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Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

FULL COUNCIL - INFORMATION REPORT

Date Written	2 nd July 2019
Report Author	Andrew Mogford
Service Area	Performance and Scrutiny
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	17 th July 2019

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

Annual Scrutiny Report 2018 / 2019

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Scrutiny is a function of Councils in England and Wales and was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 creating separate Executive and Scrutiny functions in Councils. The role of scrutiny was strengthened with the passing of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.
- 1.2 The role of Scrutiny includes monitoring performance; challenging the Council's spending proposals; reviewing services; contributing to policy development; examining the work of other local public service providers and promoting public engagement in the democratic process.
- 1.3 The scrutiny function at Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) is performed by six scrutiny committees. These committees are made up of Elected Members (or Councillors) who are not part of the Council's Executive (Cabinet); along with co-opted representatives.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to apprise Council and other interested parties of the role of the scrutiny committees, and their work during the 2018/19 municipal year.

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to apprise Council and other interested parties in the role of scrutiny committees, and their work during the 2018/19 municipal year.

- 2.2 Overview and Scrutiny (often just referred to as “scrutiny”) is a function of Councils in England and Wales introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 which created separate Executive (Cabinet) and Scrutiny functions. In Wales the scrutiny function was extended in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.
- 2.3 Broadly speaking, local government scrutiny committees operate in a manner similar to the select committees supporting the UK Parliament. They are composed of non-executive councillors of all political groups (in proportion to the Council’s overall political balance), and meet both in public and in private to:
- Help the Administration develop and review policies;
 - Test the Council’s performance and offer advice for improvement;
 - Provide pre-decision scrutiny of decisions that the administration is about to make;
 - Periodically call in for examination decisions that the administration has recently made;
 - Offer a platform for citizens and citizen groups to represent their concerns or ideas for improvement.

Further information can be found the MTCBC website.

- 2.4 The Centre for Public Scrutiny outlines that scrutiny has four ‘cornerstones’, namely:
- Led by ‘independent minded governors who own the scrutiny role;
 - Acts as a ‘critical friend’ of the executive, holding decision makers to account;
 - Represents the views and concerns of the citizen;
 - Leads to the improvement of public services.
- 2.5 The Scrutiny function at MTCBC is supported by the Democratic Services and Performance and Scrutiny teams. Working closely, the support team ensures the scrutiny function is delivered in line with statutory requirements. Scrutiny is comprised of Elected Members, co-opted members and young people; all these play a valuable role in the meetings, each bringing a different perspective. Work is ongoing to promote the work of the scrutiny committees.
- 2.6 Elected Members will recall the report ‘Appointment to committees 2019-2020’ presented to Council on the 15th May 2019, the Council’s annual general meeting (AGM). This report details the appointments to committees and the cycle of meetings.

3.0 UPDATE ON ACTIONS

- 3.1 The Wales Audit Office (WAO) report ‘Overview and Scrutiny: Fit for the Future? – Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council’ outlined 6 recommendations (in addition to 2 recommendations from a related WAO report). Following this changes have been made to the Scrutiny function at MTCBC. These changes include (but are not contained to): greater ownership of the forward work programme and meeting agendas is taken by the committee members; Cabinet Members attend Scrutiny committee meetings to be held to account; continuing to review the type and level of

scrutiny required (value for money); the youth voice is now stronger with representation on committees; work is being done to consider effectiveness (e.g. paragraph 3.3 below); a Cabinet work priority focus has been developed; a Cabinet forward plan is being developed.



Chair:
Cllr. Tanya Skinner

3.2 Elected Members will recall the 'Annual Scrutiny Report 2017/2018' report presented to Council on the 26th September 2018. In this report under recommendation 2.2, the Council approved a pilot scheme for the webcasting of scrutiny committee meetings. It has been agreed that this will be piloted in the Governance, Performance, Business Change and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee.

3.2 Table 1 (below) offers a brief overview of some of the 'headlines' linked to the delivery of the scrutiny function (excluding joint overview and scrutiny committee meetings) over the 2018-19 municipal year.

