and duplication.</p>	<p><b>Agreed</b></p> <p>The PSB is keen to pursue opportunities to reduce overlap and duplication within the current legislative constraints. There is</p>

Recommendations for Improvement	Cwm Taf PSB comment for information
<p>To help build capacity, consistency and resourcing of activity we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PSBs take the opportunity to discharge other plan and strategy obligations through the Local Well-being Plan;</li> <li>• the Welsh Government enables PSBs to develop flexible models of working including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- merging, reducing and integrating their work with other forums such as Regional Partnership Boards; and</li> <li>- giving PSBs flexibility to receive, manage and spend grant monies subject to PSBs ensuring they have adequate safeguards and appropriate systems in place for management of funding; effective budget and grant programme controls; and public reporting, scrutiny and oversight systems to manage expenditure.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>developing and strengthening integration between the Cwm Taf and Bridgend Public Services Boards and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board which will enable resources to be maximised as far as possible.</p> <p>A joint Well-being Assessment produced for Cwm Taf and Bridgend is being developed to support the CTM footprint, which will lead to a single Well-being Plan for CTM. This work will be produced alongside the separate statutory requirement for a Population Assessment so that overlaps and duplication are minimised.</p> <p>The PSB would welcome increased funding flexibilities from Welsh Government with appropriate local oversight, controls and scrutiny.</p>
<p><b>R4</b> - To help build capacity, consistency and resourcing of activity we recommend that the Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association in their review of strategic partnerships take account of, and explore, the findings of this review.</p>	<p><b>Agreed</b></p> <p>The <a href="#">Review of Strategic Partnerships</a> prepared jointly with Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh NHS Confederation was shared at a meeting of the Public Services Board in July 2020 (<a href="#">Item 5 Governance item</a>)</p>

**[Progress in implementing the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act:](#) This national report contained recommendations for Local Authorities, other public bodies and partners.**

**Published: 21 November 2019**

Recommendations for Improvement	RCT comment
<p><b>R1</b> - Part 1 of the report highlights that despite public bodies having an increasing understanding of, and demand for, VAWDASV services, significant gaps remain and engagement with survivors and victims in reviewing and developing services is inconsistent. To address this, we recommend that needs assessment and mapping of service provision by public bodies are revisited and involvement widened and enhanced to include all relevant stakeholders to build a more accurate picture of current service provision and identify gaps.</p>	<p>A response to this report was prepared for consideration by the <a href="#">Overview and Scrutiny Crime &amp; Disorder Committee</a> at its meeting scheduled for 16 March 2020.</p> <p>As a result of the actions taken to respond to the pandemic, the committee meeting did not take place as scheduled.</p>

Recommendations for Improvement	RCT comment
	<p>During the pandemic, all the Council's VAWDASV support services continued and adjusted to operate remotely as a result of the Covid restrictions in place. We deployed regular <a href="#">social media campaigns</a> to highlight the issues of domestic abuse and how to report. Numbers of referrals remained constant throughout and are currently at the same level as pre-Covid.</p> <p>The Audit Wales Report is now scheduled to be presented to the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Crime &amp; Disorder Committee in Autumn 2021. The Council's response will be revised to reflect the work completed since March 2020 and the lessons learned from responding to the Covid pandemic.</p> <p>The recommendations arising from the Audit Wales report are already reflected in the priorities identified in the local Cwm Taf Morgannwg Implementation Plan 20/21 which is set out in the <a href="#">Cwm Taf VAWDASV Strategy Report</a> 2019-20.</p>
<p><b>R2</b> - Part 1 of the report describes how victims and survivors of VAWDASV often find it difficult to navigate a fragmented system of service delivery. To support victims and survivors to access and use services we recommend that public bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• produce comprehensive and relevant information in a variety of media on the full range of services available to protect and support victims and survivors; and</li> <li>• create a joint pathway to access services and support for both victims and professionals and advertise access arrangements widely</li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed</b></p> <p>It is worth noting that the Audit Report highlights examples of good practice which includes development of the Council's Resilient Families Programme, which has drawn together a range of work streams to provide a single pathway for early intervention service for families.</p>
<p><b>R3</b> - Part 2 of the report notes that whilst it is important that organisations comply with relevant data protection legislation, they also need to share data with partners to better meet the needs of victims and survivors. We recommend that authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure staff who are likely to come into contact with victims and survivors have appropriate VAWDASV training;</li> <li>• provide refresher training to service managers to ensure they know when and what data they can and cannot share; and</li> <li>• review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed</b></p> <p>There are clear examples set out in the Cwm Taf Annual Report of how staff from all agencies are involved in meeting the needs of survivors of VAWDASV. The findings set out in the Audit Wales Report will be considered as part of our continual review of processes to strengthen our support to clients.</p>
<p><b>R4</b> - Part 2 of the report highlights that while some good progress has been made with regional working, there are not always appropriate levers in place to support service transformation in line with VAWDASV legislation. To ensure the benefits of regionalisation</p>	<p><b>Agreed</b></p> <p>VAWDASV is a complex agenda and this is recognised in the report above. The report also sets out the Council's</p>



