



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2022-2027 COMMITTEE**  
Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee held on Monday,  
22 July 2024 at 4.00 pm

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

**County Borough Councillors – The following Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee  
Councillors were present online**

Councillor J Edwards (Chair)

Councillor B Stephens	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor S Emanuel	Councillor Sera Evans
Councillor G Hughes	Councillor C Middle
Councillor L A Tomkinson	Councillor G L Warren
Councillor R Williams	

**Officers in attendance:-**

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Mr M Crumbie, Head of Procurement Delivery  
Ms S Davies, Head of Finance  
Mr M Hughes, Head of Finance  
Ms S Daniel, Principal Democratic Services Officer

**Apologies for absence**

Councillor R Davis    Councillor Sheryl Evans  
Councillor W Jones

**7        Declarations of Interest**

In accordance with the code of conduct there were no declarations pertaining to the agenda

**8        Q4 Performance Report**

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications introduced the report to Members on the Quarter 4 Council Performance Report to 31 March 2024. He advised of the importance the 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. He added that it is the responsibility of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to refer any exceptions identified to the relevant subject scrutiny Committee for further consideration.

The Service Director - Corporate & Management Accounting 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). Following conclusion of the presentation of the report, the Chair opened for Members comments and questions

A Member referred to the sickness absence levels in the Community and Children's Services Directorate which has remained high for some time, the Member asked for more information on this.

The Service Director - Community & Children's Finance advised that there are ongoing challenges in the care sector and it is advised that if the care providers are ill that they do not come into work due to the vulnerable people they care for. He advised that he can provide specific cost detail following the meeting.

A Member was concerned at underspend in ALN, particularly with the requirements in the ALN Act and also underspend in Highways given there are a lot of repairs required around the County Borough.

The Service Director - Corporate & Management Accounting explained that underspend in Highways is due to an increase in fee income for the charging of temporary traffic lights where broadband had been installed.

The Service Director - Education & Financial Reporting advised that the ALN underspend is consistent with the Quarter three report, she explained the underspend is due to temporary vacancies, which are temporary and will be filled in the learner support service and also underspend in out of county spend.

A Member asked how we ensure our resources are managed effectively and ensure efficiencies are tracked and delivered.

The Service Director - Corporate & Management Accounting advised that the Finance Directorate meet with every SLT Director to discuss budget plans regularly. He advised that savings are built into the budget strategy and are monitored in line with the budget as a whole. If there are any issues, these will be raised in the quarterly performance reports.

A Member asked how the Authority are bringing the number of Empty properties down to achieve targets set by Welsh Government

The Service Director - Corporate & Management Accounting advised he can report back on specific figures to members following the meeting, however he advised that RCTCBC are the lead Authority in this area and there is a strong focus in this area for the next two years, he concluded that the Authority does rely on Welsh Government funding to achieve the targets

A Member referred to the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Service, review and sought reassurance that the current service is still ongoing and operational

The Service Director - Community & Children's Finance reassured that the current service is operating as usual and proposals on the restructure work will be put forward with Children's Services on the proposals.

A Member asked why there is a delay with the customer surveys within Leisure Services. The Service Director - Community & Children's Finance advised that

he was unaware of the reasoning but will report back to the Member following the meeting.

A Member asked for a list of the 13 neighbourhood networks to be sent out following the meeting.

A Member referred to overspend in Children's Services, Safeguarding and Support, are there schemes they can consider to look to drive down the costs. The Service Director - Community & Children's Finance advised that the increase in costs is predominantly linked to the increased costs and demand for residential care which is not unique to RCTCBC. Some of this is being driven by the Llanid profit agenda set by Welsh Government and the lack of foster carers. He advised it is a complex mix of reasons why we are seeing increase in demand for extra care and extra costs. There is a lot to tackle, recruit foster carers in house, we are proactive in terms of investment in preventative measures including upskilling the current workforce. We hope to see the costs come down over time.

The Chair referred to the turnover of staff remaining consistently high, she asked how do we learn from staff and address the issues and how this links to the risk register does as attracting staff does has moved from Amber to Red.

The Head Of Procurement Delivery advised that before a staff member leaves, they have exit meetings to understand why they are leaving. He continued that lots of wellbeing support has been provided over the last few years and will continue to be provided. He further advised that workforce planning and management is a fundamental risk in the delivery of Council services. He continued that work is ongoing to identify areas of concern and learn from the data to understand the causes.

The Chair asked how we can support our residents who are struggling with the ongoing cost of living crisis as this is a big concern she hears from her residents.

The Head Of Procurement Delivery advised that the Authority are identifying grants and resources that can make a difference to our most vulnerable residents and make sure they are getting the best possible service from us. Members will start to see updates on this over the next few months and years as we look to transform our services. The Chair thanked the officer for his response and asked that this link into the child poverty work the Committee will look at in a future meeting.

A Member referred to the rollout of Universal Free School Meals with the most recent uptake 63.4%, the member asked if there is a more up to date figure and how can we increase this.

The Service Director - Education & Financial Reporting advised that the figure reported is the most up to date and further figures will be reported in Quarter 1, she continued that there are ongoing social media campaigns and information given to families through school communications to ensure families are applying for the free school meals. She continued that the School Essentials Grant is also available to families in need with payments being made to families in readiness for September term.

A Member raised the bridge repair schemes don't relate to any in the upper

Rhondda area and asked for more information on the investigatory works for a solution which will help alleviate congestion at Stag Square. The Member also asked for an explanation on works being paused on the construction of a new school due to inclement weather when works in other areas had been progressed.

The Service Director - Corporate & Management Accounting advised that the Treorchy / Gelli link road was one of the schemes that was put forward to Welsh Government. He continued there is still a commitment in the service area to look at the feasibility, design and consultation work, however it is difficult as any work will create more disruption temporarily. He advised that the Council are reliant on Welsh Government to support the scheme so is a challenging scheme to push forward. With regards to the inclement weather he advised that it depends what stage each scheme was at during this period of time, some schemes could progress with internal works where the buildings were water tight.

The Chair referred to targets missed with explanations stating work is ongoing or no further progress made to date and asked what work is being undertaken to address these issues.

The Head Of Procurement Delivery advised that this can be feedback given to them as officers so this will be taken on board so we can elaborate on this for Members in the future and ensure these are reflected in the report and so Members can understand the reasons why the targets haven't been met.

A Member referred to the specialist placements for pupils with highly complex and significant Additional Learning Needs and asked if this includes Welsh Medium places. The Service Director - Education & Financial Reporting advised she would clarify and report back to the Member.

A Member asked for more detail on the Artist in Service to the community of Treorchy which was awaiting service delivery outcome. The Head Of Procurement Delivery advised that more detail will be sought and fed back to the Member outside of the meeting.

A Member commented that people not in employment, education or training in Wales has risen over 10% with work mentioned with Careers Wales. The Member asked for more detail on this in relation to the timescales.

The Head Of Procurement Delivery advised that they would speak to the Service area with regards to the delivery plan and will feedback to the Member.

A Member thanked the officers for the report and was grateful to have the officers in attendance from the various service areas. The Chair agreed with these comments and thanked the officers for their attendance at the meeting.

## **9 Urgent Business**

None

## **10 CHAIRS REVIEW AND CLOSE**