

Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Friday, 15 July 2022 at 10.00 am.

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

Councillor R Bevan (Chair)

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Councillors

Councillor J Thomas

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Councillors

Councillor S J Davies Councillor D Parkin

Councillor B Stephens

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Mrs L Toghil, Cwm Taf PSB Support Officer

Mrs K Williams, Cwm Taf PSB Support Officer

Mrs S Handy, Members Researcher & Scrutiny Officer

Co-opted Members in attendance

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

The Service Director, Communications & Democratic Services RCTCBC welcomed Members to the meeting of the Cwm Taf PSB Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee in 2021 (the JOSOC) and noted the 5 core statutory functions of the JOSOC.

2 Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors K. Morgan from RCTCBC and C. Jones and K. Gibbs from MTCBC and Co-Opted Member Mr M. Jehu.

3 Declaration of Interest

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

4 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 28th January 2022 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

5 CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR APPOINTMENT

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED**:

1. To appoint Councillor Bevan as Chair of the Cwm Taf Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2022/23 Municipal Year; and,
2. To appoint Councillor Mytton as Vice Chair of the Cwm Taf Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

6 THE CWM TAF JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23

The Service Director of Democratic Services & Communications gave an overview to Members in respect of the Cwm Taf Public Service Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2022/23.

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

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the contents of the proposed draft Cwm Taf Joint PSB Joint Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23.

7 UPDATE FROM A PSB REPRESENTATIVE ON ONGOING WORK TO DELIVER AGAINST THE CWM TAF WELL-BEING PLAN 2018-2023

Lisa Toghill, Senior PSB Officer for the Cwm Taf PSB, thanked the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the invitation to this first meeting of the 2022/23 cycle. Ms Toghill explained that unfortunately, the Chair, Mark Brace, is currently on bereavement leave, and so can't be in attendance today. In his absence, the two Senior PSB Support Officers will present Committee with the update on the work of the PSB.

As we have recently published our Annual Report, which outlines our work and progress in the past year, we thought it would be useful to highlight key areas of progress and achievement from that, and so I will outline some of our work from 2021-22, then I'll hand over to Kirsty who will run through our plans for the coming months and year moving forward.

Just to give some context on our duties and processes, it's worth noting that this was our final Annual Report on the 2018 – 2023 Well-being Plan.

The Plan set out the steps to meet our Well-being Objectives as follows:

- Thriving Communities,
- Healthy People,
- Strong Economy
- Tackling Loneliness and Isolation

However, the world as we know it now is a very different place to when the Plan was written and the focus of the Board has rightly shifted to meet new and emerging challenges, particularly around the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and more recently the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis. Against such a challenging backdrop, we are still in a position to celebrate progress being made.

This will also be the final Annual Report and final cycle of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny function for Cwm Taf as we will be merging with Bridgend to create one Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board ahead of publishing our new Well-being Plan in May 2023 – Kirsty will outline this in more detail when she updates you on future plans.

Before reporting on some of the work under each of the Objectives, it is important to note that as well as the publication of our Annual Report, we have also carried out and published the next iteration of our Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well-being Assessment. This was supported by contracted consultants, as well as our partners, but has been a major focus for the PSB support team in the last year.

I will now share some of the highlights under each of the Well-being Objectives for the past year:

Thriving Communities

Partnership working is at the centre of PSB work. It has been the driving force of Covid-19 recovery work. The relationships that started in the PSB allowed organisations to integrate their work and resources to work at pace, work smartly and support communities trying to re-build, re-engage and re-connect.

‘Community Hubs’ have been developed across the area as a result of the ‘Thriving Community’ Objective.

A key focus in the last year has been on re-establishing or creating new ‘Neighbourhood Networks’, supported by Community Co-ordinators and chaired by community leaders. Over 250 groups are engaged in these networks in RCT, and this continues to increase, seeking solutions and ensuring that residents have opportunities to influence developments within communities. During 2021-22 a total of eight external grants provided £335,068 was made available for community groups via the Neighbourhood Networks and Food Support Fund.

In Merthyr Tydfil, as part of the Gurnos Community Hub, Cardiff

Metropolitan University have been carrying out a research project focusing on Pen y Dre High School. This work engages Welsh Government to review the future direction of travel for 'Community Focused Schools' and identify and build upon the successes of the current approach in the area.

Healthy People

There has been continued progress regarding the Vulnerability Profile project under our Healthy People Objective. This work focuses on preventing unplanned pregnancies, supporting children to be school-ready, and reducing the number of children taken into care. The purpose of this work is to enable information sharing between partner organisations to identify pregnant women and children who would benefit from early interventions to prevent poor outcomes for them and their children. The scope was originally from preconception to age two - 'First 1000 Days of life' - but has been extended to age seven to ensure that profiles are developed that promote school readiness and transition into and through the foundation phase of education. As at the end of this reporting year, the RCT pilot project has made significant progress. Highlights include Data Disclosure Agreements signed by CTMUHB, RCTCBC, South Wales Police and Secure Anonymised Information Linkage, Swansea University. Qualitative research has also been undertaken to gain the views of families and professionals in sharing data across organisations to inform future practice.

