



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Virtual meeting of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 21 November 2023 at 5.00 pm

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

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

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

Councillor J Bonetto (Chair)

Councillor S Bradwick	Councillor R Davis
Councillor D Evans	Councillor N H Morgan
Councillor G Jones	Councillor D Owen-Jones
Councillor D Parkin	Councillor A Roberts
Councillor G Stacey	

Officers in attendance:-

Ms L Davies, Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services

Mr N Elliott, Director of Social Services

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Ms R Hope, Head of Service for Public Protection and Regulatory Services

Mr N Pilliner, Environmental Protection and Housing Standards Manager

Ms J Bow, Head of Service - Accommodation

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor G Caple and Councillor D Grehan

Apologies for absence

Councillor A J Ellis	Councillor A Fox
Councillor H Gronow	Councillor T Williams

18 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, County Borough Councillor S Bradwick declared a personal interest in item 5 Pre-Scrutiny - Day Services for older people.

"I previously have been employed by Tegfan."

19 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.

20 MINUTES 25.09.23

The Democratic Services Officer outlined to Members matters arising from the minutes of the meeting on 25.09.23 noting that further information had been shared with Members in respect of the nature of Ombudsman Complaints and current performance of the Adaptations and Community Equipment (ACE) Team's waiting list and waiting times for an ACE assessment.

The Director of Social Services also provided a verbal update to Members on the use of hospital white board data and information management in relation to the consent of data sharing that due to time constraints it had not been possible to provide a report for this meeting. Therefore, Members were advised that a further report would be brought back to the next meeting on this issue.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 25th September 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

21 Pre-Scrutiny - HMO Licensing Report

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications outlined the purpose of the report for Members to pre-scrutinise the detail provided in the report and to provide comments and observations to Cabinet prior to their consideration. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager continued to presented the detail of the report to allow members to scrutinise the effectiveness of the 2019 Additional Licensing Scheme (ALS) for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and the proposal to declare a new ALS for HMOs from April 2024, in accordance with the provisions of the Housing Act 2004.

The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager began by outlining the definition of a HMO for Members and the background to the report. Members were informed that HMOs have a higher fire risk and as a result additional fire precautions are needed in HMOs. Also, higher concentration of poorly managed HMOs can add pressure to local communities. Members were provided with information regarding the number of HMOs currently in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and the large number of these are located in the Treforest ward where there is a large number of students.

In terms of legislation, it was highlighted from the report that the Housing Act 2004 ('the Act') came into force in Wales in June 2006 and introduced powers for Local Authorities to regulate standards in the private rented housing sector including the requirement for Local Authorities to licence certain types of HMO known as Mandatory HMO Licensing. The Act also allowed Local Authorities to introduce other types of licensing scheme for different types of HMO (Additional Licensing) and to licence the single occupation rented sector (Selective Licensing). Members were informed that both schemes are discretionary.

Members were provided with further information from the report into the Additional Licensing Scheme with the Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager highlighting that since 2006 the Council has operated successive Additional Licensing Schemes. The 2014 Additional Licensing Scheme (ALS) was reviewed in 2018 whereby a decision was made to implement a further ALS which came into effect on 1st April 2019. Members were informed that the current ALS is due to lapse on 31st March 2024.

The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager also highlighted that online applications have been introduced since 2019 and this has led to an improved processing time for licenses and also changes were made to how the fees were processed and a two-part payment was introduced to cover costs of implementing the ALS.

Members were reminded that the decision to renew an ALS must be based on evidence of the need for such a scheme and were referred to the relevant section in the report and Appendix 1 which detailed the findings of the full evaluation of the HMO Licensing Schemes (Additional and Mandatory), since 2019, undertaken by the Housing Strategy Team. The Key findings as outlined in section 4 of Appendix A were presented to Members.

Members were also directed to Appendix 3 which contains the full results of the public consultation undertaken between 5th September 2023 and 17th October 2023, a period of 6 weeks. Members were presented with the key findings of this consultation as outlined in section 5 of Appendix A.

In relation to the proposal of recommendations for a 2024 scheme, Members were informed that a review of the conditions has found they are largely fit for purpose although the Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager highlighted to Members an additional recommended fire safety condition as contained at 5.6 in Appendix 2.

A Member referenced the size and location of rooms provided in HMOs, sharing experience of a resident living in an attic room at a property against fire regulations. The Member also raised a query around the inspection visits undertaken at HMO properties and the involvement of tenants with these inspections. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager responded that there are space standards in terms of HMOS and the Council enforce these as part of the inspections, adding that any particular concerns of individual circumstances can be raised directly with the Housing Standards team. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager also shared that in relation to inspections, Officers aim to speak to tenants as part of inspection as part of the inspection requires them to access all rooms noting that tenants should also be aware of when inspections are taking place.

