



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2022-2027 COMMITTEE

Minutes of the HYBRID meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee held on Wednesday, 18 September 2024 at 3.00 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 G L Warren
Councillor R Davis
Councillor C Middle
Councillor S Emanuel
Councillor Sera Evans
Councillor W Jones
Councillor R Williams

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

Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor Sheryl Evans
Councillor L A Tomkinson
Councillor G Hughes

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Ms S Daniel, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence

Councillor B Stephens

15 Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the code of conduct the following declarations were made pertaining to the agenda

Councillor G Hughes – Personal Interest in item 4 – “My mother is employed by Home to Home Care”

16 Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 8th May and the 15th July 2024 as a true and accurate record of the meeting

17 Consultation Links

The Principal Scrutiny Officer reminded Members of the open consultations and advised if Members had any queries in relation to these they can contact the

scrutiny team

18 Pre-Scrutiny Residential Care Homes for Older People

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented the report to Members which invited the Committee to undertake pre-scrutiny on the Cabinet report which set out recommendations to reflect changes in need and develop more cost-effective care solutions which are sustainable for the future. The Director Adult Services then took Members through the proposals in the report and invited questions and comments from Members.

Members recognised that the review had been put forward as part of the Council's responsibility to ensure its adult care homes and services are sufficient, of good quality, and are sustainable for the future.

Members acknowledged the need for the Council to review its adult social care provision to ensure that it continues to meet the changing needs of the County Borough and delivers a care model that is fit for purpose. Members noted that the needs of older residents were changing.

All Members noted the excellent service that is provided by the care staff. Members sought assurances that job losses could be avoided and sought clarification that opportunities could be explored to utilise experienced and skilled staff, impacted by this proposal, in other residential care areas, where appropriate. The Committee were reassured that an Equality Impact Assessment had been completed as part of the process and would be updated to reflect the consultation responses. The Director also advised that there would be a number of options available to staff including redeployment, voluntary early retirement and voluntary redundancy.

Members noted from the report that lower levels of demand for general residential care are expected to continue with higher demand for other care need categories, such as dementia. All members noted that the report and the proposals sought to respond to this situation.

Members noted the significant financial challenges facing the Council and the level of investment that has already been delivered through the Council's Modernisation Programme.

Members questioned the rationale for proposing the closure of Ferndale House, prior to the completion of the new residential facility at the Chubb Factory site. Members acknowledge the significant level of subsidy for both homes and the financial rationale for this proposal.

Members raised concerns around the demand for nurse led care and stated that the Council needed to lobby Welsh Government to ensure continued capacity for expertly trained nurses to deliver the level of care in line with the demands from our communities.

Members encouraged more focus upon highlighting that whilst the Council does have to make efficiencies, it also continues to invest in the delivery of excellent social care.

Members were reassured that the report seeks Cabinet approval to **consult** on the proposals, and that if Cabinet were to agree to the proposals, then a period of consultation and engagement with service users, families and staff would subsequently follow, as outlined in the report

A Member noted that Treorchy was listed as a mitigating site when no developments were currently being progressed. Officers clarified that whilst a site for development was still in negotiation with the Health Board the long term intention was to develop an extra care site in Treorchy. Members were reassured that there would be sufficient provision to manage the short term demand whilst this progresses.

Members raised concerns regarding the implications this proposal could have on service users and their families and Officers reassured the Committee that if the proposal was approved, that the welfare and safe transfer of residents would be the primary consideration in the event of any home being de-commissioned.

Members were reassured that if the proposal was to be agreed by Cabinet a change would only take effect once suitable alternative accommodation is found for the care home's residents to ensure minimal disruption to the resident. Members were advised that the choice, comfort and safety of residents would be a priority for the Council and home closure protocols would be followed by staff to ensure the best interests of residents.

Members acknowledged the changing needs of residential care and asked officers to outline how confident the Council would be in its ability to meet the assessed needs of its constituents, should the proposals be approved by Cabinet. Officers responded that all of the care homes in the independent sector are subject to strict regulatory requirements in line with Care Inspectorate Wales requirements with level 5 qualified nurses in post to provide the care required. Members were reassured to hear that contract management monitoring arrangements would also be in place and that they would receive a good level of care.

Members commented on the potential impact the proposals could have on hospital discharge rates across the County Borough and were informed that this is managed by providing "surge capacity" with interim placements available to manage needs whilst a package of care is being put together. Members were reassured by the explanation provided, noting that the pressure arising from hospital discharge impacts most greatly upon Home Care Services. Members noted the information provided by the Director in respect of the capacity which would remain, and how this compared with the level of capacity in neighbouring local authorities.

Following conclusion of the discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Authorise the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications to provide feedback to Cabinet on behalf of Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Chief Executive presented the report to the Committee to provide an overview of the progress being made in the delivery of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding responsibilities, overseen by the Corporate Safeguarding Group, chaired by the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive advised of the positive progress in respect of delivering the Corporate Safeguarding Policy which includes developing a Delivery Plan for 2023/24, including actions relevant to corporate safeguarding risks across the Council. He advised that the group membership was expanded to include a wider range of functions to manage emerging risks, for example around digital and data security. The Chief Executive continued that in light of the new Corporate Safeguarding Policy and its Framework areas, a new Corporate Safeguarding Delivery Plan 2024/25 has been developed and is presented at Appendix II to the report. The delivery plan will be monitored and reported using the Council's Performance Management Framework with progress being monitored by the Corporate Safeguarding Group.

