



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 23 July 2019 at 5.00 pm at the Council Chambers, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor M Powell (Chair)

Mr J Fish	Councillor G Thomas
Councillor G Holmes	Councillor S Bradwick
Councillor R Yeo	Councillor W Lewis
Councillor J Williams	Councillor T Williams
Councillor J Cullwick	Councillor G Caple
	Councillor M Diamond

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr N Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services
Ian Christopher- Strategic Manager, Prosperity and Development.

County Borough Councillor in attendance:-

Councillor M. Adams - Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors A Davies-Jones, S. Rees-Owen and A. Fox.

5 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, County Borough Councillor G. Holmes declared the following personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 6 – “I have a professional interest in the Whitbread Company”.

6 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 2nd of April 2019 and the 8th of July 2019 as an accurate reflection of the meetings subject to “private sector” being added in to the 8th of July minutes to specifically reflect the need for the creation of more private sector jobs in the County Borough.

7 Finance and Performance Scrutiny Work Programme 2019/20

The Service Director of Democratic Services & Communications gave an overview to Members in respect of the revised Scrutiny arrangements.

It was highlighted that at the special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on the 1st May 2019, a report was presented which provided a response to the request from Committee Members to review the Council’s scrutiny arrangements and to update Members on the progress that has arisen from the Wales Audit Office report in respect of the Council’s Scrutiny arrangements ‘Fit for the Future’.

Councillor G. Thomas raised a query in respect of the item under ‘Other areas for exploration:- Investment programme to re-generate industrial estates’ and sought clarification as to when this item would be looked at by the Committee. The Service Director of Democratic Services & Communications confirmed that the Work Programme under the new arrangements is planned on a six monthly basis and that this item would be reviewed at this juncture.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to:

1. Agree the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2019/20 (up until December 2019 in the first instance); and
2. Agree that the Work Programme be reviewed at quarterly intervals to ensure the items identified for inclusion are relevant and that any additional referrals are incorporated.

8 Report of the Director of Finance and Digital Services

The Service Director, Finance & Improvement Services presented the Council’s Year End Performance Report (to 31st March 2019) to the Committee.

It was explained to Members that the Year End Report was presented to and approved by Cabinet on the 18th of July 2019 and contains revenue and capital budget performance; Treasury Management prudential indicators; Organisational Health information including staff turnover, sickness and Council strategic risks; Corporate Plan updates; and other national measures.

The Service Director, Finance & Improvement Services outlined the Corporate Plan priority updates along with a summary of performance measure results.

Members made a number of observations and put questions to the Service Director.

Councillor G. Thomas referred the Committee to page 28 of the report and to the increased rate of people kept in hospital whilst waiting for social care. The Service Director informed Members that as more people were being supported to live at home during 2018/19, this put pressure on the capacity of services and impacted on the timeliness of care packages commencing. The Service Director went on to indicate that within this overall position there were elements of positive performance, for example, reductions in the number of delays due to assessments and also reductions in the number of delays due to choice/availability. The Service Director added that the Council remains committed to the timely discharge of people from hospital, supported by the Stay Well@Home Service and working with partners to strengthen capacity.

The Chair raised a query in respect of the increased number of people requiring support to live at home and questioned how the Council deals with this in terms of the additional resources required. The Service Director informed Members that the Council continues to focus its work, and that of its partners, on early intervention and prevention, prioritises the allocation of resources to these areas and optimises the use of additional funding provided by the Welsh Government, for example, winter pressures funding. The Service Director went on to indicate that although demand is increasing, positive results are being delivered in areas such as the Reablement Service that is supporting people to live independently for longer.

Councillor S. Bradwick questioned when the work on the Black Lion Hotel in Aberdare was due to be completed and pointed out that it has been four years since the building work began and that it is having a detrimental effect on the visual appearance of the town centre. The Councillor also referenced similar issues in respect of the Boot Hotel, Aberdare. The Director of Prosperity and Development acknowledged that both projects have not proceeded as quickly as originally planned and he assured Members that the Planning Service is working with the individual companies involved in order to progress projects as quickly as possible. The Director advised that he would feedback an update to Committee Members in respect of this issue in due course.

