



Cwm Taf Public Service Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

INTERIM ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21



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CWM TAF

PUBLIC
SERVICES
BOARD



Contents

- 1 Foreword**
Page 3
- 2 Membership**
Page 4
- 3 Function of the JOSC**
Page 5
- 4 Wellbeing Objective:
Strong Economy**
Page 6
- 5 Moving Forward**
Page 9



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council



RHONDDA CYNON TAF





Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to present to you the **Cwm Taf Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report for the Municipal Year 2020/21.**

I am grateful to everyone who has helped contribute to our efforts in shaping the results outlined in this report. I would like to express my thanks to Committee Members for voting to elect me and **Councillor Skinner** to the Chair and Vice Chair positions for another Municipal Year.

Due to the focus of local authorities and partners upon the COVID-19 Pandemic, our committee only convened twice during the 2020-21 Municipal Year (September 2020-May 21). Our two Councils have faced unprecedented challenges in maintaining vital public services during this period and it is testament to the dedication, professionalism of our staff that we have continued to support our most vulnerable residents and deliver key public services in these difficult circumstances. Despite the pandemic impacting on the Committee's ability to meet regularly, Members have persevered in continuing to be a 'critical friend' to the Cwm Taf Public Service Board.

The Committee's focus this year was on the 'Strong Economy' objective outlined in the Cwm Taf Well-Being Plan.

In line with the Committee's **Terms of Reference**, Members agreed to undertake detailed scrutiny of the PSB's decisions and actions regarding this particular objective and our recommendations are clearly set out within this report.

This year, we also welcomed the Chair of the PSB, Mr Mark Brace, to our Scrutiny Committee. Particular focus was given to response and recovery in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic and also the changing focus and direction of the PSB.

The close working relationship developed last year between the JOSC and the PSB Chairs has continued throughout this Municipal Year and continues to strengthen the scrutiny process as we move forward.

Going forward, we will continue to produce valuable and outcome focused recommendations to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of our communities, businesses and residents. I would like to thank all the Members, Co-opted Members and Citizen Representatives of the Committee for their continued dedication and professionalism throughout another challenging year.

Councillor J. Bonetto

(Chair)



Membership of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Members:



Cllr J Bonetto
(Chairperson)



Cllr G Caple



Cllr A Cox



Cllr W Jones



Cllr A Fox

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Members:



Cllr T Skinner
(Vice Chair)



Cllr K Gibbs



Cllr J Davies



Cllr D Isaac



Cllr D Sammon

Co-opted Members:



Mr Melvin Jehu
Local Health Board



Mr John Jenkins
Community Health Council



Ms Anita Lewis
RCT Citizen Representative



Mr Michael J Maguire
MT Citizen Representative



Function of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The aim of the JOSC is to scrutinise the overall effectiveness of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee.



The core statutory functions of the JOSC are:

- To review or scrutinise the decisions made or actions taken by Board;
- To review or scrutinise the Board's governance arrangements;
- To make reports or recommendations to the Board regarding its functions or governance arrangements;
- To consider matters relating to the Board as the Welsh Ministers may refer to it and report to the Welsh Ministers accordingly; and
- To carry out other functions in relation to the Board that are imposed on it by the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.



In addition to these functions, the JOSC's Lines of Inquiry can also include:

- The effectiveness of the Wellbeing Assessment;
- The effectiveness of the Wellbeing Plan;
- The effectiveness of performance measurement arrangements;
- The level of commitment from individual partners to the work of the Public Services Board;
- The effectiveness of the Public Services Board in communicating its work, objectives and outcomes to its stakeholders; and,
- The effectiveness of the Public Services Board in addressing the issue of pooled funding to tackle priorities.



Wellbeing Objective: **STRONG ECONOMY**

To grow a strong local economy with sustainable transport that attracts people to live, work and play in Cwm Taf.



This year the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to scrutinise the development of one strand from the Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan. The agreed objective for scrutiny was “Strong Economy”. Limiting the focus to only one objective gave Members the opportunity and time to conduct a thorough, detailed and informed review to produce a meaningful outcome at the end of the year.

