

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Monday, 23 September 2019 at 5.00 pm at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park. Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

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

Councillor M Adams (Chair)

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| Councillor S Evans | Councillor P Jarman |
| Councillor H Boggis | Councillor D Macey |
| Councillor L Walker | Councillor G Caple |
| Councillor S Morgans | Councillor W Jones |

Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services & Communications
Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Mr N Wheeler, Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services

Other Members in Attendance

Councillor G Thomas

Co-opted Member in Attendance

Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

16 Declaration of Interest

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

17 Apologies

The following apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors J Bonetto, J Brencher, M Griffiths, J Harries and E Stephens.

18 Draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Special Overview & Scrutiny Committee which had been convened to provide Members with the opportunity to undertake pre scrutiny of the Council's draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024 and to inform a recommended way forward and feedback to the Cabinet.

The Chief Executive reminded Scrutiny that in February 2016 the Council approved its Corporate Plan for 2016-2020 following a period of consultation in respect of the vision, purpose and the then three priorities, Economy, People and Place. The Corporate Plan had succeeded to shape the way in which the

Council works and has progressed such matters as the reduction of Council office accommodation and significant investment with which to deliver public services.

With regard to the Council's draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024, members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider whether it set out a clear vision and purpose for the Council and whether the priorities, People, Places and Prosperity were appropriate. Members were reminded that the priority 'Prosperity' had replaced the former priority 'Economy' to better reflect issues relating to our town centres and the way residents conduct their work and business and how they socialise.

A Member referred to the Council's vision and suggested the following: "To be the best place in **Wales** to live, work and play..." not just South Wales to better reflect that this Council is the best in Wales.

Another Member referred to the vision for our communities within the plan and referenced the National Survey for Wales 2016/17 data which placed RCT in 19th position out of 22 Local Authorities, below the National average as residents feel they have little sense of community involvement. In response, the Chief Executive agreed that conducting the Council's own public survey would be a way of producing a true reflection of public perception in respect of Council services, community engagement and the fear of crime as some sample surveys can be low and provide a misleading picture.

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications stated that a report to the next Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee sets out the Council's approach to resident engagement and consultation particularly with regards to service changes, budget consultation and corporate plan engagement.

The co-opted member present reminded committee of the importance of engagement with young people and although the Corporate Plan was aspirational and sound he felt it lacked appeal to young people. At this stage, it was confirmed that Members input alone was being sought but consultation with the wider community would involve a range of methods including online, accessible roadshow events and specific engagement for young and older people.

A Member suggested that a key theme and concern for young people is climate change and inclusion of this topic may attract their interest. It was pointed out that under the priority, Prosperity, a number of actions are already in place to address this issue.

People: are independent, healthy and successful

The Chief Executive explained that each priority includes a number of objectives and a number of actions under each objective. Scrutiny was asked to form a view on whether they considered the objectives to be relevant and appropriate and he invited Scrutiny to suggest others areas for inclusion as necessary.

Members discussed the issue of child poverty and the numbers defined as living in poverty as a concern and a topic that should be referenced in the Corporate Plan. They acknowledged that it did not necessarily relate to financial poverty but to poor education and social deprivation. The Chief Executive heralded

education as key to enabling families move out of poverty. Despite concerns raised that through the centralisation of services, contact with families at a local level is lost, the Group Director, Community & Children's Services pointed out that there is a wide range of available services which are now more effective such as the 'Resilient Families' initiative which identifies those families and extended families in need.

It was agreed that the promotion of safeguarding issues would be targeted more widely through a number of sources such as the Council website.

A query was raised in respect of the increasing opportunities for partnership working and whether the local authority has the balance right, is there currently an over reliance partners? Members were reminded that recently the local authority held the Cwm Taf Health Board to account with a request for further actions to be reported back to Full Council, demonstrating its leadership role.

Another reference was made to the earlier survey which stated that 52.9% of RCT residents consider that Adult Social Services are delivering an effective service, which questions are surveys truly reflecting public perception and are services delivering? The Group Director, Community & Children's Services confirmed that the Director of Social Services report evidenced RCT to be nearer the top quartile in many areas. He assured Scrutiny that the Council's vision is for every child in the County Borough to be all they can be and for the local authority to aspire for all. The Chief Executive added that as evidenced in the Director of Social Services report and the Customer Feedback Scheme – Comments, Compliments and Complaints annual report, fewer complaints are being referred to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) and those that were referred were resolved successfully by the relevant service area.

Places- where people are proud to live, work and play

Members commented that RCT is far ahead of other local authorities in respect of grass cutting and maintenance of its green spaces and its street cleansing services. The Group Director Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services reported on a number of areas under the priority 'Places' that are performing well such as a reduction in the number of insurance claims due to the continuing work to improve the condition of the roads throughout the County Borough. He added that through a number of initiatives the Council is looking to achieve its 70% recycling target set by Welsh Government. The levels of dog fouling and fly tipping have reduced due to enforcement powers. Members highlighted illegal parking as an area for inclusion in the Council's Corporate Plan using the Council's mobile camera parking enforcement vehicle to capture clearly defined images of vehicles parking unlawfully outside our schools, in bus stops and on pedestrian crossings.

Members praised the recycling process in RCT which was considered a 'first class service' particularly the nappy recycling service which now has over 11,000 participating residents but Members encouraged further promotion of the schemes that are working well.

It was agreed that a section on community safety should be included in the Corporate Plan which would demonstrate how the Council is ensuring that RCT is one of safest places in Wales to live and how the Council intends to deliver this.

Prosperity - Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; been entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper

Scrutiny Committee agreed that key to the prosperity of the residents of RCT is providing good quality homes and helping people into work. As a major employer, Members asked how the Council is planning to deliver better paid employment. It was confirmed that the Council is already supporting working parents back into employment and is delivering excellent graduate and apprenticeship schemes. Businesses are being encouraged to open in town centres such as the Taff Vale development in Pontypridd which will increase footfall to the area and local spend. In keeping with the promotion of town centres, it was reported that the staff from Bronwydd House would be accommodated in Porth town centre so as to help the town to thrive whilst the building would be transformed into an Extra Care provision for the County Borough's residents that need extra support.

Members were informed that through the City Deal local companies (the example of companies producing medical aids/devices was given) are now inter connecting and trading with each other, building up a local network.

A Member suggested that the Corporate Plan acknowledges how the Council intends on supporting those who are delivering educational outcomes for our pupils and raising performance.

Members agreed that promotion of our tourist destinations and green spaces needs to be improved via wider distribution of the RCT tourist brochure and better signage to our parks. The Chair also stated that we should have local people employed at our key Heritage sites.

In conclusion, the Scrutiny Committee was asked to give further consideration to the approach in delivering the priorities and specific issues such as climate change and whether the seven national Wellbeing goals within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 have been given the appropriate focus.

Concern was raised in respect of the reduction of peat bogs to accommodate the wind turbines and the fear that RCT is a wind rich area for future development. The Member asked whether it was for RCT to defy the Planning Inspectorate Wales in certain cases so as to protect its existing natural habitats and readdress the balance. It was suggested that the influence of the 10 local authorities of the City Deal may be the best way forward in tackling this issue.

In response to a query in relation to the Phurnacite Works in Aberaman, it was suggested that discussions with Welsh Government/Developers would take place over the next few years to encourage major housing developments on the site.

Following extensive discussions it was **RESOLVED** to endorse a final draft, to incorporate the comments and points raised by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, for inclusion in the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024, for future consideration by Cabinet, prior to wide-ranging public, staff and stakeholder engagement.

This meeting closed at 6.30pm

**Cllr M Adams
Chairman**