



***ENVIRONMENT, REGENERATION AND
STREETSCENE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE***

10.00 AM TUESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2023

***MULTI-LOCATION MEETING - COUNCIL CHAMBER, PORT TALBOT
& MICROSOFT TEAMS***

All mobile telephones to be switched to silent for the duration of the meeting

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1. Chair's Announcements
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (*Pages 5 - 52*)
For the Committee to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on the 14/07/2023, 28/07/2023, 14/09/2023 and 06/10/2023.
4. Pre-Decision Scrutiny
To select appropriate items from the Cabinet Board agenda for Pre-Decision Scrutiny (Cabinet Board reports included for Scrutiny Members)
5. Urgent Items
Any urgent items at the discretion of the Chairperson pursuant to Section 100BA(6)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

6. Committee Action Log (*Pages 53 - 54*)
For the Committee to comment on and note the actions and the progress from the previous meetings.
7. Forward Work Programme (*Pages 55 - 56*)
For the Committee to receive the Forward Work Programme of the Environment, Regeneration & Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee for 2022-23.
8. Access to Meetings
Access to Meetings to resolve to exclude the public for the following item(s) pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the relevant exempt paragraphs of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

PART 2

9. Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s
To select appropriate private items from the Cabinet Board agenda for Pre-Decision Scrutiny (Cabinet Board reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members).

K.Jones
Chief Executive

Civic Centre
Port Talbot

8 November 2023

Committee Membership:

Chairperson: **Councillor S.Pursey**

Vice
Chairperson: **Councillor T.Bowen**

Councillors: S.M.Penry, C.James, L.Williams, W.Carpenter,
K.Morris, A.Dacey, R.Davies, N.Goldup-John,
S.Thomas and R.W.Wood

Notes:

- (1) If Committee Members or non-Committee Members wish to have relevant items put on the agenda for future meetings, then please notify the Chief Executive/Chair eight days before the meeting.*
- (2) If non-Committee Members wish to attend for an item of interest, then prior notification needs to be given (by 12.00 noon on the day before the meeting). Non-Committee Members may speak but not vote, or move or second any motion.*
- (3) For pre scrutiny arrangements, the Chair will normally recommend forthcoming executive items for discussion/challenge. It is also open to Committee Members to request items to be raised - though Members are asked to be selective here in regard to important issues.*
- (4) The relevant Cabinet Board Members will also be invited to be present at the meeting for Scrutiny/ Consultation purposes.*
- (5) Would the Scrutiny Committee Members please bring the Cabinet Board papers with them to the meeting.*

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Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Scrutiny Committee

(Multi-Location Meeting - Council Chamber, Port Talbot & Microsoft
Teams)

Members Present:

14 July 2023

Chairperson: Councillor S.Pursey

Vice Chairperson: Councillor T.Bowen

Councillors: R.Davies, N.Goldup-John, C.James,
S.Grimshaw, K.Morris, S.M.Penry and
L.Williams

**Officers In
Attendance** D.Griffiths, C.Morris, C.Plowman, A.Thomas,
J.Stevens, S.Brennan, A. Collins, Harvey,
H.Hasan, S. Owen, A.Phillips and T.Rees

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors W.F.Griffiths, J.Hurley, S.Jones and
C.Phillips

1. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

The Chair noted that agenda item 14 of the Cabinet agenda pack, which is the private report relating to the Proposed Mynydd Fforch Dwm Wind Farm Development, has been deferred from this meeting due to the need for further consideration of the report.

The Chair noted that the Members of the Scrutiny Committee had agreed to scrutinise the following items from the Cabinet Board agenda:

- Item 9: Streetscene Capital Funding 2022/23
- Item 11a: Addition to Streetcare Fees and Charges 2023/24

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Goldup-John - Personal interest for Item 9 on the Scrutiny agenda as he works for Transport for Wales. He has dispensation to speak.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd of June 2023 were approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

4. **Active Travel**

Members received an update on Active Travel as presented within the report circulated. Officers also explained that there have been some organisational changes in the Environment directorate from April 1st 2023 and Active travel has been consolidated under the Head of Engineering and Transport service portfolio area.

The Active travel network map and policy driven areas were under planning previously. These functions are now integrated under the engineering consultancy area. Officers advised that the report is a transition report and covers last year and taking things forward from now.

Members commented that in the corporate plan it was set out for the need of a 5-year plan on active travel within Neath Port talbot. Members wanted to know when this plan would be available to view.

Officers explained that there are short, medium, and long-term plans and officers have been trying to establish how to how to prioritise the program. There are 400 Active travel routes in the active travel network maps with 100 given a high priority. Transport for Wales are developing a system to help authorities prioritise these further, once this is available officers will be able to start to develop the plan.

Members expressed the importance of promotion of active travel. Members also pointed out that on the Active travel map, the link takes you to a map with no Key or details. Members suggested that this could be changed to a different page that provides a key and additional information as well as a link that takes you to the NPT page.