Activity	Performance
Number of meeting papers issued to members in line with required deadline	41/41 (100%)
Percentage of scheduled meetings completed	95% (39/41)
Number of reports considered across all Committees	106
Number of Cabinet decisions debated under 'call-in'	0
Number of external partner representatives attending a scrutiny meeting	14
Number of task and finish groups established during 2018-19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 focusing on homelessness (Regeneration & Public Protection) • 1 focusing on pitch fees (Neighbourhood Services, Planning & Countryside) 	2
Number of task and finish groups running during 2018-19	5
Number of task and finish groups completed where findings were presented to Cabinet	2

Table 1: Key outcomes recorded through delivery of the Council's scrutiny function

3.3 This will form the basis of further analysis to measure the effectiveness of the scrutiny function at MTCBC in meeting the WAO recommendation outlined above.

4.0 **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: GOVERNANCE, PERFORMANCE, BUSINESS CHANGE AND CORPORATE SERVICES**

4.1 The Governance, Performance, Business Change and Corporate Services consists seven Councillors plus four co-opted members (1 voluntary sector member; 1 Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum members and 2 public, non-voting members).

4.2 Chairpersons comments

This year has continued to be a learning experience and has been an eventful year.

It has been an eventful year some of the areas we tackled include:

- Thematic performance report covering the four main themes of Living Well, Working Life, Best Start to Life and Environmental wellbeing. Work has begun in ensuring that there is a golden thread through everything we do in all departments and that all objectives and outcomes are led by us and are in line with the corporate plan.
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) update;
- The Council's DRAFT Tackling Poverty Strategy; particularly focusing on the strategy lines up with the three strands but also making further recommendations around how it fits into the Cwm Taf well-being plan. This recommendation will be actioned in the year ahead.
- Recommendations made by external regulators (WAO, CSIW, ESTYN, Welsh Government etc.)

We continue to work on the two main recommendations from WAO, namely 'support to third sector' and 'production of a Cabinet forward work plan'. These ongoing pieces of work are to be reflected in the annual plan for the year ahead.

There have been some changes to the structure of the Committee this year and we are now smaller than before; however, work has begun in further engaging Committee Members to play an active role in shaping the Work Programme for next year and ensuring that it is consistent and in line with the work plans in their own portfolios.

Last year, I identified the need for a greater understanding of the overview function of the Committee and the current structure. To address this, work has been conducted in two main areas one is a structured meeting being held with committee members where we bring together all draft work programmes for the year ahead and identify any common areas that may need to feed up into governance/overview. Secondly, I incorporated meetings with scrutiny officers a month before in order to look at the agenda item in more detail and be more focused on the information we require from Cabinet and/or officers. To achieve a more comprehensive overview function, further work is required in the year ahead as again documents could be made more accessible to co-opted members. We have received some excellent feedback this year from co-opted members and we are using this feedback to make changes to the way we send documents and accompanying information. I feel this is a work in progress and hope to see it become more efficient, inclusive and streamlined as we progress.

To further build on this progress it is important that we pick up on last year's objective of learning from best practice models in other Councils this year. Initial conversations have started and we hope to visit Monmouth and/or Caerphilly in the coming months.

This year, I have also requested to become part of any public consultation events to increase awareness and promote the importance of scrutiny. I feel it is important that we offer an alternative method for members of the public to bring items to our attention. I think being out in the community will be a positive step for scrutiny and I look forward to attending some events this year.

With ongoing budgetary restrictions and constraints, this proves a challenging time for all councillors but particularly for this Committee and Audit. Much time was taken up this year with several joint specials being held. I would welcome the opportunity to become more efficient this year, while we have to ensure the budget is given the considerable importance it deserves, it also needs a more collaborative and better communicated message this year in order to get the most of the scrutiny process.