The CHOICE project offers advice and support to access Long- Acting Reversible Contraception. It has seen the project increase their services to the most vulnerable women in our communities and expand to include a CHOICE street-based service and supporting homeless clients. CHOICE is now identified within the referral pathways of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Sexual Assault and Rape Crisis Centre and at New Pathways, and it is part of the pre-release protocol from Eastwood Park Prison and Young Offenders Institution for women. It has been integrated with RCT Social Services Department, and a Well Woman Clinic has been introduced offering tailored support for sex workers in Bridgend. Staff development has been a key success to the project, with two members of the team receiving training to administer a variety of LARC based on individual need, and the team has been extended to include an Outreach Healthcare Support Worker. This expansion of service resulted in over 700 referrals made to the project up to February 2022.

Strong Economy

We have been starting a cultural shift by exploring the supply side potential for social enterprise delivery in advance of social procurement, and 'thinking local first' with a workshop event that brought together the social business sector with procurement professionals. This has come about through working regionally with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies and a project looking at Building Wealth in Local Communities

and progressive procurement practices. The same work has brought about some changes to procurement practice and influencing national policy.

Tackling Loneliness and Isolation was a cross cutting area of work for the PSB and presented opportunities to integrate with our Regional Partnership Board (RPB) around social prescribing, using community assets and befriending services. There is a designated role in Cwm Taf for a Tackling Loneliness and Isolation Development Officer in recognition of the impact that we know these feelings can have on our well-being. The Development Officer has created a new referral pathway to Community / Well-being Coordinators in Interlink RCT and VAMT, creating six 'loneliness champions' at South Wales Fire and Rescue Service stations in Aberdare, Abercynon and Merthyr Tydfil. There is potential for more, and for more public sector bodies to be involved. The pandemic significantly impacted on all our well-being. We have spoken with people to understand what it's like to live and work in Cwm Taf and heard that all of society faced feelings of loneliness and social isolation as well as potential physical and mental health challenges. These still affect many of us as we return to 'normal life'. Befriending groups and services make a huge difference to many people with one of the people supported calling the service "life-saving". The third sector Befriending Network has been established aiming to share best practice, training and joined up delivery of services for people experiencing loneliness. There are currently 35 involved services in the Network.

Other cross – cutting areas include:

Community Safety and Cohesion The Covid pandemic made it difficult for communities to come together and connect, but a new group has been set up in Merthyr Tydfil to help support people from Kerala who were feeling isolated from their community. 72 families now have a support network for children and adults to come together through music, dance, and food.

As part of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), RCT were successful for Safer Streets funding to tackle the issue of Violence against Women and Girls. This funding allows for interventions in targeted areas and more broadly across the local authority aiming to reduce violence against women and girls. This includes improvements to public spaces such as Cae Fardre, Ynys Underpass and Beddau Park. The Digital Bench Scheme has been widened to encourage young people to congregate in pre-planned 'safe spaces' providing mobile phone connectivity and charging points. A community fund has also been introduced to support town and rural communities to drive crime prevention initiatives such as Neighbourhood Watch, provide self-defence lessons and fund minor schemes which empower communities to take back their public space and feel safer.

Volunteering played a critical role in helping people during the pandemic, both through receiving and providing support, and we saw an increase in the number of volunteers in Cwm Taf. This has decreased for a variety of reasons, including people returning to work after furlough but we also

heard experiences of fatigue or 'burn out'. We need to support those giving their time and help recruit new volunteers so that the significant benefits that volunteering brings are sustained and continued. We are committed to improving how we involve communities in our work and decision making and were one of the regions selected to work with Coproduction Network for Wales as part of their Project Dewi. We will work with the network for five years (from spring 2021) to try to develop a practice of meaningful engagement and involvement, moving towards full co-production. We tried adopting this approach when carrying out our Well-being Assessment, and we feel that we have been able to enrich this round of assessment with more qualitative information, as a result of this support.

That was just a summary of the work undertaken in the last year. If you would like to learn more, the full Annual Report is available on the Our Cwm Taf website, we can also circulate with the minutes for members information. I'll now hand over to Kirsty to give an outline of the work for the coming year.

Kirsty Williams, Senior PSB Support Officer provided Members with an update on future plans.

The following points were noted for Members:

PSB Future Focus

As Lisa outlined, in the time since we last met with JOSOC the PSB has published both the regional Well-being Assessment and the Cwm Taf Annual Report. We were pleased to be able to meet the deadlines for both documents, including arranging translation and design which is no mean feat when you have no budget and an expanded footprint.

At the January 2022 meeting we outlined to JOSOC Members our intention to continue this regional working beyond the Assessment and into the development of the new regional Well-being Objectives, Plan and creation of one merged PSB Board by May 2023. This is still very much the case and is the main focus for the Board for the 2022-23 PSB year.