Officers agreed that they would get this link updated. Officers also highlighted that they are working on different ways to promote active travel and are intending to go out to events to promote it. Officers

also advised that they are open to ideas and suggestion on promotion.

Officers further explained that embedded in the road safety teams and primary education teams is the promotion of walking and cycling. Over 12 months these teams get to nearly all the primary schools and work is also done in secondary schools. This aids in the promotion of walking and cycling.

Members also suggested that officers pass on the information to community councils so they can promote it in the local community. Officers agreed that this was a good idea and that they would send it out to the town councils when the link had been updated so they too could add it to their websites or share the link.

Members asked for an update on the 2 new posts that the budget had allocated for active travel. Officers explained that in June the Active travel manager position was filled by someone from another team. A position as Active Travel officer is being job evaluated and has taken longer than expected.

Officers also added that with the Active travel roles they, want to respond to the plan and implement mores schemes on the ground. If they are successful in securing grants, then the consultancy service area has several engineers who will help support the active travel role and be able to manage the resource and help deliver that work.

Officers advised that after 2 years, the financing is intended to be self-sufficient. Officers advised that they have expressed concerns to central finance around this. Officers explained that it will generate income, but it has been highlighted that there are uncertainties that it would be 100% recoverable. This could result in a financial pressure and will need to be monitored over the next 2 years.

Members expressed gratitude for this update as they weren't able to recall the time limit on the funding of the roles when members went through the budget setting process and had thought they were placed in as investor save initiative and in the base budget, but now see that it is not in the base budget.

Officers confirmed that while not in the base budget there is a commitment by central finance that if they couldn't fully recover the costs, it would be dealt with as a pressure going forward so the

permanent posts would be dealt with like any other pressure within the Environment department.

Following Scrutiny the report was noted.

5. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

Streetscene Capital Funding 2023/23

Members received information on Streetscene Capital Funding 2023/23 as presented within the report circulated.

Members pointed out that it isn't great that half the budget is going to the highways and engineering works programme even though it is essential work. Members advised that anyone looking at it would not expect to see this money being spent on repairing roads etc. Members suggested that this should be changed in relation to presentation in the budget, either subsuming it all into the highways and engineering works programme or making a more realistic allocation between the two.

Officers advised that they take that on board about the public perception of it being spent on highways while being necessary and priority work. Officers will see how this can be presented in the future and advised that things may change in Autumn following assessments. Streetcare officers are coming up with a prioritised programme which is challenging.

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

Addition to Streetcare Fees and Charges 2023/24

Members received information on the Addition to Streetcare Fees and Charges 2023/24 as presented within the report circulated. Members wished to clarify if this was a new service?

Members were advised that it was a new charge for any commercial operation, such as landscapers, horticulturalists etc who may wish to use the facility at the Burry Port site. Now they can use this for a fee.

Members wanted to know where these businesses have been taking this type of waste until now. Officers clarified that any waste that goes

to the recycling centres, goes to any one of numerous composting facilities across South Wales.

Officers weren't able to comment on where these companies take this waste to currently.

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

6. **Urgent Items**

There was none.

7. **Forward Work Programme & Committee Action Log**

The Members of the Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

8. **Access to Meetings**

That pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following items of business which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

9. **Neath Integrated Transport Hub**

Members received information on the Neath Integrated Transport Hub as presented within the report circulated.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

10. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s**

Members did not scrutinise the private items on the Cabinet Agenda.

CHAIRPERSON

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**Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Scrutiny
Committee**

**(Multi-Location Meeting - Council Chamber, Port Talbot & Microsoft
Teams)**

Members Present:

28 July 2023

Chairperson: Councillor S.Pursey

Vice Chairperson: Councillor T.Bowen

Councillors: W.Carpenter, A.Dacey, R.Davies, N.Goldup-
John, S.Grimshaw and S.E.Freeguard

**Officers In
Attendance** D.Griffiths, J.Stevens, A. Collins, S.Curran,
I.Rees, S.Cook, J.Woodman Ralph and T.Rees

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors W.F.Griffiths, J.Hurley, S.Jones and
C.Phillips

Observers Councillors S.Paddison, S.Reynolds,
C.Clement- Williams and A. Lockyer

1. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chair noted that the Members of the Scrutiny Committee had agreed to scrutinise the following items from the Cabinet Board agenda:

Item 5: Commercial Property Grant: 14 Orchard Street, Neath (Pages 3 - 16)

Item 6: Parking Review Options Report 2023 (Pages 17 - 52)

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

3. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

Commercial Property Grant: 14 Orchard Street, Neath

Members enquired whether there was a tenant secured for the building.

Officers advised there has been interest, but the condition of the building means nobody can go in until it is refurbished. Officers see it as an important building in relation to Gwyn Hall.

Members also enquired about the ownership of the building. Officers advised that the ownership isn't included in the report, but officers can advise members outside of the meeting.