Recommendations for Improvement	RCT comment
<p>are realised, we recommend that delivery agencies (local authorities, health bodies, the police, fire and rescue authorities and the third sector) review their approach to regional working to better integrate services and maximise the positive impact they can make on victims and survivors.</p>	<p>commitment to developing a new regional service model in the medium term and statement of intent.</p>
<p><b>R5</b> - Part 3 of the report highlights that the complex and short-term funding mechanisms, lack of data and insufficient consultation with stakeholders, are not supporting sustainable commissioning of VAWDASV services. To address this, we recommend that local authorities review their commissioning arrangements to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• remove duplication and overlap between different approaches within the authority and with partners;</li> <li>• rationalise administration arrangements to improve efficiency and value for money;</li> <li>• streamline and standardise commissioning arrangements to reduce the burden of administration on all parties; and</li> <li>• set appropriate performance measures, targets and benchmarks to judge the impact and outcome of commissioned services.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed</b></p> <p>This will be part of the considerations for the new regional service model which will be developed in the medium term.</p>

**Published: 23 July 2020**

Recommendations for Improvement	RCT comment
<p><b><u>Intelligent use of data</u></b>                      R1 - Public bodies and third sector partners should ensure they use data to plan the right future services, and to put in place effective data sharing protocols to ensure they respond effectively and safely to people sleeping rough.                      We recommend that councils and their partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• invest in data analytical skills to better understand the current situation and predict future demand to prevent future homelessness;</li> <li>• review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities effectively; and</li> <li>• introduce a single data capture and risk assessment process for to help support safe decisions making in dealing with people sleeping rough</li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed</b>                      The Council has put in place a Performance and Support Officer, which has significantly improved data capture and recording. This enables the production of weekly reports in respect of homeless people, rough sleepers and temporary accommodation placements. The data has improved our understanding of service demand and pressures.</p> <p>Through the use of ‘<a href="#">Abritas</a>’ the Case Management system for Homelessness and ‘<a href="#">Homefinder</a>’ we are able to better plan the right services for the future.</p> <p>Information in respect of the number of clients supported and the accommodation units available, among other things, is included in the RCT <a href="#">Housing Support Grant annual update</a> which sets out the support provided to prevent people from becoming homeless, stabilises their housing situation, or helps potentially homeless people to find and keep accommodation.</p>
<p><b><u>Integrated services to tackle complex needs</u></b>                      R2 - Because public bodies are responding to people in crisis, they often deal with acute issues in isolation and rarely address the fundamental cause of the crisis. To do this requires public bodies to design and create service delivery models that are responsive.                      We recommend that public bodies use our complex needs self-reflection tool to improve how they can jointly address complex needs in the future</p>	<p>The Council has a strong track record of working with partners to support people in crisis.</p> <p>Our case management system, Abritas, and other referral pathways help us identify service users who present with complex needs.</p> <p>The identification of these needs led to the Council applying for Welsh Government Trail blazer funding to pilot a <a href="#">Housing First</a> project for offenders and an outreach project for those individuals deemed to have complex needs in partnership with <a href="#">Pobl</a> and our Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners who provide the support and accommodation.</p> <p>The outcomes from both these projects have been over and above what we expected. Some of our most complex and high-risk clients many of</p>

Recommendations for Improvement	RCT comment
	<p>whom have previously led extremely chaotic lives, have maintained their tenancies.</p> <p>Following the outcomes from the pilot projects. Housing First has been mainstreamed and these services can be commissioned to assist our clients who present with multiple support needs. These include chronic substance misuse, mental health needs, domestic abuse and offending backgrounds.</p> <p>Additional staffing resources have been secured through Housing Support Grant in 2021/22 to expand the Housing First project in RCT and to increase the number of service users who can be supported on the project.</p> <p>Funding for a project officer is also in place who will further develop the project including revising the referral form and putting in place an operational framework including an updated SLA and Information Sharing Protocol.</p>

[Better law making: the implementation challenge](#) – This national report sets out key findings and the four key questions that the Welsh Government and the Senedd should routinely address.