4.3 Work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee for the period 1st May 2018 to 30th April 2019

The role and remit of the Governance, Performance, Business Change and Corporate Services scrutiny committee is wide and varied. Over the 2018-19 municipal year; the Committee has received reports on a variety of topics which were reviewed and scrutinised. A selection of these are listed below:

- The Council's DRAFT Annual Governance Statement;
- The establishment of a City Deal Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- Thematic performance report reflecting the progress made against the Council's **Living Well** wellbeing objective as outlined in Focus on the Future: wellbeing in our community;
- The Council's Change Programme;
- The Council's DRAFT Annual Performance Report for 2017/18;
- Thematic performance report reflecting the progress made against the Council's wellbeing objective linked to **Environmental Wellbeing** as outlined in Focus on the Future: wellbeing in our community;
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) update;
- The Council's DRAFT Tackling Poverty Strategy;
- Thematic performance report reflecting the progress made against the Council's **Best Start** wellbeing objective as outlined in Focus on the Future: wellbeing in our community;
- Recommendations made by external regulators (WAO, CSIW, ESTYN, Welsh Government etc.); and
- Thematic performance report reflecting the progress made against the Council's **Working Life** wellbeing objective as outlined in Focus on the Future: wellbeing in our community.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my scrutiny colleagues; officers and partners who have all contributed to the work of the Committee during 2018/19.

4.4 Additional work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee for the period 1st May 2018 to 30th April 2019

The task and finish group established continues to develop the work looking at the current status regarding 'Council Support to the Third Sector'. This work will create a repeatable process that MTCBC can use to consider value for money of third sector spend against outcomes.

4.5 Looking forward to 2019 / 2020

A number of Committee Members have been involved in the development of the 2019-20 Work Programme. The Work Programme offers the Committee to scrutinise a cross section of topics to meet identified organisational needs and requirements (e.g. scrutiny of the Annual Governance Statement; thematic updates linked to the objectives laid down in the Corporate Wellbeing Plan; and the Annual Performance Report will once again be scrutinised this year).

Other topics to be reviewed by Committee Members will include the Audit Action Plan; the council's developing Tackling Poverty Strategy; and reports on Human Resources.

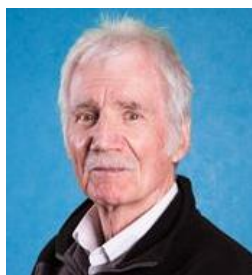
5.0 **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: LEARNING AND LAESCYP**

5.1 The Learning & LAESCYP Committee consists seven Councillors plus eight co-opted members (1 voluntary sector member; 1 Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum member; 2 public, non-voting members; 1 Association of School Governors member; 1 Parent Governor (primary) member; 1 Parent Governor (secondary) member; and 1 Diocesan member).

5.2 Chairpersons comments

The Learning and LAESCYP Scrutiny Committee continued 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 have maintained a good overview of the Education Services, challenged these services effectively and made well informed decisions. Scrutiny members have also held managers to account for the services and outcomes that they are responsible for.



Chair:
Cllr. Harvey Jones

The Scrutiny Committee agreed an appropriate and well-planned programme of work that included a robust monitoring of action plans arising from the Education Services self-evaluation arrangements. The Committee also established an appropriate programme of reporting, which included end of key stage performances, NEET figures, inspection outcomes, categorisation of schools and pupil attendance.

The Annual Performance Report, Self Evaluation Reports, School/Pupil Performance Reports and a range of other performance reports, were presented to the Committee throughout the year for scrutiny and challenge, as part of the work programme. The Committee ensured a comprehensive evaluation and monitoring of data relevant to standards and the quality of education, including consideration of trends and progress over time. One important example of this comprehensive evaluation of data relevant to standards, was the attainment of our pupils in Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

One of the highlights of the year was when the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors at Heolgerrig Community School, Trelewis Primary School, Cyfarthfa High School and Afon Taf High School, provided excellent presentations to members of the Scrutiny Committee. These presentations helped committee members develop their knowledge and understanding associated with these four schools. The presentations also gave members the opportunity to ensure that the schools have robust school improvement plans in place to deliver even better outcomes for their learners.

Scrutiny members also debated the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). Local Authorities are now under a duty to prepare a plan explaining how they will improve the planning of Welsh-Medium education and improve standards, together with their targets for improvement. Finally, we also debated the regional and local plans to support and prepare our schools for the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs & Education Tribunal (Wales) Act.