Members also expressed their praise for the team involved for bringing this scheme forward as it will enhance the area.

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

Parking Review Options Report 2023

The Cabinet member for Strategic Planning, Transport and Connectivity thanked the chair for the invitation to the meeting and advised that he and the officers were happy to answer any questions.

The chair gave a brief overview and chronology of the Task and finish group and the report before the committee from the officers on the task and finish report recommendations.

Members highlighted that on the IIA assessment first stage, it states a further stage isn't required as its only carpark users that are affected.

Members stated that because the Council doesn't give discretionary amounts to disabled users for parking, that the statement in the IIA is wrong as disabled people do use car parks. Members also stated that as many disabled people are on fixed income, they wanted to know why the next stage assessment is not required.

Officers explained that the Blue Badge scheme applies to on street parking and that it does not apply to off street parking in terms of any concessions. Officers also advised that within the authorities' car parks, the disabled parking bays are located as close to the exits and

accesses to the car parks and the pay and display machines to aid with accessibility issues.

Officers advised that the Blue Badge scheme nationally is not fiscal or assessed on a means tested basis. Meaning that the ability to pay is not a consideration.

Members asked if as an authority they are taking cognisance of how it would be affecting disabled people on a fixed income. Members felt that the IIA didn't take that into account.

Officers explained that there are some wider principles to consider. If someone has a car and are able to run, insure and tax it, then generally they are in a better financial position than a lot of residents within the local authority. Officers stated that car owners can generally afford to pay some contribution in terms of parking charges to help the Council maintain those facilities.

Officers highlighted for members that all of the car parks cost a considerable amount of money to maintain as well as the increase in energy costs, general maintenance of the buildings and security. Officers explained that there's a balance to be struck, but the Blue Badge scheme is not means tested so it's not a fiscal issue in terms of ability.

Members highlighted that during the task and finish group, they looked at the possibility of allowing disabled users an extra hour as people with a blue badge may take extra time to exit or enter their cars. It may also take them longer to shop.

Members wanted to know if that could be taken on board even if it is to look at doing it in certain car parks within the towns that they get an extra hour.

Members stated that given the parking increases are on the hourly rates as proposed, and not on the all day parking rates, It may disproportionately affect disabled users who may take longer. Members suggested that it may make them go over that hour threshold and therefore need to pay more than they would have otherwise paid.

Officers advised that the recommendation is due to the current financial pressure, based on the parking budget, blue badge holders would pay the full charge.

Officers advised that they recognise and are guided to take into account the issues of disability and that's why the authority locate all of the disability parking close to access of the play and display machines.

Officers explained that they made a recommendation based upon the primary issue of the concession of a blue badge is for on street and not off-street parking. And that it is a difficult budget position where officers have got to try and break even on the parking account.

Members were advised that with the blue badge scheme, holders get 3 hours on double yellow lines provided they put on the badge and the clock at the time. Blue badge holders are also exempt of any time limit within the limited waiting bays. Officers stated that it's very important that Blue badge holders read the badge book because a lot of holders don't realise the concession that they actually have on street.

The chair explained that the principal of what the committee had put forward was to make sure that concession was consistent and extended into the surface car parks as well. The chair advised that he recognised the limited opportunities for people to park on the street around the town centres.

The chair stated that he took the point there are some concessions but felt that the principal was ensuring that that was available in the car parks as well.

The Chair stated that there's a limited amount of blue badge parking bays in the car parks and asked the Cabinet Member what was the financial calculation assessment around this recommendation?

The Cabinet Member advised that in his opinion, if someone has a Blue Badge then they are entitled to park where they are allowed and that not all disabled people are unable to pay for their parking. The Cabinet member explained that as a disabled person with a Blue Badge he has no problem with parking because the Blue Badge concession and the facilities are there for him to use on road parking.

The cabinet member said that he agreed with the officers that blue badge holders should read the book because there's lots of concessions for people with the Blue Badge. The Cabinet member advised that he doesn't think Blue Badge holders would want to be put into a category where they can't pay their way.

Members responded to the Cabinet member and clarified that the committee's recommendation was designed to level the playing field in the sense that an abled body person could make a shop within an hour. Members stated that somebody who is disabled, may take longer and therefore would have to pay a higher charge because they have a disability. Members explained that the idea of the committee is to balance out things so that somebody who's disabled shouldn't be unfairly penalised and having to pay more to park for longer because of their disability.

Members challenged the impact assessment as they believe that the proposal does impact on disabled people more than able-bodied people and highlighted that many blue badge holders do not have a second income.

Members wanted to know if the IIA was legally sound, and that due regard has been given to people who are disabled and that impact assessment only responds to people are using a car park.

Officers advised that it is an on-street scheme, legally the blue badge is an on-street concession. Officers advised that if members feel strongly about that, as this is a national scheme, they can lobby central government to change the Blue Badge scheme.

