

Minutes of the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

24 November 2022

Port Talbot Civic Centre / Remotely - Hybrid

Chairperson:	Councillor J.Henton
Councillors:	W.Carpenter, M.Crowley, N.Goldup-John, C.Lewis, R.Mizen, P.A.Rees, S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds, D.Whitelock, S.Harris and S.K.Hunt
Co-opted Voting Members:	M.Caddick
Officers In Attendance	H.Lervy, C.Millis, Thomas, A.Thomas, P.Walker, R.Crowhurst and W.John and A.Thomas
Cabinet Invitees:	Councillors J.Hurley and N.Jenkins

1. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, it was agreed that Cllr Henton chair the meeting.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

It was confirmed that the committee would be scrutinising Cabinet Board Agenda Items 7, 8 and 9.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations of interest were received from:

Cllr M Crowley Item 7 (Cabinet Board), Personal, Non-Prejudicial

Marie Caddick Item 7(Cabinet Board), Personal, Prejudicial.

Cllr S. Hunt Item 8 (Cabinet Board), Personal, Non-Prejudicial

Cllr. S. Harris Item 8 (Cabinet Board), Personal, Non-Prejudicial

3. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

Band C Schools

Officers confirmed that the report outlines and recommends the next tranche of schools that require significant capital investment. There is no requirement to consult at this stage. The report hopes to secure outline investment from the Welsh Government Capital Funding Programme. However, it was noted that if this is approved, an outline business case will need to be presented to Welsh Government to for each proposal, in order to secure funding.

Members asked if officers could provide clarity on the criteria for the selection of schools and what weighting is given to certain aspects i.e. pupil numbers, welsh language etc. in order for members to be informed of the process.

Officers confirmed that the Welsh Government Capital Programme is aimed at reducing building maintenance backlog over a period of time. Officers outlined how the Education and Environment directorates work together to identify schools which may present challenging future business continuity issues and how they are prioritised. There is no specific priority given to Welsh medium schools. However, Welsh language has been taken into consideration in the recently approved WESP and if this is to be delivered successfully it will require significant capital funding to deliver its ambitions.

Members queried if officers anticipate any impact on funding discussion with Welsh Government regarding the possibility of delays or decision on using current Welsh Government funds for the new school, pool and additional learning needs unit in the Swansea Valley?

Officers confirmed that the amount of money currently secured for reinvestment in the Swansea Valleys £22.5million, and that money is secured for a specific project. If the project does not go ahead, then the money can't be drawn down. There is a general concern in terms of the cost of construction and the general ability for the local authority to fund in terms of its budget position. It was noted that it is likely that Welsh Government may consider funding fewer schemes, due to the increased construction costs. Officers advised that schemes going forward would need to have a strong economic argument in order to have the best possible chance of securing funding.

Members specifically raised concerns in relation to the number of additional learning needs for Llangatwg School and if the number of places is sufficient for future planning? Concerns were also raised about the outline proposals to demolish the 1929 built part of the school and the possible loss of the swimming pool, which is used by the community.

Officers confirmed that there are additional learning needs places in several of the proposals. Further, that there will be a report on this item when considering

next year's budget. In relation to the specifics of any proposals, the relevant communities will be consulted and consideration will be given as to how to best deliver the proposals within the community. There are no firm proposals for development at this time.

Following scrutiny, Members were supportive of the recommendation to be considered by Cabinet Board.

Cefn Coed Options Appraisal Report

The local member for the area provided a brief overview of the history of the colliery and some information with regards to what the museum holds.

Members were informed that an updated strategy would be brought before the committee in Spring.

Members noted the expenditure outlined in the 2019 masterplan of £5.2m and a grant was offered of £2.7m. Members queried what evidence there was or a strategy to support the difference in funding. Officers advised that Heritage Lottery Funding would be the starting point with further sources of funding also to be considered. If the report is approved, a consultant would be worked with to consider this in detail.

Following scrutiny, Members were supportive of the recommendations to be considered by Cabinet.

Creation of a Regional Partnership for Sport and Physical Activity in West Wales

Officers advised that a joined up regional approach to sport and physical activity is being strongly encouraged by Welsh Government.

Officers noted that a further report would be brought forward outlining how the company would be legally and financially operating and that the Sports Council are satisfied with the approach.

Members sought assurances that grass roots sports would be included as part of the partnership approach. Officers confirmed that the partnership would provide assistance to develop at grass roots level.

With regards to the financing of the partnership, the Sports Council have offered assurance that the appointment of a senior officer for the partnership and an administrative support, will be fully funded by Sports Wales and will not be deducted from any grant money received by NPTCBC.

Members asked to be kept up to date with regards to how sporting clubs can make links and get involved with the partnership once it has been formed.

Following scrutiny, Members were supportive of the recommendation to be considered by Cabinet.

4. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23**

Members noted this item for information.

5. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

Councillor J.Henton

Chairperson