Councillor R. Yeo referred Committee Members to the lack of recruitment in social care and noted the work the Council is doing with partners to support improvement in this area. The Councillor added that an update on this area will be reported to the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee during 2019/20. The Chair commented that where more detailed or

relevant information has been reported to other scrutiny committees, if a hyperlink could be included within the appropriate section of the Performance Report to enable the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee to consider a full as picture of performance as possible.

Councillor J. Cullwick requested clarification in respect of the number of houses being developed across the County Borough. The Director of Prosperity and Development acknowledged that the Council needs to find additional delivery methods such as SME Builders and self-build. The Director advised Members that some major schemes that were expected to be underway by now had stalled such as Cefn Hendy (that proposes 460 houses being built) and Llanilid where 1850 are expected; however, ongoing issues such as ecological issues and a village green challenge have caused significant delays.

In respect of the performance indicator for the number of new affordable homes being delivered, Councillor G. Thomas questioned why there had been a reduction in the targeted figure for 2018/19. The Director of Prosperity and Development fed back that as part of setting the target at the start of the 2018/19 financial year, it was anticipated that a number of large schemes could be delayed for reasons outside of the Council's control and this was reflected in the target set. The Director went on to indicate that the Cefn Hendy and Llanilid sites were examples of this where there have been delays in the sites being started. The Director added that it was anticipated that some of the delays will be progressed during 2019/20 and this is reflected in a slightly higher target being set for the next 12 months. Councillor W. Lewis queried whether Members could have access to a report that shows how many property developments were turned down on appeal. The Director of Prosperity and Development advised Members that he would collate the information and circulate to Members of the Committee.

Councillor R. Yeo referred Members to page 87 of the report and commented that he felt encouraged by the Council's strategy in respect of empty properties. Councillor T. Williams requested additional information in respect of empty properties across the County Borough. A number of Members concurred and requested a breakdown on a ward-by-ward basis. The Director of Prosperity and Development advised that he would collate the information and that an update would be shared with Members of the Committee.

Mr Fish, the Voting Elected Parent/Governor Representative, highlighted a number of areas for feedback: to what extent has the £0.195M underspend within Early Intervention Services (within Children Services) impacted on the delivery of the Resilient Families Service; does the underspend for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) (within Council Wide budgets) mean an increase in prosperity across the County Borough; and how has the £104k underspend for Education and Inclusion Services been utilised as part of the Council wide year-end position.

The Service Director, Finance & Improvement Services provided feedback on the points raised: the £0.195M underspend within Early Intervention Services was primarily due to temporary staffing vacancies during the year and within this position appropriate resources were allocated to support the delivery and on-going development of the Resilient Families Service; the underspend on CTRS reflected an on-going trend of reduced caseload that is likely to be influenced by a number of factors, for example, change of individuals' circumstances / income levels, individuals becoming employed and the roll-out of Universal Credit, with the area of CTRS continuing to be closely monitored to ensure eligible claimants are identified and supported to claim the benefits they are entitled to; and the £104k underspend for Education and Inclusion Services related to non-school budgets, reflected one-off underspends in core budgeted areas during the year and was incorporated into the Council wide year-end Revenue Budget position.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the Council's financial and operational performance position as at 31st March 2019 (Year End).

9 Report of the Director of Finance and Digital Services

The Service Director, Finance & Improvement Services presented the report in respect of the Council's proposed performance indicator targets for 2019/20, subject to approval by Council on 31st July 2019, as set out in the Draft Corporate Performance Report.

Members were asked to scrutinise the proposed performance indicator targets and determine whether specific targets require review in more detail.

Discussions ensued and Councillor M. Adams, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, suggested that the matter should be reviewed at the next Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting. A number of Members agreed with this proposal.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED**:-

1. To refer the Council's performance indicator targets for 2019/20 to the next meeting of the Chairs and Vice Chairs; and
2. To determine whether specific targets should be referred to individual scrutiny committees for review in more detail.

10 Rhondda Cynon Taf Tourism Strategy and Destination Management Plan

The Director of Prosperity and Development presented his report to Members in respect of the Council's draft Tourism Strategy and

Destination Management Plan.

A presentation was provided to accompany the report and Members were asked to provide feedback on the relevant issues to help shape a strategy to develop RCT as a key visitor destination.

The Director of Prosperity and Development advised the Committee that the feedback would be used to inform a draft strategy, which will be reported to Cabinet in the autumn for consideration.