Published: 24 September 2020

Key Findings and Questions	RCT Comment
<p>Audit Wales considered some of the challenges faced by local authorities and other public bodies when trying to implement legislation on the ground.</p> <p>Key findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regulatory Impact Assessments underestimate the costs associated with implementing legislation</li> <li>Local authorities struggle with capacity and find it difficult to implement new legislation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed</b></p> <p>Councils have over many years drawn the attention of Welsh Government to the local impact and implications of proposed changes to legislation, the changing partnership landscape and the potential resourcing requirements of the bodies/partnerships required to implement new laws.</p>

Key Findings and Questions	RCT Comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of legislation often requires the Welsh Government to support local authorities and publish timely guidance, but this is not always provided nor is it sufficiently clear and aligned</li> <li>Different pieces of legislation and guidance are not sufficiently integrated to ensure public bodies are able to deliver their new responsibilities effectively and efficiently</li> </ul>	<p>Whilst the Council has a positive track record of allocating resources to meet and support new initiatives and laws, the key findings identified by the Auditor General reflect this Council’s experience on the ground.</p>

[Commercialisation in Local Government](#)

Published: 06 October 2020

Recommendation for Improvement	RCT Comment
<p><b>R1</b> - Undertaking commercialisation requires councils to have enough capacity, the right skills and robust but agile systems to be in place.</p> <p><b>We recommend that councils use our self-evaluation tools to develop a strategy for the extent to which they want to pursue commercialisation.</b></p>	<p><b>Agreed</b></p> <p>The Council has a good track record of using commercialisation as a tool to meet its business needs. This is explicate in our Corporate Priorities and our approach to delivering them as set out in our Corporate Plan 2020-24 – <a href="#">Making A Difference</a></p> <p>The Council’s approach to Commercialisation was set out the Capital Strategy Report (sections 9.9-9.11), considered by <a href="#">Council</a> at its meeting on 10 March 2021.</p>



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2020/21**

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**12<sup>th</sup> MAY 2021**

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES &  
COMMUNICATIONS**

### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to present to members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee the draft Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report for the Municipal Year 2020/21, in accordance with the requirement of the Council's Constitution.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Review the draft report at Appendix 1A and determine whether the Annual Report forms a balanced summary of the work undertaken by the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees during 2020/21;
- 2.2 Subject to 2.1, endorse the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21 and its presentation to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Council on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
- 2.3 Authorise the Service Director of Democratic Services & Communications to consult with the Chairs of the respective thematic scrutiny committees to confirm the content of their individual Annual Reports before presentation to the Council AGM.

### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To ensure the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees have delivered against their respective forward Work Programmes (whilst still retaining a flexible approach as far as possible).

### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Annual Report is a constitutional requirement and is reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to seek its endorsement in advance of final presentation to the Council's Annual General Meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
- 4.2 The Annual Scrutiny Report provides an opportunity to communicate the work the scrutiny committees have undertaken, reflect on any lessons learned to help guide future work and assist with the formulation of the forward work programmes in respect of any outstanding and ongoing work streams.
- 4.3 Unsurprisingly, much of the scrutiny focus during 2020 has been the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's services and the recovery response going forward. The structure of the annual report reflects the shorter than usual municipal year, different ways of working and the constraints on council officers and resources.
- 4.4 In addition to the information contained within the scrutiny annual report, the reports and minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny committees held during 2020/21– up to April 2021 are available via the council's website and the [virtual committee pages](#)

### **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 It is considered appropriate that Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee have the opportunity to review the attached draft Annual Report to assess whether it represents an accurate reflection of the scrutiny activities during 2020/21 before it is presented to the Annual General Meeting of the Council.

### **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising from this report and no Equality Impact Assessment is deemed necessary for the purposes of this report.

### **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 Following consultation with the members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and subject to their endorsement of the Annual Report (and following consultation with the Chairs of the respective scrutiny committees) it will be presented to the (AGM) of the Council on the 26th May 2021.