A Member noted the level of respondents to the public consultation and praised the team on the respectful number of respondents and the valid comments made. The Member noted that further analysis of the responses broken down into each respondent group would further support Members in their scrutinization of the results. The Member also outlined a concern regarding the limited feedback in respect of the tenants group highlighting that this group have an important voice and queried what more can be done to engage with tenants. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager acknowledged that the levels of respondents in the tenants' group is not as high as would have been hoped and outlined that during the consultation door to door visits were carried out and sessions were arranged with the students' union. Going forward, it is acknowledged more engagement could be done with the students' union, as many tenants are also students. It is recognised that in the future, increased feedback from tenants will be valuable.

Another Member raised a query about the safety element in HMO's and the ability to ensure that individuals have secure locks on rooms to create safe spaces. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager

acknowledged the importance of this and assured Members that this would be covered by licensing conditions and will ensure this is included when conditions for 2024 are revised.

A Member noted the specific issues that affect the Pontypridd / Treforest area as a result of a high number of HMO properties referencing anti-social behaviour as a particular issue.

The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager responded that HMO licensing inspection regime aims to address ongoing issues and also referenced how planning concerns have also been addressed through Supplementary Planning Guidance regarding the number of HMOs. They also added that the service area work with Anti-social behaviour teams and street care with lots of resources going into the area because of issues to try to address them. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager also highlighted that the issues raised demonstrate the need for the scheme going forward as the scheme tries to improve every time and revisit the conditions to address problems faced. The Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services also added that Treforest has a unique housing market and acknowledged the issues faced are longstanding but reiterated the point made about the need for ongoing licensing and the enhancement of scheme elements that could continually address issues. The Director highlighted that the safety and wellbeing of tenants is what the scheme is aimed at and that RCT have the most comprehensive licensing scheme in Wales currently to recognise there is a unique pressure in the housing market.

A Member asked what can be done to address non-compliant HMOs and absent landlords noting that issues arise in these types of properties more frequently. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager shared that regular occupancy checks are undertaken in relation to Treforest ward along with annual inspections to pick up any non-compliance and enforcement is taken where necessary. They also referenced the need for ongoing maintenance and regulation keeping resource in the area once the scheme is in place as a duty to continue with ongoing monitoring and taking relevant action.

Another Member added to the concerns regarding non-compliant landlords noting the high figures outlined in the report, querying what happens following identification of non-compliance also asking whether annual inspection is enough to identify all issues. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager outlined the application process informing Members that landlords need to meet the standards before they have licence issued. Every 3 years thereafter there is an annual inspection to ensure they are compliant with conditions of license and general housing standards. Members were informed that during these inspections, if any issues are identified then action is taken, either under non-compliance with conditions or improvement notices which can result in prosecution. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager shared that once issues are identified and raised with landlords there is generally good compliance.

A Member noted that the majority of data relates to the Treforest ward and asked whether there are increases in HMOs in other areas across the borough that should be highlighted. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager responded that Treforest is the main location for HMO due to the location of the university and that currently there is no information to suggest an influx in other areas.

Following consideration Members **RESOLVED** to:

o Authorise the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications to provide the comments and observations of the Committee to Cabinet following pre scrutiny of the report.

22 Pre-Scrutiny - Day Services for older people

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications outlined the purpose of the report for Members to pre-scrutinise the detail provided in the report and to provide comments and observations to Cabinet prior to their consideration. The Director Social Services shared the purpose of the report is to make recommendations with regards to the future delivery of the Council's day services for older people.

The Director Social Services outline the background of the report highlighting that at its meeting on 11th September 2019, Cabinet, following a period of formal consultation, agreed a new day service model for older people that would change the current emphasis away from building based services, where the person is required to fit in with the services available, towards a more personalised service that better responds to individual needs and outcomes. There is now a need to review day service provision for older people.

The Director Social Services provided Members with an overview of the current day services offer for older people as outlined within Appendix A and informed Members that while the Council's Day centres remain popular among the people that use them and provide respite for carers, attendance at them has shown a decline over recent years.

The Director Social Services shared that taking into consideration the information outline in section 4 of Appendix A there is the belief that the service area needs to redesign its offer of day services for older people, ensuring it continues to meet assessed and changing need, in more cost effective and efficient ways, in line the overall requirements of the Council's Day service model for older people.

The Director Social Services outlined for Members the two proposals as detailed in section 5 of Appendix A. Members were also informed that if agreed, staffing structures would need to be reviewed and any changes would need to be consulted upon with staff and union representatives prior to any change in service. The Director also outlined for Members the process that would be undertaken with current day service users to support them with any changes.

