



FULL COUNCIL - INFORMATION REPORT

Date Written	3 rd December 2018
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Service Area	Performance and Scrutiny
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non-Exempt
Committee Date	19 th December 2018

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

Annual Scrutiny Report – Chairperson Comments

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out comments and observations from each Scrutiny Committee Chair; reflecting on the past year in relation to their respective committee.

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Each year the Council's Scrutiny Committees produce an Annual Report. This report includes a retrospective insight into the work undertaken by each of the Council's Scrutiny Committees during the municipal year. A key part of the report includes comments from Scrutiny Chairs.
- 2.2 The Annual Scrutiny Report 2017 / 2018, although comprehensive, did not reflect the views of Scrutiny Chairs. It was therefore requested in 'Full Council' on 26th September 2018 that a report is produced reflecting the 'voice of the Chairs'.

3.0 CHAIRPERSON COMMENTS

3.1 Governance, Performance, Business Change and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee



Main achievements this year 2017-2018

“As a new chair in the first year of the role, this year has been a steep learning curve, I have had to adapt and learn on the job. My main objectives this first year were to learn more about the formal processes involved in Chairing but also about building a strong professional relationship with the committee.

Chair:

Cllr. Tanya Skinner

It was important that I learnt how the governance committee fitted into the scrutiny function and how much of an overview role it played. In setting the work plan for the year ahead I was able to draw on previous experiences of chairs before me and ensure that the work plan fitted in and complimented the overall corporate plan whilst providing sufficient opportunity for scrutiny and challenge. This first year has been about building relationships, observing, learning and shaping the agenda and work plan.

The introduction of the ‘Well-being of Future Generations Act’ dominated the landscape for much of this year, providing one of our first opportunities for scrutiny. Questions such as; did each piece of new work adopt the approach, how would the new approach fit in with existing longer term plans, what would real change look like and how would we measure and deliver this new approach. Perhaps more importantly the new Act allowed us an opportunity to look at how we could do things differently. With this in mind, towards the end of the first year I took the opportunity to review the WAO recommendations we had received; specifically around our existing scrutiny function and our support to Third Sector services. I was able to identify certain areas of best practice within other local authorities and determined the need for us to adopt a pre-scrutiny model utilising a cabinet forward work programme, thus enabling us to be more proactive and efficient.

In looking at areas of best practice it also highlighted other areas for improvement such as, the need to establish a clearer understanding of the overview function of this committee, the lack of public engagement and towards the end of the year we were able to identify duplication when trying to evidence work relating to the wellbeing of future generations act. Current meetings also tend to be led from officers rather than directly from Cabinet, reports can sometimes feel like information only rather than being part of a process that shapes policy, identifies potential pitfalls and makes recommendations as effective scrutiny should.

Initial work has begun in this area in the form of meetings with the current administration to start forming the forward work plan and I was able to set up a Task and Finish group has to start reviewing the support currently on offer to Third sector Organisations. So far, we have been able to explore current practices and consider what can be done this work is ongoing with the hope of making more significant progress in the year ahead.

Looking ahead 2018-2019

My 3 main objectives for the year ahead are:

1. Improve the value and reputation of scrutiny as part of the comprehensive review, focusing on the introduction of a cabinet forward work programme, pre-scrutiny model, effective overview function that accurately achieves a golden thread throughout all committees and measuring impact for the future. We also need to ensure that cabinet members are leading and not officers and that communication is very clear around what it is the committee are scrutinising. To do this we must continue to learn from best practice models in other LA's and encourage more open and clear lines of communication between officers, chairs and cabinet members.
2. Continue to address the WAO recommendations by continuing the work that has begun with the Third Sector Task and Finish Group.
3. Increase engagement with public including our co-opted members, explore different methods of gaining their views and concerns not just around items on the agenda but also how we currently deliver scrutiny e.g. are the reports difficult to understand, is too much jargon used, do they feel too nervous to ask questions etc and look at how we can encourage both our youth representatives and co-opted members to be more active and involved. When cabinet are conducting consultations or roadshows, I feel there may be an opportunity for a scrutiny table to be included so members of the public can learn more about what we do and put suggestions forward.

On a more general level it is also important that we remain focused on the 'Well-being of Future Generations Act' and the changes that it will mean for the Third Sector and Public sector. The Cwm Taf partnership offers many opportunities to not only work collaboratively but also more efficiently. There are many opportunities for scrutiny to start working more as a safety net and a critical friend over the coming years and in times of potentially huge changes it is imperative that we have a scrutiny function that is fit for the future".

3.2 Learning and LAESCYP Scrutiny Committee



Chair:
Cllr. Harvey Jones

“The Learning and LAESCYP Scrutiny Committee continues to give high priority to Education. Members have worked effectively to ensure a strong focus on improving education outcomes for all our learners. Through reports to the Scrutiny Committee, members continue to have a good overview of the Education Services, in order to challenge these services effectively and make well informed decisions. Scrutiny members have also held managers to account for the services and outcomes that they are responsible for.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed an appropriate and well-planned programme of work that included a robust monitoring of action plans arising from the Education Service's self-evaluation arrangements. The Committee has established an appropriate annual programme of reporting which includes end of key stage performance, NEET figures, inspection outcomes and categorisation of schools.