### **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. **LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

9.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report supports the arrangements to strengthen the Council's consideration and scrutiny of its work, through 'the lens of the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act'. these arrangements will be embedded into the business of the Council as set out in the Policy Statement agreed by Cabinet on 2 November 2016.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**as amended by**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT**

**12<sup>th</sup> MAY 2021**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES &  
COMMUNICATION**





**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT  
2020/2021**

DRAFT

**Scrutiny Annual Report – 2020/2021**

**Foreword from the Chair Councillor Mark Adams**

When the pandemic hit, the council's overwhelming focus was to protect its residents and continue to operate its key functions. The Council's scrutiny function, as with all its formal committees, has found out that both Members and Officers can be flexible and operate incredibly well in a rapidly changing environment. We have learnt to scrutinise remotely, maintain a flexible approach to our forward work programmes and adapt to changing priorities. Our colleagues and partners have embraced new ways of working and have worked alongside us. Every scrutiny committee has evidenced, through their work programme outcomes that we can produce good quality scrutiny at pace. Remote working has taught us to streamline processes, maintain quality yet increase our flexibility and agility.

This has been a much shorter Municipal Year than normal as the Council's Annual General Meeting (AGM) was delayed until September 2020. Before that, the Overview & Scrutiny committee became the single point of scrutiny for all reports and updates with an invitation extended to all non-executive members to participate. During that time, we considered a number of Covid related reports as well as the traditional scrutiny reports, ensuring we did not place any undue burden on our officers and partners who were involved in the Covid response and recovery process.

Beyond the AGM all four thematic scrutiny committees resumed their activity with a much-needed carefully managed forward work programme that would see them identify the emerging issues and adopting a more business as usual approach. The Scrutiny Committees have all successfully produced sharper pieces of work, mixed in with traditional scrutiny reports to respond to what is a fast-moving situation. We have undertaken a number of pre scrutiny opportunities which means we have been able to comment on important decisions before they are made.

We are already best placed to deal with the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act, in particular robust scrutiny of the executive. I believe we are already undertaking this good practice which will stand us in good stead for the future. We have also participated in a number of Welsh Government consultations, to make sure scrutiny's voice is heard at the early stage of the process.

As Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee I am confident that we have taken the opportunities to enhance our collective resilience and focus on key issues for the benefit of the communities that we serve.

**Councillor Mark Adams**

**Chair, Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

## A Year in Numbers

<b>41</b>	<b>Scrutiny Committees in total held</b>
<b>6</b>	Pre-scrutiny of key decisions
<b>1</b>	Notice of Motion referred to Scrutiny by Council
<b>1</b>	Members' Steering Group established
<b>3</b>	Consultations Contributed to
<b>1</b>	Call-In
<b>1</b>	Referral from Audit Committee
<b>20</b>	Reports in response to COVID-19



## **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

I am proud to have been Chair of the [Overview & Scrutiny Committee](#) at such a pivotal time in the council calendar, when scrutiny continued to be member led and robust. Although we acknowledged that it had to be more flexible than ever before, we demonstrated that it could be conducted in a supportive and constructive way, scrutinising issues that impacted on the lives of residents and the places in which they live and in line with the Committee's terms of reference.

The Committee has scrutinised a range of Council services over the year, with a number of key recommendations being brought forward, which it is anticipated will assist the service in its delivery and have a positive impact on the residents and users of those services within RCT. Details of this work is illustrated through Appendix one of this report. However, a number of key areas taken forward by the Committee have been highlighted below.

### **Council's Residential Care Home Service for Older People – Pre-Scrutiny.**

During this shortened municipal year, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee has undertaken pre scrutiny of many important issues, some of which have been a long standing and substantive focus for some time. **Pre-Scrutiny** in Rhondda Cynon Taf provides the opportunity for all members to inform the development of key policy areas providing the ability to act as a critical friend in advance of Cabinet consideration.

In recent years, this approach has been further enhanced through the ability of scrutiny to consider the Cabinet Work Programme and as a result of the engagement undertaken with Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet Members, enables Scrutiny Chairs to be cited on the decisions and policy developments.

The modernisation process of the Council's Residential Care Home Service for Older People has been one of our key considerations since Cabinet outlined its vision for services for older people in 2018. This committee has been at the forefront of the council's considerations and we, once again, had the opportunity to undertake pre scrutiny of the consultation feedback on the [1st December 2020](#).

Scrutiny agreed that the proposals to increase the number of the retained council residential care homes to 9 and redeveloping 2 further homes to meet

## **APPENDIX 1A**

identified needs for additional accommodation with care and support, would provide adaptable solutions for the growing needs of an aged population. We also acknowledged how the thorough consultation process had listened to the views and opinions of residents. Our comments and feedback were presented to the Cabinet on the [3rd December 2020](#). Scrutiny will continue to be involved at further stages of the process and contribute to this hugely important development.

