

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 22
November 2021 at 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor R Yeo (Chair)

Councillor S Evans	Councillor L De Vet
Councillor M Griffiths	Councillor P Howe
Councillor G Jones	Councillor L Jones
Councillor S Powderhill	Councillor A Roberts
Councillor G Stacey	Councillor J Williams
Councillor S Trask	

Officers in attendance:-

Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services
Ms L Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Mrs R Hope, Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services
Mrs Cheryl Emery, Head of Community Safety and Community Housing

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor W Lewis

16 Declaration of Interest

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

17 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 20th September 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

18 Consultation Links

Members acknowledged the consultation links which were provided for their information and **RESOLVED** to note any consultations that are relevant to the remit of the Committee.

19 Regional Feed Law Enforcement Service: Food Standards Agency Full Audit Report & Action Plan

The Head of Service for Public Protection and Regulatory Service outlined the purpose of the report to provide members the opportunity consider and

scrutinise the Report of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) following the full audit of the Council's Regional Feed Law Enforcement Service, carried out in December 2019.

The Officer explained the reasons for the delay in the report being presented to Committee and informed Members that the final report and action plan were received from the Food Standards Agency in July 2021, 18 months after the audit.

The Officer continued to outline the background to the report, funding for feed controls and the feedback received from the Food Standards Agency Audit. The Officer highlighted the feedback from the report drawing Members attention to section 4.4 confirming that the Report concluded that:

- A 'Moderate' Assessment of Assurance was identified in relation to the Cwm Taf Regional Feed Service. There are four categories of audit assurance; 'Moderate' is the second highest;
- 11 specific recommendations were made by the auditors in relation to service delivery in Rhondda Cynon Taf;
- 5 of these were required process or procedural amendments;
- 6 of these were areas where Rhondda Cynon Taf already had processes in place, but could benefit from recommended amendment;
- 1 example of Good Practice was identified within the report, and this specifically related to Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Members were informed of the 11 recommendations made, a number of these have already been addressed.

One Member queried the length of time between the inspection being carried out and the report being produced and whether a further audit was due impacting on the Council's ability to implement the recommended actions. The Officer advised that there is currently no planned audit by the Food Standards Agency and the impact of Covid on timescales has been recognised but assured Members that the Council were on track to complete all actions by December 2021.

Another Member queried the 5 process / procedural recommendations as recommended in the results of the Audit and asked whether these had been carried out. The Officer confirmed for Members that the majority of the recommendations had already been completed but all were on track for completion by the above date.

The Chair thanked the Officer for a comprehensive report and Members **RESOLVED** to:-

1. Note the Food Standards Agency Report on the Cwm Taf Regional Feed Law Enforcement Service provided by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council in partnership with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.
2. Note the Action Plan prepared by the Public Health and Protection Service to address the recommendations arising from the Food Standards Agency Report on the Regional Feed Law Enforcement Service.

Progress made by Community Housing in relation to the Rhondda Cynon Taf Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2018-2022

The Director Public Health Protection and Community Services introduced Members to the Head of Community Safety and Community Housing who took Members through the detail of the report. The Officer outlined the purpose of the report to update members of the committee with the progress made by the Housing Department in relation to the RCTCBC Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2018 -2022 and to outline the significant ongoing pressure on the Housing Solutions Service and support services resulting from the pandemic and the additional actions that have been taken.

The Officer took Members through the background to the report outlining the specific duties of the Housing Wales (Act) 2014 and the objectives of the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018. Members were informed that as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns additional challenges were identified in terms of needs duties.

The Officer continued to present to Members from the report the progress against the Homelessness Action Plan discussing the 3 objectives and their detail as outlined in the report. Members were also provided with information regarding Regional Project Development – Homeless and Housing Support Grant as detailed in section 5 of the report.

Lastly, the Officer took Members through the challenges and opportunities going forward including:

- The significant pressure on temporary accommodation and high number of individuals placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
- People remaining in temporary and supported accommodation longer than necessary due to limited move on housing options.
- Meeting the housing and support needs of a small cohort of homeless individuals with high complex needs.
- The possible removal of the WG Hardship Fund as from 1st April 2022 and the uncertainty of the medium to long term impact of the pandemic on homelessness and housing services.
- Identifying suitable locations and buildings for the development of specialist projects.
- Recruitment and retention within support sector of high- quality staff linked with uncertainty over funding and short- term contracts.

The Chair thanked the Officers for the presentation and raised a query regarding the figures outlined in section 3.5.1 of the report and the impact that Covid legislation had on the figures and whether the numbers represented repeat or new clients. The Officer clarified the impact of Covid legislation on the figures and confirmed that the figures represented mostly new clients although acknowledged the high levels of repeat clients amongst prison leavers.

One Member noted the slow uptake of the hardship grant and queried whether this was a result of people not being aware of the availability of the grant. The Officer confirmed that the application was made available online and Officers had contact with relevant 3rd parties to ensure the grant was targeted at the right individuals. The Officer highlighted to Members that a barrier to the process was identified regarding the eligibility criteria for the grant which prevented a number

of individuals in completing successful applications. Members were informed that this has been fed back to Welsh Government and requests made to widen the criteria to ensure the target groups can apply.

One Member also asked Officers to clarify the data included in the report relating to people leaving B&B accommodation and being offered tenancy agreements and the sustainability of this offer. The Office advised that whilst they did not have specific data at present this is something that will be collated to share with Members. Members felt that there should be a proactive offer of support available to ensure tenancy agreements are able to be as successful as possible.

Lastly, a Member discussed the impact of anti-social behaviour and the issues this can have on the ability to sustain tenancy agreements and support homeless residents. The Director Public Health Protection and Community Services referenced how key to tackling this issue is having the support of elected Members and local engagement to raise issues and be addressed appropriately. The Director also acknowledged the important role that privately rented landlords have and the importance of engaging with this sector.

The Chair thanked Officers and Members for their in depth discussion on the topic, Members **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the content of the report and provided comment on the progress made to date.

(Note: During the discussion, County Borough Councillor W Lewis declared a personal interest in this item:

"I work for Hafod Housing which has been referenced in the discussion.")

21 Chair's Review and Close

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and contribution to this evening's discussion highlighting the importance of the topics raised in both reports and brought the meeting to a close.

This meeting closed at 6.00 pm

**CLLR R. YEO
CHAIR.**