



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday, 14 March 2019 at 5.00 pm at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Park, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor S Bradwick (Chair)

Councillor T Williams	Councillor M Weaver
Councillor A Chapman	Councillor D Owen-Jones
Councillor D Grehan	Councillor E George
Councillor G Hughes	Councillor W Owen
Councillor S Pickering	Councillor E Stephens
Councillor A Fox	

Officers in attendance

Mr N Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services
Mr D James - Head of Regeneration & Prosperity
Mr A Wilkins - Director of Legal Services
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Mrs A Virgo, Project Team Leader - Funding and Implementation
Mrs W Edwards – Head of Community Services
Mr N Kelland – Principal Librarian

37 Apologies

An apology of absence was received from County Borough Councillors M Fidler Jones, G Stacey and W Treeby.

38 Declaration of Interest

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

39 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 7th February 2019 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

40 Announcements and Introductions

The Chair made the following announcements:-

1. County Borough Councillor S. Pickering and member of the Scrutiny Committee has recently completed an expedition raising money for the British Legion;
2. Mr Steve Gammon, Streetcare Cleansing & Enforcement Manager is

retiring and on behalf of the Committee, the Chair extended his thanks to Mr Gammon for his contribution to Scrutiny;

3. Commend the Council's Legal Services on the successful prosecution of an individual who has been handed a suspended prison sentence in Court for assaulting an Enforcement Officer – supporting the Council's zero-tolerance approach to violence against its staff.

The Chair introduced the following officers and congratulated them on their recent promotion:-

Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates

Mr N Wheeler, Group Director, Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services

Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services

41 Rhondda Cynon Taf's Welsh Public Library Standards Assessment 2017-18

The Head of Community Services presented the feedback received from Welsh Government in respect of the Library Service's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) for the period 2017-18. Members were reminded that at the Scrutiny meeting held in December 2018 an interim report was presented as at that time the full assessment had yet to be published on the Welsh Government website.

The Head of Community Services reported that the Sixth Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards includes 12 core entitlements and 16 Quality Indicators designed to monitor how well library services provide for the people of Wales. From a Local Authority point of view, Rhondda Cynon Taf met all of the 12 core entitlements in full, achieved 5 of the 10 quality indicators in full, 1 in part and failed to achieve 4.

It was stated that overall the Welsh Government's narrative assessment of the local authority performance was positive however, the Head of Community Services acknowledged that a number of factors outside the immediate control of the service have had a major influence on the Council's performance. The Library Service will not be able to meet the quality indicator on opening hours as reduced funding in 2016 has meant the opening hours have reduced. In respect of the ICT (Q111) it was reported that the decision was taken not to invest in any further public access computers as only 24% of the available time was being used and library users are bringing their own devices into the libraries.

In respect of the All Wales data, set out at Appendix 3 of the report, the Head of Community Services commented that making comparisons with other local authority library services is difficult as they have developed their services in different ways.

A number of positive comments were received in respect of the improvements and investments made to the Library Service in RCT, specifically in relation to the opening of the new facility at Rhydyfelin, the new development at Taff Vale and the planned community hubs at Ferndale and Mountain Ash. This long term investment was considered a positive development. There has been an increase in the number of hours by volunteers, particularly young volunteers, which has been evidenced in the Summer Reading Challenge.

Following the presentation the Head of Community Service responded to a

number of queries in respect of staffing levels and investment in staff training with funding being made available for 2 members of staff to enrol onto a professionally recognised course.

Concern was raised that the 4% target on Welsh medium stock was not met. In response the Principal Librarian confirmed that the number of Welsh books obtained from the Welsh Books Council has increased, are prominently displayed and include a number of downloadable audio and e-books. He added that this stock did not include school age curriculum related books as these are costly, however the provision for e books is proving popular.

A Member asked for more publicity for the mobile library routes and timetable in the form of posters and leaflet drops to advertise the service in their area.

Following further discussion it was **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the content of the Annual Assessment report received from Welsh Government.

