



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting on  
Wednesday, 9 September 2020 at 5.00 pm held Virtually.

### **County Borough Councillors - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-**

Councillor S. Rees-Owen (Chair)

Councillor W Lewis	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor H Fychan	Councillor A Calvert
Councillor S Powell	Councillor M Powell
Councillor M Griffiths	Councillor G Jones
Councillor G Stacey	Councillor M Diamond
Councillor J Edwards	

### **Co-Opted Members in attendance:-**

Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative  
Mr C Jones, Representing GMB  
Mr K Wilhite, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative  
Mrs R. Nicholls, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

### **Officers in attendance:-**

Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services  
Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services  
Ms A Browning, Head of Children's Looked After Service  
Mrs J Clark, Head of Safeguarding  
Ms T Prosser, Head of Service  
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services

### **County Borough Councillors in attendance:-**

#### **7 Declaration of Interest**

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

#### **8 Chair's Welcome & Announcements**

The Chair welcome Members and Officers and Cabinet Member for Children's Service Cllr Tina Leyshon to the Meeting of the Children's Services aspect of the Committee. The Chair gave a warm welcome to the newly appointed Director

of Children's Services Ms Annabel Lloyd to the Committee and along with Members looked forward to working with her going forward.

The Chair also brought to Members attention that Mr K Wilhite Co-opted Voting Member and Parent Governor would be leaving his role on the Committee due to him returning to the USA. On behalf of the Committee Members wished him well and thanked him for his hard work and dedication throughout his time as a Member of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. The Committee agreed that a letter is sent from the Chair on behalf of the Committee to thank him for his service and to wish him well in his future adventures.

## **9 Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

## **10 UPDATE ON COVID 19 POSITION IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF (Children's Services )**

The Director of Children's Services thanked Members for the warm welcome and explained that the purpose of the report and verbal update is to allow the Committee to scrutinise and challenge the Council's response to the Covid 19 Pandemic taken from the Children's Services perspective.

The Director of Children's Services explained that she would give the update in two parts. The first part would cover the initial service adjustment to Covid 19 from the beginning of the lockdown under the following headings:

- Transformation of the service;
- Safeguarding Children;
- Risk Assessment of Cases ;
- Risk Assessment of face to face work including YOS;
- PPE;
- Supporting CLA, carers and Homes;
- Work with partners including Courts;
- Managing Performance, working differently and communication; along with;
- The Benefits and Challenges.

The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Children Services to give her view on the service.

After presenting her overview the Director of Children's Services opened up the meeting for questions.

Co-opted Member Mr K Wilhite thanked Members for their kind words and put forward a question regarding data and costs in respect of the youth service he felt it would help the Committee to understand the comparison of the before and during the Pandemic, he also felt that the Committee would benefit from some statistic in relation to the other services and initiatives provided over this period. The Director of Children's Services confirmed that over 300 childcare place had been made available, however there isn't any contrast data at present. With the permission of the Chair the Director Children's Service agreed to speak with the Head of Community Wellbeing and Resilience and provide Members with a

response.

Another Member thanked the Service for all its hard work during these unprecedented time and wanted clarity on some points of the Directors update.

The Member found it intriguing that some children were benefiting by not attending school for long periods of time and asked if this is something we could learn from.

The Director of Children's Services highlighted that Looked After Children need to go to school and there is no sufficient evidence at this stage to say otherwise, she went on to explain that relationships for vulnerable young people can be an issue when transitioning in respect of attachment and relationships and in some cases additional time in placement has benefitted the development of attachment and placement relationships.

The Member wanted clarification in respect of the support for our disabled children and their families during this time with even more pressures on families.

It was explained that families have in most cases work well and Children's Services have tried to work differently and provided them with greater support. The Head of Service went on to explain that at first families didn't want support, the officer went on to explain that the service provided support in different ways with residential staff offering alternative services and worked alongside the Children Looked After education service and Educational Psychologist .

Co-opted Member questioned the partnership working during this time and asked for clarity on partnership work with the CAMHS Service, the Member also asked for clarity on the pressures on the resilience family service going forward as many service have had to take a step back during this time. .

The Director explained that work with CAMHS had continued and online services had been made available to help with the pressures . The Head of Services continued to explain the challenges that were faced during lockdown had been greater than before. In respect of the resilience family service the R.A.G system is in place and families continue to receive a service

Members echoed the concerns regarding the CAMHS and asked what other action of support are we offering to families and a Member asked if the support given had stretched to the Welsh language provision especially Children Looked after.

The Director explained that Children Looked After service continued to keep in touch with young people which includes Welsh Language learners. The Head of Service to explain that there is some extra funding grant provision from Welsh Government was in its early stages and did not have the full information to hand however this would be sought from the Senior Educational Psychologist School Support and Improvement Officers regarding the CLA Provision and this would be reported back at a later date.

Members felt it would be helpful to have more reports and further in-depth information. Officers explained that additional information will be provided at future meeting and written responses would be sent to Members as soon as possible.

With regards to the Recovery phase the Director of Children's Services explained that it was important to check on both staff and families wellbeing. It was explained that a staff survey had been carried out with regards to the agile working and on balance the staff are doing well with a 75% response to the survey. Safe office space has been found for staff to carry out duties with a look to a more hybrid approach in the future.

Members were informed of the 7 child care hubs that had been established, and the work that had been carried out by the YOS under the new arrangements.

Members were also informed that each service is safely and gradually increasing face to face work and is continue the work with families .

A Member commented that it was strange talking about a recovery phase /plan as a local lockdown could be likely and asked what plans were in place to address the Winter months with children's wellbeing put at a greater risk, the Member explained as of now children have been able to play outside and face to face contact was more manageable. Members wanted clarity on how we support these vulnerable people going forward.

The Member acknowledged that officers from the Education department was not present at the meeting to answer some of the points raised but had concerns that carers would find these added pressures difficult. It was asked what support are we giving to schools potential increase in cases etc. are the hubs ready. The Member went on to comment that it would be beneficial to receive this information from the education service to avoid anymore upheaval going forward.

Officers explained the Service has a contingency plan , graduated response, The Director of Children's Services meets with heads of service regularly during fast moving situation .

It was also explained that communication is of the utmost importance and daily meeting are arranged to support families with RAG process in place to respond to any new concerns etc.

Members continued to put further questions and concern regarding the safety and wellbeing of the Children& Young People across the County Borough and

**RESOLVED :**

- To receive a written response in respect of data and costs regarding the Youth Service.
- To receive a written response in respect of the identification of vulnerable families from the Head of Service
- That questions regarding education would be passed to the relevant department and the response would be sent to Members as soon as it is available.

**11 Urgent Business**

The Committee RESOLVED that there was no urgent business to discuss.

**This meeting closed at 7.10 pm**

**CLLR S REES-OWEN  
CHAIR.**