

30 January 2024

Dear Cabinet Members

Re: Pre-Scrutiny of the Council's Draft Corporate Plan 2024-2030

I have been instructed by this Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee to convey the comments and observations of Members in relation to the Council's Draft Corporate Plan 2024-2030

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee were provided with the opportunity, by the Council's Chief Executive, to pre-scrutinise the Draft Corporate Plan at its meeting on the 29th January 2024. Members undertook a constructive discussion in respect of the draft plan, which I have summarised below:

Vision

Members welcomed and supported the content of the proposed Vision statement, which they determined demonstrates ambition, while also highlighting the challenges the Council and its communities will face over the next six years. A number of Committee Members suggested strengthening the 'inclusivity' within the Vision, by the inclusion of the word such as "All" at the beginning of the statement and there forward in the wider document.

Despite the likely challenges ahead, members acknowledge the importance of remaining to be ambitious and setting an aspiration vision for the County Borough.

Members then took the opportunity to focus and comment upon the specific wellbeing objectives contained within the plan.

Wellbeing Objective – People and Communities

Members were pleased to see the continued focus upon school attendance, noting the continued priority placed upon this by the Council's Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee. Many members cited the importance place standards and attainment will play increase opportunities for young people and reducing poverty into the future. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also considered that there needed to be more explicit reference to Child Poverty within the Plan as well as a need to build aspiration for communities and young people in particular. Members reaffirmed their wish to be provided with the opportunity to influence this specific aspect of the corporate plan moving forward. Some Members raised concerns at the use of hyperlinks throughout the Plan and recommended that the use of these are reviewed and used only where necessary to ensure the plan is accessible and easy for the public to read and understand.

Wellbeing Objective - Work and Business

Members expressed their broad support for this objective but raised concerns more widely, at the lack of employment opportunities available, in particular apprenticeships available outside of the public sector. Members urged that the availability of apprenticeships and broader skills development is reviewed to ensure that placements are available to inspire people to train and secure skilled work after college. Likewise members also acknowledged the positive benefits this could deliver in attracting investment and job creation to South Wales. Members questioned whether the plan could influence current and future national apprenticeship programmes, which some members deemed to be inflexible, which in turn deters smaller businesses based in RCT from participating. Members also indicated that they would like to see reference to high skilled work and also supporting people into rewarding career paths and not just jobs. Members noted the need to focus on attracting large high skilled employment back to the South Wales Valleys.

A member highlighted a general concern in respect of traffic issues and mobility across the County Borough, including the Town centres and in particular East -West connectivity in the south of the County. All members acknowledged that communities need to be well connected with improved infrastructure and accessible, affordable public transport.

Members also noted the value in local opportunities for residents to shop in smaller local retail areas, not just the focus on Town Centres, would bring wider economic benefits and enhance communities in RCT.

Wellbeing Objective – Nature and the Environment

The Committee highlighted the issues the Council faced with increased problems with litter and fly tipping throughout the whole of the County Borough and the unsightliness which this thus creates. The Committee sought stronger wording throughout the Plan to highlight the importance of the public taking responsibility for disposing of their rubbish and taking personal responsibility for the wider environment. They also recommended that there needs to be more education around the dangers and health impacts of litter, while noting the good work which already takes place to combat these issues. The Committee was keen to ensure cleaner streets across RCT and pride in our communities, should form a key plank of this specific objective.

Wellbeing Objective – Culture and Heritage

Many Members acknowledge the yet unlocked tourism potential of the County Borough. Some members noted that a vision for the future, should include reference to the significance of the rich industrial heritage and also earlier history. A member requested reference to wider history, including the Iron Age, of Rhondda Cynon Taf and would like to see this considered throughout the Plan.

All members noted the important role the natural landscape should play in promote the history and culture of the area. Members also acknowledged the opportunity which will be created by the hosting of the National Eisteddfod in 2024.

Following consideration of the specific objectives, members noted some of the general themes and information contained within the draft plan. These included noting the stark health statistics in the data sections of the Plan both now and in the future, for health conditions particularly for obesity, noting that it would a concerted effort by all of the public sector to redress these issues, over future generations, and not just in the course of this draft plan. They indicated that they would like to see more emphasis on the Council's partnership working, particularly with the Local Health Board and the existing health initiatives, such as Healthy Weight Wales etc to demonstrate how the Authority is working to address these concerns.

Members also acknowledged the range and scale of challenges identified by the data, and wider breadth of challenges facing communities from health inequalities to economic deprivation and inactivity, made worse by the cost of living. Members noted the diverse difference in such challenges when comparing the South of the County Borough to the North, and how this would be considered in the context of future service delivery. Members noted the volume of data within the Plan but also noted that this needs to be utilised to inform work on the plan moving forward. Whilst acknowledging that the Plan contained the 'what' will be delivered, there was also a need to be clear about 'how' the priorities will be delivered, which in turn will help to identify the Outcomes.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee were grateful for the opportunity to pre-scrutinise the draft Corporate Plan. A copy of the recording of the meeting can be found [here](#)

Yours sincerely,

Christian Hanagan
Service Director Democratic Services and Communications
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council