Members requested that the Council's Social Media Policy be reviewed and updated and re-circulated to all Members so Members are refreshed and aware of their responsibilities in using social media responsibly.

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications replied that social media guidance was part of Members induction process and recommended that Members keep their personal and Councillor social Media pages separate. In terms of reviewing the policy, this can be referred to the Democratic Services Committee for review

A Member referred to the mandatory safeguarding (Adults and Children) training and noted that the risk indicator is marked red due to HR systems and processes in place, rather than the training not being undertaken or provided. The Member acknowledged this but commented that hopefully when this matter is considered by Scrutiny in the future, the indicator will be green. The Chief Executive agreed with the members comment and stated there needs to be more robust data collected when rolling out the training which he reassured was being worked upon.

A Member referred to a staff survey where some respondents answered that they were **not** aware of the Councils Corporate Safeguarding Policy which sets out staff responsibilities regarding Safeguarding and asked how the Council were following this up with those staff. The Chief Executive replied that this survey did not include staff from Education as they are subject to different safeguarding policy. He reassured that mandatory staff training modules will be rolled out to all staff later this year.

A Member asked how we ensure partner organisations that the Council work with are compliant with their safeguarding responsibilities, therefore ensuring they also deliver the high standards the Council expects. The Member also asked how the Council monitors standards in schools as governors no longer need to be DBS checked

The Chief Executive replied that over the last two years a lot of work has been undertaken with procurement to ensure the safeguarding requirements and policies are instilled in any organisations we work with which are subject to audit checks. The requirements are included in any contracts the council issues and an annual survey is also undertaken to appreciate the level of understanding

within the organisations.

The Chief Executive also clarified that school governors still need to undertake safeguarding training to which is also subject to audit requirements and published in the Annual report. The Chief Executive advised he would confirm to what level school governors the training should be undertaken.

A Member commented that whilst the report is about a Corporate Safeguarding focus, the Council should also have a focus on upskilling the Community. The Chair agreed that raising the standards locally will be a great help as many Members will have had experience with vulnerable adults who are not known to Social Services. The Chief Executive advised the Regional Safeguarding Board has the wider focus and will take back the comments as a recommendation to the Corporate Safeguarding Group to see how this can be implemented into future plans going forward.

RESOLVED to: Scrutinise the Council's corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children and adults at risk, including the progress against the delivery plan for 2023-24

20 2026 REVIEW OF SENEDD CONSTITUENCIES - BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES' INITIAL PROPOSALS

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented the consultation to Members in respect of the revised proposals for the Senedd constituencies in Wales, and to seek the Committee's views, comments and recommendations in respect of the initial proposals.

Members were advised that their representations will be submitted to the Boundary Commission for their consideration, prior to the conclusion of the consultation on the 30th September 2024. The response of the Committee will form the response of the Council, however, Members were advised that they are also able to submit individual responses to the consultation.

Members expressed concerns with the principles of aligning with UK Parliamentary Constituencies and queried why the proposal is for 16 constituencies. Members considered that the current proposals will make it extremely difficult for MS's to work across several different Health Boards and observed that they would be better aligned with the current Local Health Board or the Local Authority footprints.

Members felt that the wide remit of the Constituency MS's role will be so broad that they will be disconnected geographically.

Members disagreed with the statement from the Commissioner that there are very good road links between the proposed Aberafan Maesteg, Rhondda and Ogmore constituency and voiced serious concerns regarding road access especially if the Rhigos or Maerdy mountains are closed.

Members felt that there are no shared characteristics exist with the Rhondda (Pont Y Cymmer/Maesteg/Ogmore) and feel like it has been added on with no justification and did not reflect the geographical make-up of the Rhondda

Members objected to the current proposals and note the consultation asks for alternative options to be proposed, therefore, RCT Members formally proposed the constituency of Rhondda Cynon Taf, or if this is not deemed possible then Merthyr/Cynon and Rhondda/Pontypridd be considered as it was discussed that these areas have similar demographic and cultural connections

The majority of Members agreed that the Senedd does need more MS's (although added that this won't necessarily be popular with the public)

The current proposals will mean a loss of local connection and make it difficult for the public to know/understand their MS's and it could potentially drive more casework to the local members and MP's. Members believed that the current proposals will not deliver the service that the people of Wales deserve.

RESOLVED to:

1. Consider the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for Wales, and formulate recommendations in order that a response can be made by the deadline of the 30th September 2024;
2. Delegate to the Director of Legal Services & Service Director Democratic Services & Communication, to draft the substantive reply of the Council, following consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

21 Urgent Business

None

22 CHAIRS REVIEW AND CLOSE

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

**Councillor J Edwards
Chair.**