### **Flooding in RCT**

During February 2020 and just prior to the pandemic, Rhondda Cynon Taf suffered enormous storm damage and flooding in the wake of Storm Dennis. To understand the extent of the impact of the storm on the communities of RCT, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee undertook a review to consider information relating to the flooding via council officers and relevant partner organisations such as Welsh Water and Natural Resources Wales (NRW), to contribute to the statutory reporting mechanisms of the Council (as flood management authority) and to establish an inquiry session whereby local members would present their views and first hand evidence.

Over the course of two Scrutiny Committees ([14th October 2020](#), [9th December 2020](#)) and the Scrutiny Inquiry Session as well as the collation of verbal and written accounts, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee identified several common issues which emerged from both verbal and written accounts. The substantial evidence in its entirety was submitted to Cabinet on the [18th December 2020](#) together with a summary of Scrutiny's comments and observations

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee will continue to scrutinise the Council's flood risk management and emergency planning arrangements following the outcome of the Council's internal review, including any quarter performance information in respect of these areas. Scrutiny will complete its review in the next municipal year.

### **The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act.**

On 18th November 2019, the Welsh Government published the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill. The Bill (now the Act, having received Royal Assent in January 2021) aims to reform and strengthen local government and to improve electoral arrangements. It contains wide ranging proposals that will have a significant impact on the Council. To ensure Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee were formally briefed on the content of the proposed legislation and the likely impacts of those proposals on local government, scrutiny, as supported by Full Council, has undertaken several opportunities to formally indicate their position on the proposals and communicate this to Welsh Government.

At our meeting on the [13th January 2020](#) we responded to the general proposals and any potential barriers to the implementation of the Bill's provisions, the appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation and the financial implications of the Bill. Scrutiny has since also provided its [responses](#) to Welsh Government's consultation to consider draft regulations which would be made under that

## APPENDIX 1A

legislation in respect of the establishment and operation of Corporate Joint Committees (CJC's). More recently we received a [position statement](#) in respect of the requirements of the Act. The 'Coming into Force' provisions of the Act are complex and therefore the position statement sets out a much needed Action Plan detailing the various provisions of the Act, the work already undertaken and that which is required to prepare this Council for these various provisions. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee will continue to receive further information on the requirements of the Act and in particular the future role for scrutineers.

The broader work programme of the committee has continued to challenge and scrutinise the delivery of Council services, including the Council's recovery planning following the initial lockdown in 2020. Many areas of the Council's work have received specific focus over the last municipal year, including how the Council seeks to promote equalities and the steps the Council is taking to address climate change locally.

Through this focus, which we have been required to provide, and as a result of virtual arrangements and the pressure faced by Council Officers, there are a number of areas of work which the Council has needed to suspend during this shortened municipal year, which we will seek to resume as part of the 2021/22 municipal year.

I would like to extend my thanks to my Vice Chair, Councillor Wendy Lewis, and members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for their continued support and hard work.

**Scrutiny Chairs & Vice Chairs**

The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs continue to meet to ensure co-ordination between the respective committees, oversee forward work programmes and share learning. The Chairs and Vice Chairs have also maintained regular engagement sessions with their respective Scrutiny Lead Officers and Cabinet Members to discuss forward work programmes and to form a sound knowledge of each other's work.

I would like to acknowledge the due diligence of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the four thematic scrutiny committees for undertaking such a large volume of scrutiny this year and for maintaining such an overwhelming pace of work under virtual conditions.

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## **CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Key to the [Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee's](#) work for 2020/ 2021 has been the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to Education and Children's Services. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee became the first of the thematic scrutiny committees to undertake a programme of work so that it could scrutinise and challenge the Council's response to the COVID -19 pandemic from both an education and children's services perspective and in line with its terms of reference.

### **Education & Children's Services-Covid-19**

The first of many Covid-19 responses from an education perspective was presented on the [22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020](#) as we examined a number of critical actions taken by the service since March 2020 and preparations for the return to school in September 2020. We are grateful for the frequency and level of detailed evidence we have received directly from the Director of Education & Inclusion Services, to enable committee to engage effectively with these fast-moving matters over the last municipal year.

From the outset of this municipal year, we prioritised scrutinising the response of Children's Services approach to supporting vulnerable children and families of Rhondda Cynon Taf during the pandemic. We scrutinised how the service, in keeping with Welsh Government statutory guidance, has continued to maintain services such as family support, safeguarding duties, children looked after and youth offending.

We have received a number of [joint reports](#) from both Directorates outlining the support to promote the health and emotional wellbeing of pupils, staff and families across RCT as a result of COVID -19. We scrutinised the work of all service areas to ensure they are adapting to new and emerging challenges with a clear focus on preventative and sustainable models of service delivery that are both efficient and effective for the wellbeing of our young people.