The Scrutiny Committee has been effective in holding the Learning Department to account and has challenged the nature of some support services where there were concerns. For example, a Task and Finish group was set up to undertake detailed analysis of pupil attendance and attainment within all primary and secondary schools across the County Borough. Since then, action plans have been produced as part of the improvement process.

The Annual Performance Report, Self-Evaluation Reports, School and Pupil Performance Reports and a range of other Performance Reports were presented to the Learning and LAESCYP Scrutiny Committee throughout the year for scrutiny and challenge, as part of the Scrutiny Work Programme. The Committee ensures a comprehensive evaluation and monitoring of data relevant to standards and the quality of education; including consideration of trends and progress over time.

It has indeed been a privilege to chair the Learning and LAESCYP Scrutiny Committee. I would like to thank all members of the committee, the Cabinet member for Learning and Officers, who have contributed to the work of the Committee over the past twelve months”.

3.3 Neighbourhood Services, Planning and Countryside Scrutiny Committee



Chair:
Cllr. Declan Sammon

“The Neighbourhood Services, Planning and Countryside Scrutiny Committee drafted its first work program last year with the intention of gauging the effects of cuts on residents, due to the austerity measures we have had to endure, by calling in various Departments to give detailed presentations and answer questions.

Some of the topics looked at by this Committee have included Pitch Fees payable by sports teams, Fly Tipping & Street Cleansing, participation in the food waste recycling scheme, Parks & Grounds maintenance and working with Community Groups.

Now that the Committee have a good understanding of what the Authority has had to endure, we are starting to take the next step which will be to create Task and Finish Groups in an effort to hopefully come up with solutions or alternatives to previous cuts or possible future cuts which can in turn be passed onto the Cabinet.

The role of this Scrutiny Committee is not only to challenge the Cabinet, Officers, previous decisions or future decisions but also to work with the Cabinet and Officers

for the Wellbeing of every resident in Merthyr Tydfil. As a member of this Scrutiny Committee means that members have a lot of responsibility, not just to ask the difficult questions but also to offer possible solutions.

I am hopeful that going forward, this Committee, while working together with the Cabinet and Officers, will help to positively shape the future of Merthyr Tydfil for future generations.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Neighbourhood Services, Planning and Countryside Committee, the Officers and the Cabinet for their contributions throughout the last year. I would also like to thank all members of the Performance & Scrutiny Team and the Democratic Services Team for their invaluable support and guidance in ensuring that this Committee ran smoothly and members had all the information they needed to perform their Scrutiny role”.

3.4 **Regeneration and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee**



Chair:
Cllr. Julian Amos

“The committee has built on and developed its Work Programme from last year. This has included such areas as: the Cyfarthfa Heritage Area; the Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention Strategy; the Economic Growth Strategy and Partnership; the Air Quality Management Action Plan; the continuing development of the town centre and night time economy strategy.

Sitting as the Crime and Disorder Committee, it has considered Violent Crime, in particular violence against women and girls. The Committee has looked at departmental work processes and their effectiveness as measured by external audits and self-evaluation programmes.

In addition to departmental officers the contribution of the Scrutiny Support Officer to the work of the Committee has been invaluable. On behalf of the committee I would like to extend my gratitude to her”.

3.5 **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**



Chair:
Cllr. Bill Smith

“The Social Services Scrutiny Committee drafted their ‘Work Programme’ early last year; knowing that with reducing budgets, and an increase in pressure on the department; the need for a more robust scrutiny was required.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act came into force in April 2016 with the result that it has changed the way people’s needs are assessed and the way services are delivered. Since its’ implementation, we have continued to receive regular updates on progress in ensuring the Council is meeting the statutory requirements of the Act.

Some of the topics that have been scrutinised and challenged as part of the Committee Forward Work Programme included:

- Progress and performance updates in relation to the Council's Living Well Objective
- Children's Services Strategy for implementing well-being
- Adult Social Care Strategies
- Annual Report on Social Services (ACRF) 2017 / 2018
- Budget updates
- Cwm Taf Integrated Family Support Team Annual Report 2016 / 2017
- Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board Action Plan 2018 / 2019
- Wales Community Care Information System (WCCIS)

In addition to the above, the Committee also received an in-depth presentation from Barod (formally known as Drug Aid). Barod provides information and support to individuals affected by alcohol and drugs, their family and friends.

The presentation included an overview of current issues and trends; campaigns; interventions and services across Cwm Taf.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my scrutiny colleagues and Cabinet Members, Officers of the Local Authority and partners for their support”.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

4.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

5.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Not Applicable
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	0 of 4	0 of 4	4 of 4
2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement 	0 of 5	0 of 5	5 of 5
3. Protected Characteristics <i>(including Welsh Language)</i>	0 of 10	0 of 10	10 of 10
4. Biodiversity	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 1

Summary:

The Report (Annual Scrutiny Report – Chairpersons Comments) is for information only and does not contain any proposals for approval by Council.

Any developments or proposals made reference to in the Chairpersons comments would have already been subject to an EQIA or IIA on an individual basis as appropriate.

**ELLIS COOPER
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**COUNCILLOR ANDREW BARRY
CABINET MEMBER FOR GOVERNANCE
AND CORPORATE SERVICES**

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Council Report : Annual Scrutiny Report – 2017 / 2018	Committee Date: 26 th September 2018	Full Council - Link to Report
Full Council Minutes (Item No. 355)	Committee Date: 26 th September 2018	Full Council – Link to Minutes
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.