Officers explained that they are applying the concession in line with the blue badge scheme. Officers explained that nothing has changed on that blue badge scheme, from under previous administrations dating back to 2010 at least.

Officers stated that they don't know if the IIA open to challenge or not. Officers reiterated that the concession is an on-street scheme and advised members that they could be challenged as a council, but it's at the discretion of the Council in their view. The officer's view is that it is not a determined aspect.

The Chair clarified that there may be a mixing up of two things. He advised that the committee members were talking about the decision that is proposed in the report and the impacts of the decision in the report on disability, that includes disabled people, parking in car parks.

The Chair advised that is a slightly distinct thing from what the National Blue Badge scheme is and there is a duty as a Council and what members are questioning is whether the decision to say that

there's no impact on disability as a result of this decision is correct or not.

The chair stated that is distinct from what the National Blue Badge scheme is and that they are slightly separate questions.

Officers reiterated that in the blue badge scheme, its sections are clear. It does not apply to off street parking. Members were told that the disability and the blue badge are intrinsically linked so you can't separate them.

Officers advised that the Blue Badge scheme also says to holders to check with off street car parking what the charges and concessions are. Officers said they don't think they have broken any legislative position on not. Officers said that the challenge around the disability is a is a different matter.

Officers explained that ultimately it is for the cabinet to decide whether on this item whether they want to proceed or to review it further and get a formal legal opinion.

The legal officer advised that they were unable to advise on the Blue Badge scheme itself and has looked to the officers for their expertise on that subject and could be taken away further on the legal impact if input was required on that. However, the issue in regard to the integrated impact assessment is whether members have all the information they need to make the decision in hand.

The legal officer said that it would go back to the officers for their view that influenced the integrated impact assessment, to provide all the information members would require, and that they have due regard to all of the issues. The legal officer explained that it may be, that it could be an impact and members would have that to take into account.

A cabinet member asked if mipermit was available in all the car parks and suggested that the authority should make it available more widely so residents can do it off their phone. This would be helpful for people who feel pressured that they need to get back in time. Officers confirmed that mipermit was available in all car parks.

Members stated that they were glad to see that the removal of the charge for carers permits.

Members asked the cabinet member why Pontardawe is being treated differently regarding the parking price increase across the borough.

The cabinet member advised that under previous administrations there was a long debate on the Pontardawe parking situation of the free hour parking.

The Cabinet member explained that as the Task and Finish Group report didn't make a recommendation on this point then the Cabinet member and the officers decided to keep it as it was to help the traders by keeping it the same. Although Pontardawe was brought in line with other areas regarding Sunday parking no longer being free and the other price charges.

Members asked that if it is acknowledged that free parking in Pontardawe is helpful to increase footfall in town centres then why does that not apply to Neath and Port talbot?

Officers advised that previously there had been an economic review of town centres in terms of type and size of retail offer in town centres. Pontardawe was determined as having a smaller offering than Neath and Port talbot which was one of the fundamental determinations of previous administrations. In discussions with members that position hasn't really changed.

Members clarified whether it was a political decision.

Officers advised that the underlying decision was that the type of offer available in Neath and Port Talbot was bigger than in Pontardawe. It is a matter for the cabinet to decide.

Members advised that as a Task and finish group they were asked how to raise money from parking by the coalition but can't understand why Pontardawe is protected from that increase compared to Neath and Port talbot when trying to raise funds.

Members stated that Neath and Port talbot VIVA work very hard to get people to come into the town centres and they want clarity on whether there is going to be consultation with traders and organisations before the charges are raised, especially Christmas parking arrangements as the cost-of-living crisis gives people tough decisions on price of parking.

Officers advised that they weren't approached directly by Neath or Pontardawe town centres, but town centre managers meet with them on a regular basis and all town centres knew there was a parking review.

Officers explained that there was a specific enquiry submitted by VIVA Port Talbot to the authority and responded to via democratic services. Officers stated that the response was that if they have any concerns about parking fees they can contact the chair of the committee and it doesn't sound like they followed that advice.

Members advised that VIVA Port Talbot spoke to them about their concerns around the parking charges and the lack of impact it will have on Pontardawe compared to Port Talbot.

Members asked why there has been a lack of engagement on this when making decisions and not listening to businesses there?

The Cabinet member advised that he felt there hasn't been any lack of engagement and felt that the route to contact the chair of scrutiny or chair of the Task and finish group put it in the lap of VIVA to do that.

The Cabinet member explained that it was not a political decision to safeguard Pontardawe as the decision wasn't made by the current administration and had been made by a different administration for Pontardawe to have an hour free parking.

The cabinet member advised that the Task and Finish recommendations didn't include anything on Pontardawe, so the decision was to keep the hour free as it was but put up the charges in line with everywhere else as well as Sunday charging.

The Cabinet member stated that he felt this was fair across the board.

The chair asked if there had been any consultation with the traders on the proposal.