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

5.3 Work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee for the period 1st May 2018 to 30th April 2019

The Learning and LAESCYP Committee has considered a number of topics during 2018-19; we have listed below a number of the issues reviewed and discussed:

- Changes to ESTYN Inspection Reporting Framework for Schools;
- FIRST DRAFT Scrutiny Report – Review of attendance and attainment in primary and secondary schools;
- Cwm Taf Public Services Board and its role in education;
- Learning Resource Bases (LRBs) and Educated Other than at School (EOTAS) update;
- Overview of the progress of Youth Support Services since the ESTYN monitoring visit in 2015;
- School budgets and Overview of Building Stock (school buildings and estates) and future plans;
- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) – Future Plans;
- Value for money report on education services;
- The Additional Learning Needs & Education Tribunal (Wales) Act;
- ESTYN Self-Evaluation Reporting Framework (Inspection Area 2);
- Update on Nursery Sufficiency and 30-Hour Childcare Offer;
- NEETs Strategy 2018-2021;
- ESTYN Self-Evaluation Reporting Framework (Inspection Area 3);
- Report on the performance outcomes across all education services;

- Impact to support red and amber schools over the last 2 academic years (2016-17 and 2017-18);
- Home to School Transport (post consultation);
- Greenfield School Outreach Service update.

5.4 Additional work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee for the period 1st May 2018 to 30th April 2019

A report drafted by the task and finish group around outlining the findings of the review of attendance and attainment in primary and secondary schools was discussed at the start of the 2018-2019 municipal year. This report was subsequently presented to the Cabinet on 25th July 2018.

5.5 Looking forward to 2019 / 2020

Over the 2019-2020 municipal year, the Committee will once again review a number of topics which will be diverse. The Committee will continue to receive reports around core organisational requirements such as self-evaluation; and performance reports. Other topics to be scrutinised by Committee Members include a number of schools-based case studies; the impact of Flying Start and registered education providers in outcomes in maintained schools; and the impact of youth services on attainment and wellbeing.

6.0 **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES, PLANNING AND COUNTRYSIDE**

6.1 The Learning & LAESCYP Committee consists seven Councillors plus four co-opted members (1 voluntary sector member; 1 Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum members; 2 public, non-voting members).

6.2 Chairpersons comments



Chair:
Cllr. Declan Sammon

The Neighbourhood Services, Planning and Countryside Scrutiny Committee continued from where it left off the previous year and brought more issues that were important to residents and the reputation of the Council in front of the Committee so that they could be discussed, noted and debated with helpful suggestions being made where applicable.

Some of the topics looked at by this Committee have included Household Waste and Recycling Centres, Recycling / Landfill Performance, Energy & Carbon Management and Bio-diversity, Countryside and Open Spaces.

We finished our first Task & Finish Group which looked at major capital overspends on two important projects within the Borough and we were able to make recommendations that more robust and stringent procedures be implemented which may help save the Council money in the future when it undertakes other important projects.

We have recently finished another Task & Finish Group looking at Pitch Fees and the Decreasing Rates of Participation in Team Sports in Merthyr Tydfil. The Committee will monitor the impacts of decisions made by the Cabinet which will hopefully make a positive impact on participation rates in future years. We intend to continue creating Task & Finish Groups in order that important issues can not only be looked at in detail, but also so that we can follow up by giving recommendations if we believe they may of help to residents and the Council.

I believe that this Committee has worked very well together and also, with both the Cabinet and Officers, by being a 'critical friend' in order that we try 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 pay special thanks to all members of the Performance & Scrutiny Team and the Democratic Services Team for their invaluable support and guidance in ensuring that this Committee continues to run smoothly and that its members have all the information they need to perform their scrutiny role.

6.3 Work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee for the period 1st May 2018 to 30th April 2019

The Neighbourhood Services, Planning and Countryside Committee has scrutinised a number of topics over the 2018-19 period; a sample of the topics reviewed is listed below:

- Air Quality Management Area (AQMA);
- Energy Update (Carbon Management);
- Environment Enforcement across the County Borough;
- Task and Finish Group report on 'Capital Project Referral – Brandy Bridge scheme/road slip south of Pontygwaith);
- Countryside (including the Environment (Wales) Act);
- Open Spaces Strategy;
- Recycling & Landfill performance;
- Household Waste and Recycling Centres;
- Street Cleansing performance;
- Local Development Plan update;
- Highways, Winter Maintenance and Street Lighting Update;
- Update from Merthyr Valley Homes – fly tipping.