42 Progress of the Taff Vale Redevelopment

With the aid of Power Point, the Head of Regeneration & Prosperity presented the report of the Director of Regeneration, Planning & Housing in respect of progress of the Taff Vale Redevelopment with emphasis on achievements since the item was last reported to Scrutiny in September 2017.

Scrutiny was reminded that there is a renewed confidence in Pontypridd through the development of key regeneration schemes such as the Pontypridd Lido which has increased the footfall to the town and re-established its strategic location within the County Borough.

The Head of Regeneration & Prosperity reminded Scrutiny that the scheme incorporates three buildings on site, two large office accommodation buildings incorporating street level food/drink units and a third which will house a 21st Century library, a Council customer contact point, a café and a new leisure and fitness centre. In addition it was reported that the development will also include a direct link with Ynysangharad War Memorial Park via a pedestrian route across the river.

Scrutiny was provided with an update on the key milestones to have taken place since the previous progress report and informed that advancement has since been made with the main construction works and the steel frames to the three buildings which are nearing completion. Preparation work has also begun on the footbridge following appointment of the appropriate contractor who specialises in bridge design.

An update was also provided in respect of the Contractor's Community Benefits Plan target of 2280 weeks of recruitment and training of local people (long term unemployed, trainees, apprentices and work experience placements) With 1248 weeks having been achieved to date it was anticipated that the target would be surpassed by the end of the contract.

It was reported that on the 7th March 2019 the First Minister of Wales, Mark Drakeford AM, had visited the Council's flagship development at the former Taff Vale Shopping Centre site to officially announce the new name of the site as Llys Cadwyn. The name translates to Chain Court, reflecting the strong, proud, industrial heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf, and the world famous Brown Lenox & Co. chain works, which were situated in Pontypridd during Wales' industrial

heyday.

In conclusion, the Head of Regeneration & Prosperity explained that as part of the Contractors commitment to Pontypridd there had been discussions around a Community Legacy Project and the bowls pavilion within the park had been proposed for improvement using donated labour and materials from the Contractor.

The Head of Community Services took the opportunity to report on progress of the library facility within the development as something she had been involved with since its inception. Members were provided with an overview of the project which will include a children's area that includes space for crafts, a teenage space, an expanded collections area that will house such artefacts as the Evans James family bible which has been conserved by Glamorgan Archives. The Head of Community Services stressed the importance of working closely with the architects to keep in line with customers' needs and build a library that delivers an effective community space.

Following the presentation, it was agreed that Members of the Committee attend a site visit of the development in due course to see first-hand the progress made.

In response to a query regarding the importance of a clerk of works on site to monitor and sign off every stage of the development, the Director of Corporate Estates confirmed that external professionals and RCT staff inspect the project of works and are jointly responsible for signing off every stage of the project with a monthly report to confirm the arrangements.

In respect of an update regarding the letting of office space within the development, it was confirmed that a marketing campaign and brochure would be launched shortly to advertise the space available. A lettings agent has been appointed who has already received a number of enquiries, in advance of the campaign and an open day has been held which also generated a number of interests.

In terms of parking facilities for the new development, it was confirmed that there are 70 car parking spaces available to users of the buildings which would complement the existing car parks in Berw Road, Sardis Road, the Goods Yard and St. Catherine's Corner which currently offer plenty of capacity to visitors to the town. Scrutiny was reminded that the South East Wales Metro, part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, will improve the connectivity by public transport across the region and offer four trains per hour in each direction.

It was **RESOLVED:-**

1. To acknowledge the progress of the Taff Vale Redevelopment;
2. That Scrutiny Members undertake a site visit to the development site in the next few weeks; and
3. That a further update will be reported to this Scrutiny Committee on the next key stages of the development.

43 Urgent Business

The Chair announced that the Group Director, Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services wished to present a music video recently made by a young

resident of RCT, which had been shown to members of the Senior Leadership Team. The video had a strong message about the importance of recycling across the County Borough and it was hoped that the video would be shown to schools in RCT.

Members agreed that it was a useful tool to promote recycling in RCT, especially amongst school aged children. The Chair thanked the Group Director for providing Scrutiny with the opportunity to view the video.

This meeting closed at 6.20pm

**Cllr S Bradwick
Chairman**