Members were informed that redesigning the Councils Day services offer will ensure that provision is delivered in a way that promotes individual wellbeing and independence while supporting a more efficient service delivery and making effective use of Council resources. The Director also informed Members that if agreed, the proposals could generate an estimated revenue saving in a full year of approximately £140,000, which would be recommended to be ring fenced and invested back into Adult Services budget enabling the Council to maintain essential care and support services.

A Member referenced the Tonyrefail Day Centre and queried how many of the 17 that attend are local to Tonyrefail and also of the 64 registered to attend, the Member queried whether there is capacity to accommodate all under the

proposals to relocate. The Director Social Services shared that currently 2 individuals who live in Tonyrefail attend. Of the 17 who attend on average per day, they are given the opportunities based on needs and that individual needs will be met under the proposals outlined in the report for Cwrt yr Osaf and longer term in Dan Y Mynydd.

Another Member queried the figures in the report in relation to Trecynon Day Centre, requesting clarification that the capacity for Cwmni Dda is sufficient to cater for the current average attendance figures. The Director Social Services confirmed that the capacity for Cwmni Dda is over 20 when both rooms are used and that the service area is confident there is sufficient capacity noting that the way the information is presented in the report does not make this clear.

A Member noted the staffing restructure that would be necessary as a result, and also referenced the need and intention to support service users to manage the change sensitively, the Member requested further detail about how this process would be carried out ensuring no impact to care levels. The Director Social Services outlined that the service area will ensure as part of any change process they would contact families and individuals who would be assigned an advocate and to outline what the changes would mean. The Director also explained to Members that any reassessments that may be required would also be undertaken. The Director emphasised to Members that the proposals would not mean any change to the level of care and support, this would remain as current and in terms of staff, the Director explained to Members that whilst some work has been undertaken to identify potential structures going forward, prior to approval from Cabinet regarding the proposals it would not be appropriate to detail this. Members were reassured that following any decision made by Cabinet, the Service Area would ensure the Council's management of change process is followed and the relevant support for staff would be available also. The Head of Service – Accommodation also added to this by outlining to Members specific details of support available for service users and staff providing examples of where this process has been undertaken previously.

With the agreement of the Chair, a Non-Committee Member addressed the Committee and outlined their concern in relation to the proposals for Tonyrefail Day Centre highlighting the figures in the report show that 70% of available places are being utilised every day which they felt was a positive attribute for the centre and demonstrated the need for the facility to remain as a safe and welcoming place for individuals. Referencing the available capacity, the Non-Committee Member felt this was an opportunity for staff to be able to engage with the local community to increase attendance at this location. The Non-Committee Member also referenced the increase in journey time for individuals currently attending Tonyrefail and expressed concern that this would impact on some service users being able to continue to attend a day centre. The Director Social Services responded that 64 registered to attend all attend on different days dependent on their assessed needs. This is not an open access day centre that individuals can attend, it would not be appropriate for the staff to engage with the local community to attend. The Director acknowledged the good work that is carried out in the centres currently but assured Members this would continue in the new locations, transferring to a facility that can offer more than the current buildings. Transport- this would change but it will be important to look at routes to ensure they are as efficient as possible.

A Member of the Committee questioned the reference made to Dan y Mynydd and highlighted the potential opportunity to utilise this and shape the design of the

building. The Director Social Services confirmed for Members that Dan y Mynydd is not built currently and outlined the plans for this to be an Extra Care facility also sharing the delays that have been faced by this project. Members were informed that it will take approximately 24 months for this to be completed and therefore the options outlined in the report were felt to be the most appropriate at this time.

A Member queried the assessment process that individuals currently undertake to attend day centres. The Member also made reference to the data provided in the report and asked what percentage of those registered to attend a day centre do not currently attend, and whether there is any data as to the reasons they do not attend. Lastly, the Member shared a concern that Cwrt yr Osaf will increase the number of local people seeking referral to a day centre in Pontypridd and this will impact on capacity for individuals transferring from Tonyrefail. The Director Social services outlined the robust social services referral process of individuals based on their needs and the various support that is available. The Director also emphasised that attendance at they day centre is based on need and shared that the location of the centre would be unlikely to increase the needs of local individuals. The Director acknowledged the request for further detail on the reasons why registered individuals do not currently attend.

Following consideration Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Authorise the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications to provide the comments and observations of the Committee to Cabinet, prior to their consideration of the matter.

23 CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

The Chair thanked Officers for their comprehensive reports and presentations to Committee. The Chair thanked Members for their contributions acknowledging the detailed debate on both reports and highlighted the important impact pre-scrutiny of the reports provides.

24 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

This meeting closed at 6.35 pm

**Councillor J Bonetto
Chair.**