6.4 Additional work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee for the period 1st May 2018 to 30th April 2019

During 2017/18; a referral received from Councillor Andrew Barry, the Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services linked to overspend in respect of two projects: the Brandy Bridge project and the Road Slippage, south of

Pontygwaith. The referral requested the Neighbourhood Services Committee analyse the factors contributing to the overspend occurring and a task and finish group had been developed to undertake this analysis.

In 2018/19; the task and finish group reported back to the Committee on the work they had undertaken to determine the factors contributing to the overspend. Following discussion with the full Committee; the report was then submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

6.5 Looking forward to 2019 / 2020

Working together, Committee Members have identified a number of topics which will be called before them for review and scrutiny during 2019-2020. The entrenched issue faced across the County Borough around fly-tipping will continue to be reviewed and scrutinised; whilst other topics impacting on the Council's ability to meet core requirements means issues such as the recycling rates for food and household waste; carbon management street cleansing will also be explored and scrutinised by Committee Members.

7.0 **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: REGENERATION AND PUBLIC PROTECTION**

7.1 The Regeneration and public protection committee consists of six elected Members and four co-opted Committee Members: (1 voluntary sector member; 1 Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum members; 2 public, non-voting members).

7.2 Chairpersons comments



Chair:
Cllr. Julian Amos

Sadly during 2018-19; the Committee lost one of its most dedicated members, the late Councillor Paul Brown. Despite his illness, Councillor Brown hardly missed a meeting, and continued to give the Committee the benefit of his considerable experience and expertise to inform debate.

This year the Committee has scrutinised much of the work of the Community Regeneration Department. The scourge of homelessness has dominated the agenda, and regular updates on the work being done to address it have been received. A Task and Finish Group is currently putting together a report to Cabinet aimed at developing Council policy.

The Committee has also received reports on progress on the Cyfarthfa Heritage Project. During one lively meeting, the issue prompted a suggestion that the Community Regeneration department looks beyond Merthyr's industrial heritage and seeks to develop a programme of work to take in its Roman, medieval and even pre-historic past. In the longer term, it is proposed to put together another Task and Finish Group to look at "Merthyr's Hidden Heritage" - an inspired title thought up by our ever resourceful Scrutiny Support Officer.

The Committee also received a demonstration of a bespoke mobile phone app developed as a result of the idea of Council Officers to enable fast reporting of litter,

fly tipping and discarded drug paraphernalia. This app offers the Council the opportunity to take a unique approach to using data collected from non-traditional sources to target quick collection of drug litter, minimising the risks of a negative impact being felt by communities across Merthyr Tydfil.

Next year the Committee will continue to consider homelessness, the extent to which drug abuse contributes to it, and what the Council is doing about it. The Town Centre Strategy, and Tourism and Heritage are also high on the agenda for review in 2019-2020.

Finally I'd like to record some well-deserved 'Thank You's'. On behalf of the Committee it would be remiss of me not to mention the sterling work of our Scrutiny Support Officer; and to thank the ever patient Democratic Services Officer that supports the Committee to complete this vital function.

7.3 Work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee for the period 1st May 2018 to 30th April 2019

The role and remit of the Regeneration & Public Protection Committee scrutiny committee focuses on areas such as economic development; tourism heritage and culture; housing and homelessness; and community safety and public protection services.

Over the 2018-19 municipal year; the Committee has received reports on the following topics:

- Post 16 Home to School Transport;
- Cyfarthfa Heritage Area;
- Homelessness & Homelessness Prevention Strategy;
- Violent Crime: Violence Against Women and Girls;
- Economic Growth Strategy;
- Air Quality Management Area Action Plan;
- Continued Development of the Town Centre & the Night-time Economy;
- Substance Misuse – Drug Litter App;
- Destination Development;
- Active Travel;
- Trading Standards & Licensing; and
- Community Safety Partnership and Plan.