Members of the JOSC decided to pursue this strand of the **Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan** due to its vital importance during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Its key issues in measuring progress of the objective are listed below:



Step 1:

Stimulate and boost the aspirations and skills of our people to meet public and private sector career opportunities;

Step 2:

Growth and promotion of tourism using the assets of our beautiful natural environment, heritage and culture for the health, prosperity and benefit of the whole community and alongside the development of the Valleys Landscape Park;

Step 3:

To make the most of the investment and return opportunities of the £1.229 billion City Deal locally within Cwm Taf;

Step 4:

Further explore the opportunities for sustainable housing and renewable energy developments with associated community funds;

Step 5:

Encourage opportunities for development and regeneration as the City Deal delivers jobs and returns on its investments, including attracting hotels.

- Supporting the development of a clean economy.
- A sustainable, energetic and expanding economy with employment rates equalling the UK average.
- A vibrant tourist industry attracting people from near and far, enjoying our natural environment, history and culture.



On the **4th December 2020**, the Committee welcomed the Chair of the Community Impact Assessment Group and the Vice Chair of the Cwm Taf Public Service Board, Mr Mark Brace.

Mr Brace reminded Members of the planned delivery of the Well-being Objectives, ACEs and Live Lab development and broader work against the **Well-being of Future Generations Act**.

Members were advised that this work was obviously greatly impacted by the flooding following Storms Ciara and Dennis, and then the pandemic.

Mr Brace also emphasised that key questions remain relevant going forward:

- How are we making a positive difference in our communities; and,
- Are our mechanisms for delivery right, and are they working

Members scrutinised the information provided and Mr Brace advised Members that 58,000 employees across the partnership have been furloughed and acknowledged that there is a lot of uncertainty about the future. Members were advised that the Community Impact Assessment work shows the potential impact of the pandemic on economic depression and mental health, particularly for young people and disadvantaged learners. The PSB has the opportunity to harness partnership working and to be a real benefit to the community.

However, Mr Brace also acknowledged that the Board cannot do everything and the focus of the Board needs to be on work that can make a real impact in the community.

Members also raised concerns in respect of home working during the pandemic and its effect on the economy. Mr Brace acknowledged the difficulties of working from home and noted that working from home has added a new cohort to the work of the PSB in respect of loneliness and isolation. Mr Brace acknowledged that people who are working from home are often isolated from colleagues, friends and family. Mr Brace emphasised the importance of social interaction and its impact on health and wellbeing.

