



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26th June 2020

CONSIDERATION OF THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 (DETAIL OF THE CABINET REPORTS CONSIDERED ON THE 21ST May & 25TH JUNE 2020)

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. To receive a **verbal update** from the Chief Executive and respective members of the Senior Leadership Team in relation to the Council's response to COVID-19.
- 1.2. To provide members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to scrutinise, review and challenge the information contained within the attached Cabinet reports, which were presented to the Cabinet on 21st May and 25th June 2020.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:-

- 2.1 Consider the verbal update from the Chief Executive and respective members of the Senior Leadership Team in relation to the Council's response to COVID-19.
- 2.2 Acknowledge the contents of the Cabinet reports included and determine whether there are any areas in which Members would like to receive further information.
- 2.3 Subject to 2.1 and 2.2 above, request the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications to report any relevant and further information to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.4 Agree as part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees Work Programme for the Municipal Year to continue to receive regular progress updates on the COVID-19 position in Rhondda Cynon Taf and service delivery response.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Cabinet reports identify the critical actions taken by the Council since the COVID-19 restrictions were imposed by the UK and Welsh Governments and set out the future steps the Council will take in respect of service planning in the next recovery phase.
- 3.2 Within its remit, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may enquire, consider, review and make recommendations to the Cabinet/and or Council as appropriate. **This Committee is therefore presented with details of recent Cabinet considerations, to determine areas of future scrutiny and to provide a general overview of the Council's service response over the last three months.**

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 On the 23rd March 2020, and in response to measures implemented by the UK and Welsh Governments as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council's committee meetings were temporarily suspended.
- 4.2 Council decisions have continued to be made during this period in accordance with the Council's constitution. However, the Council's Scrutiny Committees have been unable to undertake their role as part of the Council's decision making processes during this time, until the necessary regulations were presented by the Welsh Government.
- 4.3 With the introduction of [the Local Authorities \(Coronavirus\) \(Meetings\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020 in May](#) all local authorities in Wales have been provided with the opportunity to resume their committee processes.

5. SCRUTINISING THE OF THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 – REPORTS PRESENTED TO CABINET ON THE 21st MAY AND 25th JUNE 2020

- 5.1 The Cabinet has been utilising video conferencing to engage with senior officers around the Council's response to the Coronavirus and the first formal virtual meeting of the Cabinet was held on [Thursday 21st May](#). At that meeting, the attached report was presented by the Chief Executive, outlining the Council's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic to date, and the future intentions to establish the recovery and resumption of services. Reports emanating from the recommendations agreed at this meeting, are to be considered by Cabinet on [Thursday 25th June](#). The Chair of Overview & Scrutiny attended the initial meeting of the Cabinet, along with the Leader of the Opposition.
- 5.2 This Overview and Scrutiny Committee is being held to provide the first opportunity for Scrutiny to consider the decisions taken during this period, and the service response of the Council to date. Importantly it provides the first opportunity for members to receive information in respect of these issues. **Members are asked to consider the reports attached and determine whether there are any issues on which they would like to receive further information or review in greater detail at a future meeting. It is proposed, at this initial meeting, to facilitate detailed discussions around specific areas.**
- 5.3 Given the fast moving nature of these matters, it is important to acknowledge that information may need to be provided to Scrutiny in different formats, with a focus on a smaller range of issues relating predominantly to the Council's activity around COVID-19.

- 5.4 There will be further reports to Cabinet in the coming weeks which will outline how the Council continues to respond and prepare for the future.
- 5.5 **It is important to acknowledge, in the current circumstances, that facilitating the opportunity for Senior Officers to provide up-to-date information directly at the committee meeting provides the most effective way for Scrutiny to be engaged in these matters.** In doing so, the opportunity will continue to be afforded for Scrutiny to be updated with the latest developments as they unfold, providing greater scope to engage in these matters and request information and additional reporting as deemed appropriate by Committee Members.
- 5.6 Scrutiny will receive information and evidence from members of the Senior Leadership Team to aid Member's considerations.
- 5.7 As part of the review of these matters, it is proposed to receive information and evidence from the Cabinet Members where appropriate. The Council Leader, Cllr Andrew Morgan, has indicated his intention, subject to availability, to be in attendance at this meeting to respond to members initial questions.
- 5.8 Information on the detail of Officers and Members attending, will be circulated to members nearer the date of the meeting, to assist member's considerations of questions. To support the smooth conduct of this first virtual scrutiny meeting, members are encouraged to seek clarification on specific matters, particularly of a ward nature, outside of the meeting, if these questions to not relate to recommendations set out for Member's considerations.

6. SUPPORTING PAPERS

- 6.1 To facilitate the scrutiny process the following appendices are attached to this report:-
- **Appendix A** – Cabinet report titled: **“Update on COVID 19 Position in Rhondda Cynon Taf”**
 - **Appendix B** – Cabinet Reports scheduled to be considered on 25th June:
‘Council Infrastructure Projects – Supporting the Local economy during CORONAVIRUS’
‘Safer Places – Social Distancing in town centres and public spaces during Coronavirus’
‘Safer buildings social distancing and other safety measure in Council Offices, schools and other public buildings as lockdown is lifted.’
‘The Financial Implications of COVID-19.’

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 Engagement has been undertaken with the Leader of the Council, as Chair of the Cabinet, to provide the opportunity for Scrutiny to consider the content of reports to be presented to Cabinet on 25th June 2020.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not currently required - the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES.

11.1 This is an information report presenting the Cabinet report which outlines how the Council is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

12. CONCLUSION

12.1 Whilst it is proposed that Scrutiny is presented with a regular package of information identifying the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic (pressure points on Council services relating to COVID-19, along with the business of reinstating some services and the recovery and service planning process), Members are asked to acknowledge the fast-moving nature of this situation, which has necessitated the need to provide up-to-date information as part of the meeting, to effectively allow Scrutiny to consider these matters.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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