



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Virtual meeting of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 10 July 2023 at 5.00 pm

This meeting was recorded, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

County Borough Councillors – The following Community Services Scrutiny Committee Councillors were present:-

Councillor R Davis	Councillor D Evans
Councillor A Fox	Councillor H Gronow
Councillor N H Morgan	Councillor G Jones
Councillor D Owen-Jones	Councillor D Parkin
Councillor A Roberts	Councillor G Stacey
Councillor T Williams	

Officers in attendance:-

Ms L Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Ms C O'Neill, Strategic Arts & Culture Manager
Dennis, Service Manager Community Development
Mrs E Wilkins, Council Business Manager

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor J Edwards

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors J. Bonetto, S. Bradwick and A. Ellis.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

3 MINUTES 24.04.23

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 24th April 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

4 CONSULTATION LINKS

Members acknowledged the information provided through the consultation links in respect of open consultations, Welsh Government consultations and those matters being consulted upon by the local authority.

5 DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24

The Council Business Manager presented the report which sought Members'

approval on the Committee's draft Work Programme for the 2023/24 Municipal Year, which identified a number of initial items from discussions with the Chair/Vice Chair and Officers.

Members were reminded that the draft Work Programme is a fluid document to allow for any emerging priorities throughout the Municipal year to be added to the programme and if needed, through the Chair, additional meetings of this committee could be scheduled to address any urgent and time critical items of business.

The Council Business Manager also highlighted to Members additional items for the work programme would be added as good practice to invite the relevant cabinet Members for this Committee to attend the January and March committee meetings respectively, to provide Members with an update on their portfolio and the opportunity for the Committee to act as a critical friend to ensure future robust decision making.

Members were also informed the work programme will be presented to next meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee in their overarching and co-ordinating role to ensure there is no duplication or cross over of work on each of the thematic scrutiny committees work programmes.

Following consideration by the Committee it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Agree on issues for inclusion on the Community Services Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for the 2023/24 Municipal Year (as set out in Appendix 1) with appropriate amendments as necessary; and,
2. Request that the Service Director Democratic Services & Communications notifies the appropriate Cabinet Member and responsible Officer, of the matters identified for pre-scrutiny in advance of Cabinet consideration.

6 PUBLIC TOILET STRATEGY

The Director Public Health, Protection & Community Services introduced the Head of Arts, Libraries and Culture who advised Members the purpose of the report is to provide the Community Services Scrutiny Committee with an update on the review of the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Local Toilets Strategy from 2019-2023 to 2023-2028 and for Members to scrutinise the strategy and determine any comments, observations or recommendations in respect of these proposals.

The Head of Arts, Libraries and Culture outlined the background for Members outlining the Local Authorities responsibility and the details of the initial strategy published in 2019. Members were reminded that the strategy aims to review the quality and quantity of local toilets throughout the county borough, and to provide or facilitate the provision of clean, safe, accessible and sustainable toilets for residents and visitors to the area at locations where the need for such facilities has been identified.

Members were provided with an update on the progress to date and provided details on two objectives that have been developed with supporting actions.

One Member asked whether residents would be able to access an app to locate

the nearest public toilets noting that it is an issue for residents travelling across the borough being unaware of where the nearest location would be. The Head of Arts, Libraries and Culture acknowledged that the mapping of toilet provision across the County Borough will be key in enabling the information to be up to date and available on the Council's website. Members were also informed that signage for public toilets will be in line with Welsh Government and national guidance to ensure accessible toilets are visible throughout the borough. The Service Manager Community Development provided Members with an update regarding the mapping process and that work is ongoing with Officers in the Council's Estate's department including detail of Adult Changing Spaces and accessible toilets. Members were informed that the ambition is to have the information contained in an app as a long-term goal however in the short term the information will be shared via the Council's website.

A Member asked about the detail in the report regarding the facilities that are available in private businesses across the borough and asked what incentives there would be for these businesses to allow public access, noting that this will be a big barrier if there are no incentives provided. The Head of Arts, Libraries and Culture informed Members that as part of the initial strategy private businesses were asked to allow use of their facilities but there was reluctance by the private sector. The Service Manager Community Development advised Members that this conversation will be revisited and discussed the availability of Community Grants available for not for profit organisations.

A Member raised the possibility of speaking with the Council's Town Centre department to discuss ways to encourage businesses to allow use of their facilities as a way of ensuring Town Centres are welcoming spaces encouraging residents to visit, noting that it is important to have facilities available to help town centres thrive. The Head of Arts, Libraries and Culture confirmed to Members that as part of the discussion regarding engaging with private businesses they will include the Town Centre team.

Another Member highlighted the detail in the report regarding night time provision of toilet facilities and whether there were plans to provide these facilities in Town Centre's. The Head of Arts, Libraries and Culture confirmed that as part of discussions with the Town Centre team the provision and opening hours of public toilets would be included.

Members questioned the security and monitoring provided for public toilets to prevent anti-social behaviour highlighting the issues that have been experienced in locations across the County Borough to date. The Head of Arts, Libraries and Culture confirmed that these concerns will be taken on board and discussed with the relevant departments when considering the night-time provisions. The Director Public Health, Protection & Community Services reiterated to Members the importance of reporting anti-social behaviour to ensure any patterns can be identified and gain greater understanding of the issues faced.

One Member questioned the resources available and whether they were sufficient enough to meet the need across the County Borough. The Director Public Health, Protection & Community Services informed Members of the previous consultation undertaken with a wide range of community groups to understand the need and the difficulty of meeting the needs of specific groups highlighting the detail in the report regarding the objectives in relation to Changing places and accessible toilets. Members were reminded that the Council has maintained the majority of the public toilet facilities whilst other

neighbouring authorities have taken the decision to close a number of facilities. The Director Public Health, Protection & Community Services highlighted to Members the aim is to work to improve awareness of the locations of public toilets and the opening hours across the borough whilst working with community groups and other organisations to identify any ways this can be improved.

Another Member asked in relation to facilities that have been closed or had the opening hours restricted whether there had been any consideration into the knock-on effects on costs to the council from other departments, such as increases in environmental cleaning. The Service Manager Community Development outlined how Officers work with the Council's Estates and Maintenance department who confirm that we are at the limit with our financial capacity regarding cleaning capacity and maintenance schedule. The Service Manager Community Development confirmed to Members that there are no plans in the strategy to open new facilities other than where external grants can be secured to support the funding of such facilities in community venues.

One Member acknowledged the desired position to provide additional facilities and extend opening hours but highlighted the difficulty in doing so given the budget pressures being faced. The Director Public Health, Protection & Community Services confirmed the Council's agreement to maintain public toilets at the current levels but acknowledged the difficult financial decisions that are needing to be looked at. The Director Public Health, Protection & Community Services emphasised the strategy sets out what it is believed the policy should be around provision and accessible provision whilst being proportionate within constraints.

Members discussed their view that following detailed debate regarding the information set out in the report there is support for improving the provision but without additional financial impact to the Council. Members discussed the importance of exploring external funding options whilst also including the opportunity to work with private sector organisations to provide additional facilities.

Following lengthy consideration by the Committee it was **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the information provided in the report and for the comments to be fed back to Cabinet.

7 CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

The Vice Chair, in the Chair, thanked Members and Officers for their contributions in the meeting. The Vice Chair acknowledged the complexity of the topic discussed during the meeting but thanked Members for their engagement and in depth questioning and discussion.

8 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

This meeting closed at 5.55 pm

**Councillor R Davis
Chair.**