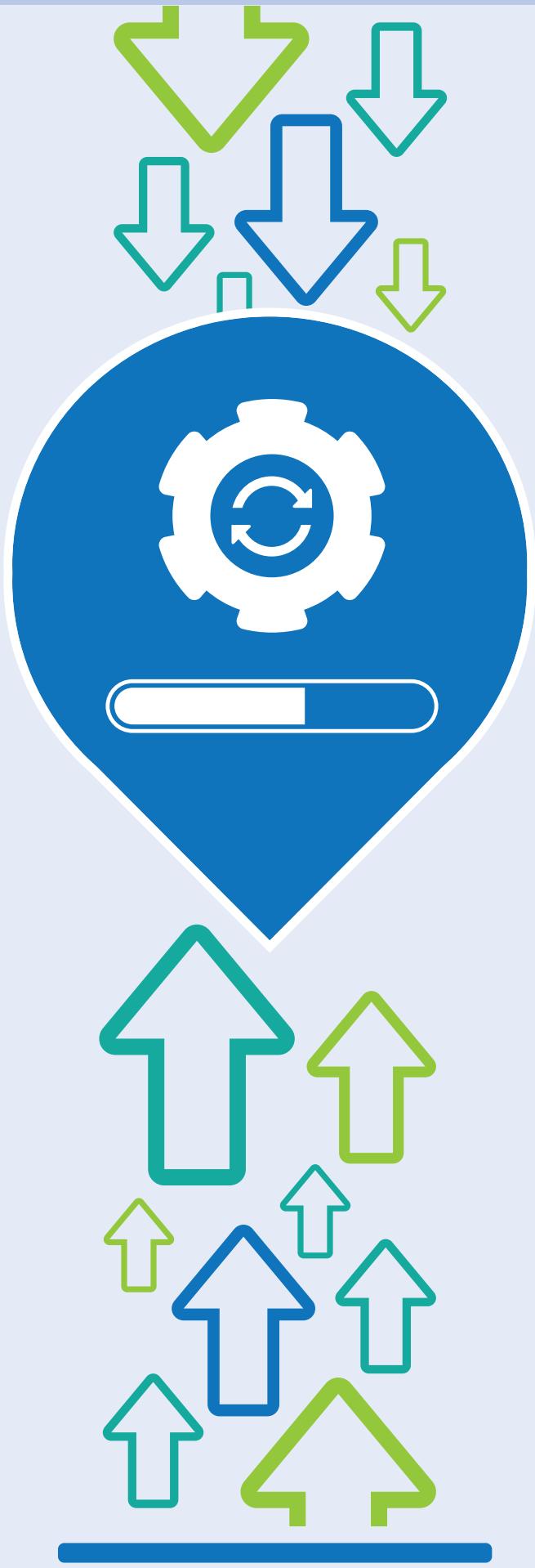


On the **23rd April 2021**, Members welcomed the Chair of the Cwm Taf Public Service Board, the Head of Procurement Delivery at RCTCBC and the the Service Director Community Services at RCTCBC.

Mr Mark Brace, the Chair of the Public Service Board, provided Members with a progress update in respect of response and recovery as well as the work of the Community Impact Assessment. Members were also advised that discussions are ongoing in respect of the Board's future work programme and joint working strategy. The relationship with the Regional Partnership Board was also emphasised and that the future plan will be to merge to create one central PSB. Members scrutinised the update and noted their concerns in respect of annual reports being retrospective and noted the need to have a report that outlines the Board's future work and its target outcomes. Members also emphasised their admiration for the work of the public service areas during the pandemic.

Members expressed a view that the positive partnership working visible across Cwm Taf Morganwg during the pandemic, came as a result of the respective organisations dedication to public services and not as a result of the work of the Public Service Board. Members commented that the role and purpose of the PSB should be reflected upon in light of the strong joint working taken forward during this period, which paid dividend in the support provided to communities, and the fact that this approach had been taken forward constructively outside of the formal Public Service Board structures.

Members also received an update from the Head of Procurement Delivery at RCTCBC on the expenditure on 'goods works and services' that takes place locally by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. The Service Director Community Services at RCTCBC also provided Members with a presentation and a short video overview in respect of employment and skills in the county. Members welcomed the scheme to get people back into work and noted the importance of providing feedback to applicants who were not successful in obtaining an employment role. Members also noted the importance of monitoring employment vacancies in both the private and public sector.





Moving Forward

This year has continued to present unique challenges and I am proud of the professionalism, dedication and hard work shown by our public service workers during this period. I am grateful to everyone who has helped contribute to the work and results outlined in this report and to the valuable outcomes that we continue to produce in order to support our local communities.

Looking forward to the year ahead, we will continue to monitor the key performance areas of the PSB with robust oversight and scrutiny. I would like to thank all the Members, Co-Opted Members and Citizen Representatives of the Cwm Taf Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee who have been involved with our work over the past year; their dedication, professionalism and commitment have helped contribute to our success.

Next year will bring opportunities and challenges in equal measure, but I feel confident and reassured that we are well placed to tackle difficult issues and maximise the opportunities for our Cwm Taf community. It is also evident that that over the medium term the Public Service Board must demonstrate its value and role in improving the delivery of public services and that its purpose makes a positive difference to the residents of Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Our effective scrutiny will seek to review key areas of performance, improve outcomes and to ultimately add value to the work of the PSB. The outcomes set out in this report demonstrate how these principles are integral to the work undertaken by this Joint Scrutiny Committee.

I would once again like to thank my Vice Chair, Councillor T. Skinner, as well as the dedicated support officers from both Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Rhondda Taf County Borough Council. I look forward to the year ahead with pride and confidence.

Councillor J. Bonetto

(Chair)





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