



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2022-2027 COMMITTEE
Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee held at the Council Chamber / online on Monday, 17 July 2023 at 5.00 pm

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

County Borough Councillors – The following Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee Councillors were present in the Council Chamber:-

Councillor J Edwards (Chair)

Councillor M Ashford	Councillor S Evans
Councillor S Evans	Councillor C Middle
Councillor S Morgans	Councillor G L Warren
Councillor K Webb	Councillor B Stephens
Councillor R Bevan	Councillor R Davis

The following Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee Councillors were present online:-

Councillor M Ashford	Councillor C Middle
Councillor K Webb	Councillor G L Warren
Councillor B Stephens	Councillor R Davis

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr Martin Veale

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr Andrew Wilkins – Director Legal Services
Mr Paul Griffiths – Services Director Finance and Improvement Services
Paula MCarthy - Head of Legal and Strategic Property
Mr Anthony Roberts – Head of Energy and Carbon Reduction
Ms S Daniel, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence

Councillor J Bonetto Councillor K Morgan

8 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Sera Evans declared a personal interest following the request for an item on International students, no recourse to public funding.

Cllr Middle declared a personal interest in item 5 as he is on the Board of Trivallis and they were mentioned in the report

9 Minutes

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd May and 24th May 2023

were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting

10 Consultation Links

The Principal Scrutiny Officer reminded members of the consultations open to members to respond to should they wish to respond to them.

11 Draft Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes

The Principal Scrutiny Officer presented the report to Members that sought approval on the draft Work Programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and also the Community Services Scrutiny Committee and the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee. The Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that since the 2022 Annual General meeting of Council, the Committees Terms of Reference were revised which strengthened the responsibilities of the Committee in respect of co-ordination

A Member commented on the importance of the proposed item on Coal Tips coming to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and agreed that this should remain on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for future consideration.

The Chair also requested that an item on Public Participation in Scrutiny come forward, following the adoption of the Public Participation Strategy at Council later this year.

A Member sought clarity on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan item and how this will be scrutinised as this has previously been considered by the Education and Inclusion Services Scrutiny Committee.

The Service Director clarified that when Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Cabinet Work Programme at their last meeting the point was raised that the WESP supports a number of Corporate functions which will be the focus when scrutinised at O&S, so it was for this reason it was being included within the O&S Work Programme. He added that the item will still be considered at the Education and Inclusion Committee also.

The Chairperson requested that an item also be included within the Work Programme on International students who have no access to public recourse and also use this as an opportunity to invite outside organisations that are providing support to the students into the Committee.

Cllr Sera Evans was supportive of this item being included but when this item is considered, confirmed that she will be declaring a prejudicial interest and leaving the meeting as she works for the University of South Wales specifically within student recruitment.

Following consideration of the report it was RESOLVED to:

1. 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;
2. Agreed that the Work Programme be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure the items identified for inclusion are relevant and that any additional referrals are incorporated;

3. Considered, where appropriate, any items which could be presented to the Committee as Information Reports
4. Agreed which matters should be referred to the thematic Scrutiny Committees for inclusion in their individual Work Programmes.
5. Considered and approved the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee and the Community Services Scrutiny Work Programmes, as attached at Appendix B and C with the removal of the Coal Tips report from the Climate Change Scrutiny as this is included for consideration on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and the addition of the item on international students on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme post Summer 2023
6. Noted that the [Education and Inclusion Scrutiny](#) Committee Work Programme will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration, following their consideration of their Draft Work Programme at their meeting on the 19th July 2023

12 Council's Performance and Resources Report (Q4)

The Principal Democratic Services Officer introduced the report to Members on the Quarter 4 Council Performance Report to 31 March 2023. She advised of the importance this information provides to the scrutiny process, particularly in terms of service delivery, but also in terms of informing matters for further consideration based on the performance information provided. She added that under the revised terms of reference, it is the responsibility of this committee, to refer any exceptions identified to the relevant subject scrutiny committee for further consideration.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services presented the report to Members that detailed the year-end position statements for revenue and capital budget performance; Treasury Management prudential indicators; Organisational Health information including staff turnover, sickness and Council strategic risks; and Corporate Plan priority action plans (including performance indicators and investment). The report also set out the Council's on-going work to enhance its response to extreme weather events and tackling Climate Change.

Following conclusion of the presentation, the Chairperson invited Members to ask questions.