Members were provided with information in respect of the following areas:-

- The ambition of the plan;
- Geographical Areas to be covered;
- Infrastructure requirements;
- Hospitality and accommodation requirements;
- Employment and Skills;
- Public and Stakeholder engagement; and
- Key next steps and actions.

The Director emphasised that RCT already has a strong core of visitor attractions such as the Royal Mint and Penderyn Whiskey, however the strategy aims to look at what other attractions can be brought forward. The presentation referenced potential new activities such as Zip World and the Rhondda Tunnel.

Following the presentation, discussions ensued and the Chair thanked the Director of Prosperity and Development for providing such a detailed presentation and asked if a copy of the presentation could be shared with Members of the Finance and Performance Committee following the meeting.

Councillor G. Thomas also thanked the Director for providing such an encouraging presentation and went on to raise concerns in respect of food businesses in RCT closing before 9pm and the subsequent negative effect that this could potentially have on tourism. The Councillor commented that in order for the strategy to be successful further work would need to be done to support new tourist attractions such as improving local café's, shops, toilet facilities and rail access. The Chair agreed and referenced the Rhigos railway line and the need for improved toilet facilities.

Councillor G. Thomas also commented that the Council would need to ensure that a range of accommodation is available to tourists throughout the County Borough and emphasised that the cost of local accommodation will be a key factor to the success of the strategy.

Councillor G. Holmes raised a query in respect of the Council's policy to encourage Whitbread to build hotels throughout RCT. The Director of

Prosperity and Development confirmed that the Council is keen to attract companies such as Whitbread into the County Borough, however, he emphasised the need to also give local people opportunity and help develop their entrepreneurial skills to set up their own businesses.

Councillor J. Cullwick raised concerns in respect of dog fouling and litter dropping across the County Borough, and emphasised the need to improve the visual appearance of local communities. The Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services confirmed that the Council's aim is to educate residents across the County Borough on littering and dog fouling, however, he acknowledged that some areas in the County Borough are particularly problematic and that further improvement is necessary.

Councillor J. Williams thanked the Director of Prosperity and Development for providing a detailed presentation and emphasised that the Council needs to do more to raise the aspirations of local residents.

Councillor G. Caple noted that the Council needs to work in partnership with Network Rail and hotel companies in order to promote the strategy and encourage local tourism. The Director of Prosperity and Development referenced the development of a 'Strategic Tourism Board', which works in partnership with companies such as Zip World to identify common problems, and the Board will be used as a catalyst to solve various issues in respect of tourism across the County Borough.

Councillor W. Lewis referenced the land near Llwynypia Hospital and emphasised that the land has the potential to be used for tourism purposes.

Councillor M. Adams noted that there is more the Council can do to promote tourism in RCT. The Councillor suggested that the Council should consider developing a local letting policy where local companies pay the Council a fee to be allocated to the list. The Councillor also emphasised the importance of local heritage, stressing that this should be part of the tourism strategy, and felt that the Council should do more to promote tourism online.

Councillor G. Holmes stressed that local companies, such as Edwards Coaches, are getting tourists around the County Borough and that the Council needs to do more to support these companies. He commented that the Council is not exploiting the full potential of some local tourist areas.

Mr Fish, the Voting Parent/Governor Representative, commended the proposed strategy and referenced that RCT is due to host the National Eisteddfod in 2022, and emphasised that the Council should not miss the opportunity to encourage the influx of tourists to visit other areas of the County Borough.

Councillor J. Cullwick pointed out that it is the attitude towards the valleys that needs to change. He acknowledged that there is a lot of money to be earned from tourism and agreed that this should be a focus for the Council.

Councillor M. Adams referenced the plaque of Jimmy Murphy as an example of where the Council could do more to promote local heritage / attractions in the County Borough. The Chair agreed and commented that the proposed tourism strategy will be a major benefit to Rhondda Cynon Taf and will also have a positive impact on the wider South East Wales region.

A number of Members confirmed that they would like to receive on-going updates in respect of the delivery of the strategy. The Service Director of Communications & Democratic Services reminded Members that the Committee's feedback will inform the proposed strategy and that the tourism strategy will be presented to Cabinet in the autumn. The Service Director confirmed that if the strategy is agreed by Cabinet then feedback could be provided to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee on an on-going basis.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Draft Tourism Strategy and Destination Management Plan subject to the comments made by the Committee.

This meeting closed at 7.00 pm

**CLLR M. POWELL
CHAIR.**