We were successful in our application for the PSB support grant for 2022-23. This is made available on a regional basis, i.e., with Bridgend PSB and has specific criteria linked to the development of the new Plan. It has been agreed that some of the money will be used to carry out engagement and involvement work to inform the development of the Objectives and delivery steps, carry out stakeholder events and cover running costs. We were pleased to see members of the Scrutiny Committee at one of these events on 23 June in SWFRS HQ and hope to continue this relationship as we develop the Objectives and Plan. The next meeting, a Three Horizons session considering the long term, is in the diary for 19 July, with the focus being on inequalities, linked to Public Health Wales' Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales strategy and system

change theory.

Some of the grant will also be used to further develop and expand on a QGIS Mapping Tool for the region. The PSB has agreed to pick up work started under RCT's Climate Change Community Activity, Communications and Engagement sub-group and in the first instance we will need to focus on gathering and plotting the same information for community groups in Bridgend and Merthyr as has already been done for RCT. We also intend on using the tool itself as a way of carrying out the engagement, asking our communities to let us know what's happening – or not – in their area and where there could be opportunities to share best practice or create networks. The focus through the RCT work was on plotting groups with an environmental or food sufficiency angle so this fits in with the emerging priorities to do with healthy behaviours and addressing the climate emergency.

We also successfully applied for additional funds to support the merger of the Board.

We have continued to make progress against the Well-being Objectives set out in the 2018 – 23 Well-being Plan and the session on 23 June covered what work from the current Objectives could continue moving into the next round, in line with what priorities emerged from the Assessment. There remained an agreement that the focus must be on the key 'wicked' issues, with the central aim of tackling poverty and inequality. Capacity and understanding the appropriateness of PSB involvement, and what that could or should look like remain key considerations – Covid really demonstrated that we need to recognise who is best placed to undertake work and it isn't always the public sector.

We've also had ongoing discussions around alignment to operational boards such as the Area Planning Board and Community Safety Partnership, and how this could inform a potential Objective with a focus on community safety which came through as a central theme from the Assessment.

A timeline has been drafted for the production and publication of the regional Well-being Plan which includes the required statutory consultation, or as we intend, involvement phases and seeking advice from the Office of Future Generations Commissioner. We have recently met with Colleen Cluett, or designated support link, to discuss what support we think would be most beneficial.

The summer and early autumn will see us start this engagement and drafting work in earnest, and then we have timetabled four weeks to start production on a final draft Plan. Consultation should then start on the draft Plan mid-November through to the end of January. We will then have until early March 2023 to analyse consultation findings and re-draft before starting four weeks of formal approval of the statutory bodies followed by design and translation.

Based on learnings from the Assessment, we are keen to improve how we engage through Welsh language, with Black Asian and Minority Ethnic and LGBTQI+ communities and build on the links made with the protected characteristic groups identified under the work of the Regional Partnership Board. We have made new links including with Menter Iaith, Community Cohesion and Equality officers and continue to look to broaden our networks.

We also continue to work with CoProduction Network for Wales as part of our successful application to be part of Project Dewi. We are one year into the five-year support package and have been appointed a new consultant to support us in our journey towards improved involvement and co-production. Developing the Well-being Plan will offer opportunities for co-production, and we will be looking for steps to deliver against our new Objectives that have involvement as a key focus.

As we all are aware, Covid cases are once again on the rise so we will need to consider how we can ensure meaningful engagement across a variety of platforms in the event of face-to-face being limited, or not ideal to the most vulnerable in our community. We would welcome JOSC input and steer on this, particularly with the communities that you represent.

Following the updates from both Lisa and Kirsty, Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions.

The Chair thanked Kirsty and Lisa for their reports and noted how important it was for the JOSC to receive these updates. The Chair also emphasised the importance of going out to see some of these projects in person.

Another Member queried whether there had been any interaction with youth services in the communities, also queried what the PSB is doing to address educating young people. Lisa Toghill advised that there are lots of projects being developed with the RPB such as 'Hear our Voices' and that involvement of all ages is a cross cutting across all of the PSB work. A series of futures workshops with representatives of young people from all three Local Authorities has taken place and a report from it is fed into the Well-being Assessment. Young people from different areas had different views on their futures. Kirsty Williams also referenced a recent youth ambassadors event linked to refugees that the PSB had supported and further reference was made to young people's experience of Covid. It was also referenced the key question of where the PSB is more useful and it was emphasised the importance of looking at what everyone is doing and for the PSB to look at being a forum for best practice.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to note the update.

8

No urgent items to report.

9 CHAIRS REVIEW & CLOSE

The Chair thanked the Committee for electing him as Chair for the 2022-23 Municipal Year and wished to put on record his congratulations to Councillor Mytton for being elected Vice Chair of the Committee.

The Chair thanked Members for attending and referenced the next meeting to be held on the 28th October 2022.

This meeting closed at 10.53 am

**Councillor R. Bevan
Chair**