The chair also expressed that he was uncomfortable with the position that when a proposal to make charges to parking charges is put forward by an administration that traders were directed to him as a scrutiny chair as the decision will be taken by cabinet members. The chair stated that while he is happy to receive feedback, ultimately it

should be for the Cabinet to have those discussions with traders as the cabinet are accountable for making the decisions on parking.

Officers advised that should the decision be taken to go ahead with the recommendations then the authority would be legally required to advertise the charges and any traffic orders for on street and off-street parking. During that period anyone who would want to object to these charges can do so in writing. So VIVA can object to them as part of statutory procedure within 28days. It won't be a consultation process.

Cabinet members advised that they need to take it back to look at with officers who should be the point of contact when concerns and complaints come in but can also see the appropriateness of it going to the Chair of the Task and Finish group, but it could have come to cabinet as well or a point of contact with officers who could then feed it back.

Cabinet members asked members of the task and finish group if they raised the concerns on behalf of VIVA in the task of finish group sessions and whether it is not reflected in the report.

Members explained that it is the coalition that are making the decision and the task and finish group would just look at it. Members advised that VIVA Port Talbot's questions were brought up via the members within the task and finish group and as members they wanted to raise these issues to the people that are making the decision, which is the cabinet members, to ensure that that they are considering this.

Members stated that there is a difference between the statutory notification and the consultation.

Members said that they felt that there seems to be a confusion over the decision makers and the people scrutinising the decisions and there is a need to make sure that they get an answer from the decision makers.

The Cabinet member reiterated that this was a decision made by the previous administration with regards to Pontardawe and asked the scrutiny chair for feedback and guidance as to where the committee's going with Pontardawe?

The chair clarified that the committee has not made the resolution on it so he was unable to speak for all the committee's views. He

clarified that the original report given to the Task and Finish group by officers asked them to consider a proposal to scrap the hour parking in Pontardawe.

The chair advised that the Task and Finish group made no comment on that proposal, but because that proposal was put in as an option to raise revenue, the cabinet members had made the choice to retain the free hour parking in Pontardawe after considering that report.

The chair advised that as the context of this is raising income. The chair explained that raising income and charges is having an impact on town centres, so the committee was seeking clarification on why that decision was taken to retain the free hour while placing a burden on other town centres.

The Chair advised that he felt that question had been answered and stated he wanted to clarify that was the basis of the questions that had been asked by members.

Members said that they believed that VIVA need to be consulted as they are trying to reinvigorate the town centres.

Members also advised that the traders they have spoken to in Neath didn't know anything about the proposed parking increases nor did the residents. Members explained that the £5 increase in on -street parking is going to affect everyone in the Neath Centre as will the increase in the car parking charges.

Members advised that they don't think there's been consultation with everyone and that neither neath or Port talbot traders seem to have known enough about the charges and questioned whether the town centre managers should have informed them.

Members raised the issue that the public don't seem to know about season tickets for the town centre parking as well as the Knoll and Margam Park. Members advised that there seems to be issues with the website. Members wanted to know if there is any way that the authority can advertise season tickets more as they help make the cost of parking far cheaper.

Officers explained that it was an oversight as it was taken for granted that there was a need to promote the season tickets and the officers are in consultation and working with the head of leisure services to

see if they can get a better solution around the country parks which are not under parking services management.

Officers advised that they recognise that there are opportunities there that we can potentially enhance that offer, not just for season tickets but as the task and finish Group and the head of leisure highlighted, opportunities where the authority might even be able to develop a menu of offers within the authority.

Officers used an example that someone might decide they may want to go to the aqua splash or visit Avon Park or going to Margam Park and you could buy all of those in a single transaction with the authority.

Officers said that it was a very positive thing that came from the task and finish group, and it was an oversight not to include in the report and that it would be marketed. Officers also said that they would work with the communications team to get the message out so that it could be shared by members via social media.

On the proposals around providing free bus travel put forward by the committee, the chair advised that he accepted the response that funding something like that from the parking budget would be challenging, but wanted to know if the cabinet are prepared to follow what Swansea do, in showing support for the local bus industry and maybe prioritise it from other funding other than the parking account, if it was felt that it was something that was really important because of all the challenges facing the bus industry and passenger numbers.

The Cabinet Member explained that he didn't disagree with member's idea, but fundamentally, at this time, due to the pressure that this Council is under he can't see any way that the authority would be able to. The cabinet member explained that in relation to funding figures they have approximately £80,000 and reality at this time he doesn't think that's feasible.

Cabinet members stated that they know that in the Amman valley they may lose an early morning service which people may lose jobs over. The cabinet member stated that there is a balance of trying to necessitate what is needed.

Cabinet members commented that it is a great idea and the cabinet board want to support it going forward, but it is a chicken and egg situation where if you can get more people on busses the service

would become more viable then it's a great idea, but it's a really difficult job prioritising and just keeping the really essential services.