7.4 Additional work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee for the period 1st May 2018 to 30th April 2019

On 30th October 2018, the Committee agreed to create a task and finish group to undertake an independent review focusing on the issue of homelessness. A number of meetings have taken place between task and finish group members and young people from Merthyr Tydfil Borough-Wide Youth Forum to discuss this issue with a

view to securing their views on this topic and to identify possible solutions which would deal with this in the longer-term.

This work is ongoing with a view to this Task and Finish Group putting together a report to Cabinet aimed at further developing Council policy.

7.5 Looking forward to 2019 / 2020

A varied Scrutiny Committee Work Programme has been developed following a piece of work undertaken involving Committee Members. Over the coming year, the Committee will continue to consider homelessness, the extent to which drug abuse contributes to it, and what the Council is doing about it. Other topics included in the Work Programme will mean the Committee will scrutinise the Town Centre Master Plan (strategy); and Tourism and Heritage are also high on the agenda to be scrutinised in 2019-2020.

8.0 **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES**

8.1 The Social Services Committee consists six Councillors plus four co-opted members (1 voluntary sector member; 1 Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum members; 2 public, non-voting members).

8.2 Chairpersons comments



Chair:
Cllr. Bill Smith

The Social Services Scrutiny Committee drafted their 'Forward Work Programme' with the knowledge that 2018/19 would be extremely challenging, due to an increasing demand for social care needs coupled with these unprecedented times of austerity; therefore, a more robust and focused scrutiny committee was required to get the best from the services.

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 to ensure the Council is meeting the statutory requirements of the Act.

The Social Services Scrutiny Committee played a vital role in the recommendation that all Care Leavers between the age of 18-25 years old and living in Merthyr Tydfil should receive council tax exemption. In addition to this, all Merthyr Tydfil Care Leavers living out of the area are able to have the same financial support that Council Tax exemption would offer them if they were living within Merthyr Tydfil. It was important that this policy was introduced because we want to be able to support all Care Leavers transitioning into adulthood to be stable and successful.

Scrutiny members have also worked with Barod (previously known as Drug Aid) and the South Wales Police Constabulary in a bid to reduce the misuse of illegal drugs, and will continue to do so in the forthcoming year.

Upon reviewing the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for 2018/19, it has been identified that there is a further requirement for improving the reporting processes between the Public Service Board (PSB) and the scrutiny members with regards to Social Services issues. The main aim of this process change is to develop working operations amongst ourselves and our partnership organisations to improve the services provided for our communities.

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”.

8.3 Work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee for the period 1st May 2018 to 30th April 2019

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

- 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
- Children’s and Young People’s Plan
- Annual Report on Social Services (ACRF) 2018 / 2019
- Budget updates
- Tackling Poverty
- Vale, Valleys And Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) - Annual Report For 1 April 2017 To 31 March 2018
- Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report
- Children’s Services Inspection
- Cwm Taf Integrated Family Support Team Annual Report 2017 / 2018
- Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board Action Plan 2018 / 2019

8.4 Additional work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee for the period 1st May 2018 to 30th April 2019

During 2018/19, the Chair and Members of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee explored areas of the Council where integration could be strengthened to enhance cross service working to achieve better outcomes for the community.

8.5 Looking forward to 2019 / 2020

The Committee Members worked together to identified a number of relevant and specific topics to focus on. This will be scheduled during 2019/20 for review and scrutiny. Over the forthcoming months the Committee will continue to offer challenge as a critical friend with regards to topic areas such as safeguarding, budgets, complaints and the Youth Offending Service. In addition to this, joint scrutiny workshops and training sessions will be organised for Social Services

Scrutiny Committee Members and extending to all Elected Members (as required). This is aimed to raise awareness of the issues that impact upon multiple areas within the Council and therefore, the community. As a result, it is anticipated that joint task and finish groups be developed to tackle some of the issues identified.

9.0 MERTHYR TYDFIL BOROUGH-WIDE YOUTH FORUM (MTBWYF) CO-OPTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

9.1 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council has integrated a young person's representative into the membership of each of its scrutiny committees. Comments have been collated from the young person representatives sitting on a scrutiny committee during this period; these can be found in Appendix 1 attached.