More recently and as lockdown measures unfold, our attention has turned to the huge challenges ahead for both service areas in developing their recovery plans. Committee will scrutinise the delivery adjustments as they are made in response to the national alert levels and we have committed to **receive termly education updates** to remain well-informed.



**Central South Consortium**

In line with our terms of reference we continue to challenge the [Central South Consortium \(CSC\)](#) on their approach in developing a school led system and to provide evidence that CSC is value for money and to demonstrate its impact and effectiveness. Committee held the CSC to account for its support to schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf, particularly during lockdown, and of its assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system. We propose to maintain our robust challenge of the Central South Consortium on a regular basis.

**Kinship Care**

We welcomed the [Notice of Motion](#) (NOM) in respect of kinship care which was referred to our Committee by Council on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

Following our meeting held on the [13<sup>th</sup> January 2021](#) committee proposes, in discussion with the proposer and seconder of the NOM, to scrutinise the results of a survey of carers and kinship carers to assess their needs and we will invite representatives from 'Grandparents Plus' who are working closely with the local authority to improve support to friends and families across Rhondda Cynon Taf. We will make our recommendations in due course.

**Referral from the Audit Committee**

The [referral from the Audit Committee](#) to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee came following concerns raised in respect of high levels of unauthorised absence at statutory school ages and Post-16 attendance levels. Attendance and exclusion data are routinely reported to scrutiny as are regular updates on the Attendance strategy. Following thorough scrutiny of the information we proposed that an audit of post 16+ is undertaken in the new municipal year. We will make our recommendations to the Audit Committee based on further evidence and as such, this will be included as part of our forward work programme for 2021/22.

In addition to the above members have continued to challenge a range of other areas including access to online learning by disadvantaged pupils during the pandemic and the how attendance has been impacted, including consideration of how the Council is working to improve attendance across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Committee has also sought to understand how the pandemic may have impacted on the participation in Welsh Medium Education and the unique challenges faced by parents and pupils by remote learning.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Members for their hard work and contributions over what has been an extremely challenging year. My thanks also to the Vice Chair, Councillor Julie Edwards, for her support throughout the year.



### **Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee**

The Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee plays a vital role in assessing service performance and policy development across a range of Council Services, including all aspects of Adult Social Care, Housing, Leisure Services and Public Health and Protection, as set out in its terms of reference.

#### **ADULT SERVICES**

The first of many reports and updates to Committee outlining the Council's response to the COVID -19 pandemic from an Adult Services perspective was presented on the [14<sup>th</sup> September 2020](#). This became our key focus for the 2020/21 Municipal Year, and we requested relevant statistical indicators to accurately monitor the performance and recovery actions of this vital service in line with the Council's 2020/21 Corporate Plan.

Not only did we scrutinise the plans in place across health and social care that addressed the challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, we proposed that this also included information on the winter pressures across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region. Committee was keen to understand how the health and social care providers and partners delivered quality care and services throughout a demanding period and to ensure that the frequently updated guidance from Welsh Government had been disseminated appropriately.

#### **ADULT CARERS SUPPORT**

As a result of committee's concerns regarding the support available for adult carers and the increased resilience by them and their families culminating in a higher demand on adult social care, we received a report at our meeting on the [8<sup>th</sup> February 2020](#) on the provision for adult carers throughout the pandemic. We scrutinised the work of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Carers Support Project (CSP) along with data from day service provision, sitting services and formal respite provision.

Respite services has continued to support unpaid carers, residential and nursing placements, sitting services and day centre provision for adults with learning disabilities or dementia, have all continued to operate despite the restrictions.

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Committee has committed to scrutinise this issue through regular reporting to ensure that the strength and resilience of all carers has been and continues to be adequately supported throughout the pandemic.

### **PUBLIC HEALTH AND PROTECTION SERVICES**

The Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee has a commitment to review the work of the Public Health and Protection Services. An overview of the regulatory service response to the pandemic was provided to the Committee on the [12<sup>th</sup> January 2021](#). It included Regulatory Services (including Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Licensing, Community Safety), Homelessness Provision and the Registrar Service. It also included the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Contact Tracing Service operated by RCTCBC on behalf of the Region.

To ensure that monitoring the demand on the vulnerable within our communities had been undertaken, we requested an [update](#) on the Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 to revisit and review the Action Plan accordingly.

We also reviewed and endorsed the renewal of the [Service Level Agreement between the local authority and Hope Rescue](#), which provides the stray dog kennelling facility for the Council. Evidence of more robust processes and sustained improvements in service delivery, since its initial implementation, warranted the endorsement to renew the Service Level Agreement.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all members of the Committee for their support throughout this challenging period, particularly my Vice Chair, County Borough Councillor Sheryl Evans for her contribution.



**Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee**

I am delighted to introduce to you just some of the work of the [Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee](#). The role of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Committee as defined in their Terms of Reference is the scrutiny of matters that affect RCTCBCs key Community Services.

**Waste and Recycling**

In setting the 2020/21 Work Programme the Committee prioritised and had regard for the unprecedented time we have all found ourselves in. We recognised the inevitable impact on frontline services from Covid-19 and therefore prioritised the Councils response to the pandemic and how this impacted the strict Welsh Government target for Wales to recycle 70% of its waste by 2025. The Authority achieved the current target set out by Welsh Government of 64% and exceeded the target achieving 68% whilst only being down just over ½% on the previous year. This is testament to the resilience and commitment of our staff and collection and disposal processes.

**Residents and Recycling**

As the Community Recycling Centres reopened with strict measures in place to comply with Covid-19 legislation, staff responded to the changes in legislation and quickly adapted operations to ensure residents were able to attend the Community Recycling Centres safely to dispose of their waste. Evident to see was the commitment from residents to recycling. During the Christmas 2020 period, more than double the amount that was usually collected was collected in the week before, during and after Christmas on dry recycling and food waste. Over 400 tonnes of food waste and 450 tonnes of dry recycling had been collected in one day, whereas the previous year this figure would have been collected over a week. This had contributed to the residual waste figure significantly reducing during this period. Well done to our residents who are clearly committed in supporting the Authority achieve the ambitious Welsh Government targets to ultimately achieve zero waste by 2050.

Achieving the strict Welsh Government targets is a priority for the Authority and in setting our Forward Work Programme for 2021/22 we will have regard for these targets. As a Committee we will work with local schools and businesses to challenge their recycling and waste procedures, to improve them in support of the Authority. We want to convey a clear message that tackling this issue is everyone's responsibility.

**Pre-Scrutiny**

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 the Committee undertook pre-scrutiny of a proposed extension and variation to Rhondda Cynon Taf CBCs Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Orders. We considered the outcomes of the public consultation exercise to extend the two Public Spaces Protection Orders, relating to dog controls, in Rhondda Cynon Taf (the Dog Control PSPO's). It was proposed that they be renewed for a further 3 year period in order to maintain the significant benefits the orders have had in relation to dog fouling and ensure appropriate powers remain in place to deal with the minority who continue to flout the laws.

Members determined that further enforcement would not be as effective as education and recommended that the Authority work closely with schools to educate our Children and Young People on the importance of being a responsible dog owner and understand the potential health risks of not clearing dog waste.

The impact of Covid-19 on the Services covered by the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee, has been substantial and we wish to extend our gratitude for the hard work, commitment and continued efforts of the staff involved in ensuring that vital services are still delivered to the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough. I would like to thank my Vice Chair, County Borough Councillor Tina Williams, and all members of the Scrutiny Committee for their hard work and commitment over the past twelve months as we have continued to ensure that matters of public interest have been scrutinised throughout what we can all agree has been an extraordinary year.



### Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee

As chair of the [Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee](#) I am pleased to report on what has been another productive, albeit unprecedented year. Throughout the pandemic we have continued to maintain our rigorous challenge of the Council's budget proposals and expenditure and scrutiny of the Council's performance as set out in our terms of reference set out.

### Tourism Strategy

In December 2020 we received an update on the [Draft Tourism Strategy](#) in light of the current COVID 19 Pandemic. In view of the sector being impacted heavily by Covid-19, committee was keen to understand how the Council was working with the sector to maintain and support its future recovery, recognising the opportunity this sector provides to deliver the aspirations of the Council's corporate plan. Members were complimentary of the progress which continues to be made and the ambitious set out with the draft plan.

### Council Performance Quarterly Reports

Committee scrutinised the [2021/22 Budget Consultation](#), as part of its role as a consultee and in line with the Committee's terms of reference. Scrutiny feedback, queries and challenges were incorporated into a Phase 1 Budget Consultation report, alongside the feedback received from all other stakeholders, and were considered by Cabinet as part of it developing a proposed Revenue Budget Strategy for the 2021/22 financial year.

We undertook pre scrutiny of the draft 2021/22 Revenue Budget Strategy in [early 2021](#). This enabled non-executive members to examine and provide feedback on the proposals, and for these to be considered by Cabinet prior to it recommending a Revenue Budget Strategy to full Council in March 2021. Specifically, we commented on the **proposed Cabinet Budget Strategy for Council Tax**, the **proposed Cabinet Budget Strategy for Schools Budget**, the **proposed Cabinet Budget Strategy for Efficiencies**, and the **proposed Cabinet Budget Strategy for Additional Investment**.