Cabinet members also commented that the finances that are just not there, the bus service is very volatile at this moment with services being cut back, so there are big priorities from an officer and cabinet perspective it is being looked at.

The cabinet member suggested that despite this they would be prepared to meet with the Chair of the scrutiny further down the line to listen to their options, you know listen to some of the recommendations, but whatever proposals come forward the finance needs to come with it from somewhere as well.

Officers gave an overview of the current bus situation and explained that they are very concerned now with the stability of bus services in the County and more widely across the region. Officers explained that there are potentially going to be some very difficult decisions on bus services coming forward.

Members were advised that the BES (Bus Emergency Scheme) that was introduced in response to the pandemic and it kept local bus services alive, because without BES the bus companies wouldn't still be here that are currently operating today.

Officers explained that the scheme was going to end in March 2023 but Welsh Government have extended that to the end of July and have entered into a new transition funding agreement.

Members were informed that the money is much less at the national level than it was previously. Officers explained that the knock-on effect of that is that essential services will probably be reduced. Officers explained to members that while the authority was considering giving a free service for a couple of weekends on the run up to Christmas, the authority could be best spending that money to sustain some bus services across the county to get people to the health appointments to work and to learning all year around. It's a real challenge and in the current climate, officers can't see how that's going to be deliverable.

Officers also explained that in reference to other local authorities such as Swansea who run a scheme like that. Swansea has much higher parking fees and charges than in this authority and what Neath and Port Talbot propose is still cheaper than Swansea's charges. The

higher parking charges in Swansea will probably release some funding, but also Swansea has got a very big BID which contributes to some of those initiatives and the Council had taken a decision themselves that they would put their own funding into that.

Officers advised that unfortunately, the authority is not in that position, and this is why officers have recommended that it is not sustainable. Officers stated that they don't believe it would ever be sustainable from income from the parking account and would have to be part of the budget prioritisation programme that Council would need to consider going forward.

Officers advised members that they may need to put more subsidy in to keep the essential services going and not free services at a couple of weekends at the Christmas period.

The Chair thanked officers for putting the bus situation into context and felt that the key point is that if cabinet members felt it is something they may wish to prioritise then it can be prioritised in the budget setting process.

The chair advised that there are a lot of benefits to doing a scheme like that and the challenge is, does the authority need to allocate some funding to safeguard existing services versus a scheme like this.

The chair stated that if cabinet members have an open mind that if funding is available, if it's something they do agree is a good thing and it's something they would like to do then if that funding becomes available is it something they would consider.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economic Growth explained that in his new role in covering Town centres, the member wants to get out with the local members who cover the town centre areas and try to get better engagement with them on something like this, getting feedback prior to when reports are done as well from local members.

The chair agreed and commented that it was unfortunate that allocations were put in the budget before the details were looked at in this instance. The chair commented that there's a lot of benefit in doing that work in advance as with the allocations being put in the budget before details were looked at may have caused a degree of difficulty, especially in the fact that it is nearly August and a decision

has not yet been made on parking charges and the authority is not going to make that income targets as a result.

Members stated that their community couldn't access transport to their own communities in Neath and Port Talbot due to the difficulties of having just two buses a day and often they are so full, people can't get on. Members said that this, coupled with even the poorest having to be able to run a car to travel out of communities has led to a community transport scheme having to be set up.

Members commented that the Council need to look at subsidising services and making sure that communities are served. Members feel that is something that other councils are managing to do and it's not happening in this authority.

Members advised that they want support to enable bus transport for outlying communities and not penalise them by over charging for parking at the same time. Members stated that this acts as an indirect tax to keep the Council functioning and the budget balanced.

Officers highlighted that the Welsh Government are going to be struggling with the budget and it's incumbent on all to lobby the national government and Welsh Government to invest in transport.

Officers advised that the budget scenario for the authorities is extremely challenging when you try to manage the budget with all the pressures that are emerging and with new demands on all the services.

The cabinet member for Streetscene highlighted that they had similar issues with busses in their community and cutbacks to morning services would mean people couldn't get to work, he advised Members to try and influence the powers to be in the assembly.

Members explained that the task and finish group carefully chose the amended hours for the seafront charges to put the greater burden of the charge on visitors and not unfairly penalise residents who want to use the sea front and the associated business as well they asked why it's been amended to shift the existing enforcement hours.

Officers noted that the task and finish group wanted to operate the seafront charges between 9:00am and 6:00pm and explained that officers work until eight, which means for two hours down on the sea front they wouldn't be enforcing anything. Officers said that they

understand the reasons of the committee, enforcement officers need to be there during the peak times in the afternoons between 8am and 8pm.

Members queried if the enforcement officers could be utilised elsewhere during that time as they feel that 6pm is reasonable and is the same as the town centre.

Members were concerned that businesses on the beach front would be getting penalised for the extra two hours, potentially missing out on people that would visit.