A Member commented on the rising pressure within the social care sector and the ever increasing demand on the service areas since the start of the Covid 19 pandemic. The Member sought clarity on what was being considered in terms of the longer-term financial planning for these service areas.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services advised that the social care was a key priority for the Council, as part of its medium-term financial planning arrangements. He advised that Cabinet had recently agreed a Residential Care Homes for Older People Strategy and a Children's Services Residential Transformation Strategy which sets out the way forward for both areas in terms of on-going service development and transformation, to ensure residents continue to have access to modern and fit for purpose services. He added that social care services have been facing rising demand alongside increased costs as a result of high inflation levels, with this reflected within the Council's 2023/24 Revenue Budget, and noted that the Council has used one-off reserves prudently to create additional capacity to reduce waiting lists for

services.

A Member asked if future projects will be affected by the rising costs of labour and materials.

The Service Director - Finance and Improvement Services advised that all projects are subject to a procurement process and on-going review in terms of costs, funding and timing, to ensure projects can be delivered within available resources. He added that where projects are supported by external funding, discussions take place with the funding organisations if costs have or are forecasted to increase due to uncontrollable factors such as high inflation and other wider market pressures.

A Member asked if Housing allocation within RCT is being affected due to the large number of international students enrolled in university and, with higher numbers expected from September, how the Council is going to be affected and how this will be addressed.

Cllr S Evans declared a prejudicial interest at this juncture as an employee for the University of South Wales, working directly in student recruitment and left the meeting whilst this matter was being addressed

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services fed back that this is a challenging position, with the Council working in collaboration with partners to take steps to provide support in this area.

A Member raised concern on the staff turnover and levels of sickness in the Community and Children's Services Group and requested further information on the reasons for staff leaving the employment of the Council and what preventative action was being taken.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services advised that the Council is proactive in its recruitment activity, that includes the use of social media, with the aim of attracting the right people to the roles and also supporting career development for existing staffing members, including apprenticeship and graduate officers. He indicated that exit interview arrangements are in place, particularly within social care and schools, with feedback provided to service managers to inform workforce development and planning arrangements. In respect of levels of sickness he added that support and engagement is taking place with staff to ensure referrals are being made to the Council's Occupational Health Service to support staff returning to work when they are fit to do so.

In response to a question from Members in respect of rates of pay, the Service Director advised that there is alignment between agency and local authority staff pay levels, in line with laid down requirements, and he added that the Council also focusses on promoting the overall package of benefits available to the Council's employees as part of recruitment and retention arrangements.

A Member expressed concern that school attendance figures are still below pre-pandemic levels. The Service Director fed back that improving school attendance is a key priority for the Council, with Council officers working closely with schools to provide necessary support and interventions in this regard.

Following a query in relation to the overspend within Adults Services, the Service Director fed back that this was primarily due to increased costs within

Commissioned Services and, in particular, external residential / nursing placements and Supported Living Schemes, together with under achievement of client contributions in care homes for the elderly due to low occupancy within the Provider Services service area.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the quarter 4 Performance report.

13 Consultation: PROPOSED EXTENSION TO RHONDDA CYNON TAF CBC'S DOG CONTROL PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDERS

The Principal Democratic Services Officer presented the report to Members to formally respond to RCTCBC'S [consultation](#) which proposes to extend the two current Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) for Dog Control within Rhondda Cynon Taf for a period of three years from the 1st October 2023

A Member asked if it was possible to add the Mid -Rhondda playing fields to the areas considered as this was not included within the maps. He requested this addition as this area is currently being brought back into use as a play area.

The Director Legal Services advised that the consultation includes all marked sports fields and pitches so this area would be included under the PSPO once it has been brought back into use

Following a query, the Director of Legal Services confirmed that the cost of the consultation is all undertaken within existing budgets and that this a requirement that the Authority must consult and review on every three years.

Members commented that they were supportive of the proposals within the consultation. They did query how many people had been fined for dog fouling and if there are regular offenders, can they be fined more. The Legal Director responded that approximately 1000 people had been fined. He added that there had been an increase in the presence of officers act as a deterrent and more emphasis placed on educating people on the effects of dog fouling.

RESOLVED: Members authorised the Service Director Democratic Services and Communication to provide Cabinet with the feedback of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to any decision being made about the extension of the Orders.

14 TO CONSIDER PASSING THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act".

15 Corporate Asset Management Plan

The Head of Legal and Strategic Property presented the report to Members which informed them of progress against the key themes of the Corporate Asset

Management Plan 2018/23.

RESOLVED: Members scrutinised the Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan as detailed in the appendix to the report

16 Urgent Business

NONE

17 Chairs Review and Close

18.25

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

This meeting closed at 6.25 pm

**Councillor J Edwards
Chair.**