### Digital Transformation

In last year's scrutiny annual report I included our review of the [Digital Strategy 2017-20](#), and it was timely that we received an update on the [Council's Digital and ICT Services](#) which demonstrated how it had delivered and supported council services over the last 12 months. Scrutiny recognised the value of the successful delivery of the Council's Digital Strategy 2017-20 which had formed the building blocks to enable the rapid response to Covid-19 for effective homeworking for staff,

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virtual meetings for Elected Members and Officers, HWB Schools transformation, the development of digital processes for RCT citizens and its support of the Trace, Track and Protect and mass testing/vaccination programmes. There is a continued commitment that the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee will be consulted on the Council's Digital Strategy for 2021 and the committee were keen to ensure that the positive progress made during the pandemic to promote virtual working was embedded into future working arrangements.

I must, of course, thank all members of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee for their continued hard work and dedication in challenging the Council's performance to deliver better outcomes for residents. Extended thanks to my Vice-Chair Councillor Graham Thomas for his support throughout the year.

I would also like to thank the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for his continued support for the Committee's work.

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## Scrutiny's principal aims:

- Better outcomes for the people of RCT
- Adding value to the way decisions are reached
- Working constructively with Cabinet
- Challenging positively as a critical friend
- Basing its findings on good evidence
- Learning from others

## Focus for 2021/22:

- Continuing the Council's good practice of undertaking pre scrutiny of key decisions and for scrutiny to continue to engage with the relevant Cabinet Member and portfolio holder to identify opportunities for future scrutiny in line with the proposals of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act
- Development of the Scrutiny toolkit to provide easy to use practical guidance and clarity to Members
- Further develop the best support for our Scrutiny Members with a focus on self-evaluation; chairing skills; scrutiny of performance data; financial scrutiny and the development of E-learning through the Members' Portal
- Ensuring that the Scrutiny Committees complete self-evaluation exercises at least once a year (as part of the process of preparing for the Scrutiny Annual Report)
- Ensure our scrutiny arrangements continue to comply with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and focus on the need to reduce the inequalities of outcome that result from socio-economic disadvantage.
- As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, consider more innovative and effective ways of scrutiny, taking full advantage of technology to this end.
- Further encouraging of public participation within the democratic process through work programme setting and webcasting of meetings.



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Click here for all Scrutiny [Virtual meetings](#)

Other work of the [OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE](#) included:

- Annual Equalities Report 2019/20
- Customer Feedback Scheme – Comments, Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2019/20
- Progress of the Cardiff Capital Region ('CCR') Joint Cabinet (the 'Regional Cabinet' - a joint committee)
- Welsh Government Consultation: Draft Regulations to Establish Corporate Joint Committees
- Call in of Key Officer Delegated Decision: Sale of Part of the Former Lady Windsor Colliery Site, Ynysybwl
- The Council's Fire Safety Risk Assessment Process
- Local Authority Arrangements to Safeguard Children and Adults at Risk
- Consideration of the Cabinet Forward Work Programme
- Crime & Disorder Committee (sitting in its role under Sections 19 & 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006)
- RLDP Members Steering Group

Other work of the [CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE](#) included:

- Regional Adoption Annual Report
- Report from the Corporate Parenting Annual Report
- Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Inspection in relation to the Disable Children's Service review
- WESP Annual Report
- Eye to Eye Counselling Service report
- Implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (ALNET) 2018
- School Attendance Unauthorised absence (in line with a referral from Audit Committee)
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

Other work of the [HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE](#) included:

- Integrated Substance Misuse Service in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil
- Hope Rescue Service Level Agreement (SLA)

Other work of the [PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE](#) included:

- Impact of COVID19 on Community Recycling Centres
- Bryn Pica Waste Management Facility
- Impact of Covid-19 on Operations of Parks and Countryside
- Streetcare Enforcement

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- **Parking Enforcement Partnership**
- **Changes to Green Waste Collections**

Other work of the [FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE](#) included:

- **The Employment & Skills Strategy 2019-21**
- **The 2021/22 Capital Strategy Report**
- **The 2021/22 Treasury Management Strategy Report**
- **Progress against the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2018/23**
- **The Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2023/24**
- **CIL Annual Monitoring Report and the proposed changes to the Regulation 123 List**
- **The Council's 'digital by default' approach**

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