Officers stated that the authority has been compared with some other authorities in regard to terms of providing free parking or free initiatives. But on the other hand the authority has not been compared with the likes of the City and County of Swansea where they charge until 10:00 PM at night for parking.

Officers explained that they have been tasked as officers to try and generate money and have flexed on the Sea Front parking, giving some concession to support the arrangement.

Officers advised they have got a responsibility to maximise the enforcement hours.

Officers explained that in the peak period in the summer, the seafront is popular, and officers would tend to enforce that area to maximise enforcement to generate the income and to get compliance with indiscriminate parking.

Officers stated that they have almost been given an impossible challenge in being asked to make money and to provide free services.

Officers advised that this strategy is going to be monitored and if the authority thinks there are benefits or non-benefits, then that would be reviewed in 12 months' time from implementation.

There was a discussion between officers and members around the rationale of changing the charging hours to meet the enforcement hours.

Members expressed the view that it didn't make sense as the authority can raise a significant amount of income between 9:00am

and 6:00pm which is the peak time in terms of visitors of the seafront and the charges are doubling as part of the proposals which is going to be significant income generation.

Members wanted to understand why officers can't re-deploy the enforcement staff elsewhere for those remaining two hours and wanted to understand the financial rational on why not to change charging hours to those that don't match the enforcement hours.

Officers said there are fundamental challenges with treating one area in isolation to other areas, in reference to the Seafront vs the country parks and other visitor attractions in terms of providing concessions in one area over another.

Members explained that the seafront is quite a distinct area as its not a gated park and contains businesses and is a destination. Members highlighted the difference in parking in the Town centre compared to the seafront if you wanted to have a meal in the evening as charging on the Seafront would be until 8pm in the on street laybys.

Members wanted to unpick the rational of the 8am to 8pm hours is from officers.

Officers explained that during peak periods the intention is that they try to maximise income and to enforce those operational hours to make sure that the people are paying.

Officers explained that the authority should be extending the charge across the piste to 10:00pm or for example in Neath multi Storey car park is open till 11:00 PM the authority should be maxing that out and charging to 11:00 PM.

Officers advised that there are some fundamental challenges for members regarding principles where there's no clear overview of that strategy.

There was a discussion between officers and the chair regarding his definition of residents visiting the seafront. Officers wanted the chair to define what he meant by the 'local area'.

Officers explained that if the residents lived in the local area of the Port Talbot region then you were within an area that you could walk or cycle to the seafront. If it was a wider authority area the officers

explained chair meant that they were choosing to drive to the seafront then you would have to expect to pay a charge and can then make a choice about where to go. Officers wanted to clarify if the chair meant local seafront residents or the wider authority, but if you chose to drive to the seafront you would expect to have to pay a charge to park.

The Chair clarified that it is about people who live in the local authority area who have to drive to the seafront because there is poor public transport and that members agreed that the importance of charging and enforcement at the seafront but did not want the charging to adversely affect businesses and residents who visit for recreation, mental health or exercising purposes.

The Chair stated that the recommendation of the Task and Finish Group was to place the charging burden on visitors rather than local residents who use it as an amenity space who can't otherwise walk or cycle to the seafront.

As visitors tend not to turn up in the evening then residents who would like to have a meal in one of the businesses could do so without the charge which is why they wanted to strike a balance with the charging period suggested.

The Chair wanted to understand the rationale of the response. The current hours are 7am-10pm, Task & finish suggestion 9am-6pm, the current proposal is 8-8 the only explanation has been because that is the enforcement hours, but they don't understand the rationale of it as the chair feels that the enforcement hours should fit the charging hours. The chair asked if they make a reasonable decision of the charging hours, what is the rationale behind the charging hours in the report?

Officers explained that they have looked at the proposal and have reduced the charging hours down, but they have been tasked with getting additional income in to reduce the deficit. From the enforcement side, they feel it doesn't make sense to reduce the hours of income and lose 3 hours without enforcement and that additional income lost.

Members raised concerns about illegal parking during the summer and wanted to know whether other options were considered before the task and finish group were asked to help find the £300,000 for parking.

Members also wanted assurances that people are going to be fined or ticketed if they illegally park and if they do illegally park, is it going to cost the legal department money to chase up fines which are not paid?

Officers explained that there is one tariff on the Seafront so the only time a person would get a ticket is if you don't purchase one. Officers advised that if the proposals go ahead, then they can dedicate an officer to the seafront to the limited waiting bays to enforce them and the car parking.

Officers also clarified that it was enforcement and not the legal section would take this on as is currently the case. Officers clarified that if a PCN is issued for not having a pay and display ticket or no ticket through the app, then enforcement will chase it and take it all the way.

Members raised the concern that anybody from the local area who visits the beach front at the moment for free for a limited time, won't in the future unless they do it early morning or evening.

Members explained that this would be off putting to a lone female walking a dog and wanted to know if local people had been consulted.