10.0 CWM TAF JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10.1 In accordance with the requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015 and having taken into consideration the requirements of Section 58 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure, 2011 and associated statutory guidance a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been established comprising elected Members of both Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Councils to scrutinise Cwm Taf Public Services Board.

10.2 The Cwm Taf Public Service Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) membership comprises 10 elected Members (5 from Rhondda Cynon Taf and 5 from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Councils) plus a number of co-opted members. In 2018/19, the co-opted members represented the local Health Board; Community Health Council; the Ambulance Service as well as a citizen representative from the County Boroughs of both RCT and Merthyr Tydfil.

10.3 The Terms of Reference for this Committee outlines that support requirements linked to Cwm Taf PSB JOSC would be jointly shared by RCT and Merthyr Tydfil county borough councils. The role of Chair and Vice Chair for the Committee would also be shared on a cyclical basis (e.g.) during 2017-18, Councillor Jill Bonetto (RCT Council) assumed the Chair, with Councillor Skinner taking the role of Vice Chair; with RCT providing all relevant scrutiny support.

10.4 For the period 2018-19; the responsibility for providing support to the Cwm Taf PSB JOSC was assumed by Merthyr Tydfil Council, as per the agreed cycle. Councillor Tanya Skinner became the Cwm Taf PSB JOSC Chair for 2018-19, with Councillor taking up the role of Vice Chair.

10.5 During 2018-19; support was offered to further develop the governance arrangements for this function:

- a Scrutiny Committee Work Programme was developed and introduced which offered a framework to the scheduling; preparation and delivery of the function;
- a report template was produced to support a more standardised way to collect information; and
- a refocus of the cycle of scrutiny meeting was undertaken and a flowchart produced to offer a visual representation of how the process worked.

This work was presented to the Cwm Taf PSB JOSC Committee membership and were approved and adopted.

10.6 Over 2018-19; four JOSC meetings were held. The Committee reviewed, scrutinised and discussed a number of topics during 2018-19; a sample of these is listed below:

- Progress updates from Cwm Taf Public Services Board (at every meeting);
- Progress updates from Cwm Taf Strategic Partnership Board (at every meeting);
- Progress update on the Thriving Communities objective; as laid down in the PSB's Wellbeing Plan - Our Cwm Taf
- Information, Communication and Engagement (ICE) group update;
- Progress update on the Healthy People objective; as laid down in the PSB's Wellbeing Plan - Our Cwm Taf
- Progress update on the Strong Economy objective; as laid down in the PSB's Wellbeing Plan - Our Cwm Taf
- Progress update on the Tackling Loneliness and Isolation cross-cutting objective; as laid down in the PSB's Wellbeing Plan - Our Cwm Taf.

10.7 As the 2018-2019 municipal year ends; responsibility for provision of the support function for the Cwm Taf PSB JOSC reverted to RCT Council.

11.0 CARDIFF CAPITAL REGIONAL CITY DEAL JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11.1 MTCBC has Elected Member representation on the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Performance and Scrutiny Team supports our contribution to this committee.

12.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCRUTINY

12.1 Whilst Scrutiny members, Cabinet members and Council officers contribute regularly to scrutiny activities, we also welcome public attendance and input at our meetings.

12.2 The involvement of local residents, community organisations and partners is an important part of the scrutiny process and scrutiny committees are committed to responding to the views and concerns of residents. We would like to encourage residents and organisations to attend and contribute to scrutiny work in securing the best possible public services. The intention is to make sure that we are dealing with the matters that are most important to the community and are delivering quality services.

12.3 The Constitution allows for members of the public to attend and speak at scrutiny meetings. With this in mind a guide as to how this can work in practice has been produced. The guide provides details on how to for example submit a written representation on an agenda item and the time limit for the member of public to put their case. This hopefully will allow members of the public the opportunity to tell Councillors directly about the things that concern them.

12.4 If members of the public feel that there is a topic that scrutiny should look at, they can let us know by completing a Scrutiny Request Form or email scrutiny@merthyr.gov.uk

13.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

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

14.0 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 2018 / 2019) 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 (prior to September) 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
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.

MTBWYF Young Person Co-opted Scrutiny Member Feedback

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council has integrated young person representatives into the membership of each of its scrutiny committees. As part of the self-reflection process undertaken each year, the Scrutiny Support Team contacted young person representatives to gather their views on their experiences during 2018-19. These can be found below:

A young person co-opted member of the Governance, Performance, Business Change and Corporate Services scrutiny committee commented:

"I am a member of Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum and am relatively new to my Scrutiny post.

Being involved in Scrutiny has helped me to gain a better understanding of what is going on in the county borough. I have been made to feel very welcome by the Chair, Councillor Tanya Skinner, as well as by the other Scrutiny members. I am gaining confidence in meetings to speak; I now have a better understanding of how the meetings work and the reports make more sense.

The last few months I have been studying for my GCSE exams and this has limited my commitment. Moving forward, I am hoping to become more involved by supporting areas of work that I am interested in".

A young person co-opted member of the Neighbourhood Services, Planning & Countryside scrutiny committee commented:

"I am 12 years old and very new to this post. I was very nervous at my first meeting; but everyone has been very supportive and made me feel very welcome.

Being part of scrutiny has been an enormous learning curve for me. It is not easy to understand the information in the reports; but I have quickly learned how to pull out relevant information and I am becoming more confident to challenge and question officers. There is a lot of good work going on in Merthyr Tydfil that people don't know about if they visited the scrutiny meetings they would understand more.

I am really enjoying the experience and learning what the challenges are to make sure Merthyr is the best it can be for the people in the community. In the future I will be encouraging the Youth Forum to participate in environmental projects, such as single use plastics and litter picking".

A young person co-opted member of the Regeneration & Public Protection scrutiny committee commented:

“By becoming a youth co-opted scrutiny member, I have had the opportunity to get to know what’s going on in my area, participating has given me the confidence to use my voice within the meetings and be involved with council work.

My advice to anyone who is thinking of taking part in scrutiny would be to have an open mind and the courage to voice your opinion and listen. All of these will help you gain life skills for the future and help you to be the best you can be.

I really enjoy the topics discussed in Scrutiny and getting involved in working groups, I am currently on the Town Planning Group and the Homelessness task and finish group and have encouraged other young people to get involved in these agendas”.

A young person co-opted member of the Learning & LAESCYP scrutiny committee commented:

“I was the first young person to become a youth member of this scrutiny. It has been an education and I have really enjoyed the experience.

I am a University student and I am passionate that every young person should have the best opportunities in life in order to receive the best education possible. Being a member of Scrutiny has helped me to gain in confidence, understand more about how the local authority works, understand how to pull out relevant information from reports and formulate and ask relevant challenging questions.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience and have a healthy respect for the time and effort local officers and Scrutiny members commit to.

Due to my studies clashing with scrutiny I will be stepping down from the scrutiny role; but another young person will be taking over my role, she has already gained experience by being a youth co-opted member on another Scrutiny”.

A young person co-opted member of the Social Services scrutiny committee commented:

“I am a member of Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum and I am 14 years of age. I became a youth co-opted member of Scrutiny in September 2018 and was really excited at the prospect of helping others.

Although I am very quiet I am more of a reflective learner, I listen to everything that is said and reflect on it I don’t really like speaking in public but the experience I have had so far has already had a positive impact by improving my confidence in lessons. I am looking to helping to make a difference”.

A young person co-opted member of the Governance, Performance, Business Change and Corporate Services scrutiny committee is now going to take up a place on the Learning & LAESCYP scrutiny committee and commented:

“I have been involved in Scrutiny for about 18 months and enjoyed every minute of it. In the beginning it was very difficult to understand what was going on and the terminology.

The best part was having someone next to me that I knew and trusted to support me to feel confident when asking questions. In the last few months I have really gained in confidence and now attend the meetings on my own. I understand now how scrutiny works and how important it is to ask constructive challenging questions to ensure that the best interests of the community are met.

I think that more young people should get involved in scrutiny and attend meetings. I will soon be moving to Learning & LAESCYP scrutiny and I am looking forward to getting to grips with understanding more about education in Merthyr Tydfil”.