Officers explained that by introducing the charges, people should have a better opportunity to have a space to park due to churn as a result of the time limit. Whereas now people are parking at 8am and going at 11pm which would be preventing residents parking.

Members raised concerns that a full range of the priorities as a Council need to be looked at to make the authority area a lovely place to work and live and by having the charging at the times suggested it may rule out certain members of the public who cannot afford to come down three times a week to the to the beach who currently use the seafront for their mental health etc.

Members enquired about the parking in the evenings and whether there was going to be an hourly or 2 hour charge in the bays. Officers advised that parking will be £4 per day but the bays will be £1.00 per hour maximum stay of two hours. The bays will only be charged at peak times and then during the winter period they will be

free. Members were told that the main carparks are going to be a flat rate of £4 a day in the recommendations.

Members raised the IIA in relation to the seafront and explained that they have family members who that can't walk more than a few yards without having to stop.

Members were concerned that their family members would never be able to walk or cycle to the sea front and when they park in the car park across the road, it takes approximately 20 minutes to get from the car park to the sea front.

Members felt that this would adversely affect disabled people and felt that the IIA needs to be re-done.

Officers explained that with regard to the limited waiting bays along the sea front, the Blue Badge scheme applies to them and Blue badge holders can park in the limited waiting bays with exemption of the time limit and also exempt the payment as well.

Members raised the point that the task and finish group had recommended exploring the possibility of overnight campervan parking on the sea front, this would raise revenue and increase visitors, but noted it had not been included in the report and wanted to know if it was going to be considered?

Officers advised that they are due to take a sea front strategy report to the head of Leisure services regarding the whole sea front and the camper van parking will be part of that remit and they will also look at it countywide and whether it can be introduced elsewhere within the county borough.

Members felt this was a great idea and were glad this would be looked at.

Members raised concerns relating to anti-social behaviour in car parks on the beach and the need previously for gated carparks at night to combat this. The members raised worries that people wouldn't want to park their campervans there given the anti-social behaviour.

Members were advised that officers are aware of the issues there and they will take that forward with the head of Leisure Services as part of the strategy and it may be such that a location is identified that

might not be in the current car parks that exist at present. Officers didn't know at this stage, and it might be a designated area that would be much more easily managed.

Members also enquired about one of the recommendations that the Task and Finish group raised about looking at mitigation measures around the immediate residential areas around the seafront and suggested that this recommendation may push people into trying to seek on-street parking in residential streets.

Officers advised that they recognise the risks associated with the parking charges. Officers suggested that the residential on street parking schemes policy document probably needs to be reviewed as it is a little bit inflexible in the way that it's applied.

Officers advised that there is an opportunity to review the policy position which have hotspots that we can review that policy position.

Officers also explained that in regard to residents parking, the upcoming revolution in terms of EV infrastructure and charging needs to be considered. Officers wanted to re-assure scrutiny and the cabinet and that that EV Charging infrastructure residentially needs to be picked up as a, separate piece of work and possibly a task and finish group specifically.

Members had questions in relation to the Neath pedestrianised zone and were concerned that in the evenings in Neath it can be extremely dangerous with the traffic moving into the town that time of night with the pavement cafes.

Members were concerned that the proposal of an evening closure doesn't spill over into the morning sessions as traders have said they would be disappointed if the authority shut the town in the morning session that runs until 10.30 am.

Officers explained that the town centre is complex in the way that it receives goods and services and deliveries to the businesses. Officers advised that they need to undertake a proper feasibility review into a any changes that are made to the orders at Neath.

Members were advised that a very detailed and in-depth consultation with the traders would be needed as by restricting it in the way suggested by the task and finish group could have a potentially detrimental effect on businesses as they will need access and egress

during that time of the day as previously post 5pm parking used to be prohibited but this was changed at the request of members to support the nighttime economy following an assessment.

Officers suggested that it does need to be considered as a feasibility and that it needs to be put on the list for consideration as part of the end of year prioritisation programme of things that will be considered for feasibility going forward.

Officers advised that pedestrian safety is important, and they feel that the whole security around the town centre needs to be reviewed along with a fresh look at how the town-centre is managed there.

Officers said that there is an undertaking that, if that gets prioritised in autumn, that will be looked at in depth and following a detailed consultation with the traders and the town centre locally elected members.

Members agreed with officers and felt that consultation was vital, members didn't want to see changes having a negative effect on the town centre prospering.

The chair stated that he recognised this is something that was worth looking at and appreciated the challenges in the the highways capital programme and prioritising this. He asked officers if speaking to colleagues in regeneration and town centres to consider if it's not being able to be funded out of highways work this clearly has benefits for town centre regeneration from reviewing this and it may be another avenue that could be explored?

Officers agreed and explained that they know there are opportunities for town centres to secure grants and that may well be an opportunity where they could do a joint approach and are happy to work in any way to achieve that feasibility there for the best outcome of everybody taking on board the concerns that Members raised.

The Cabinet member advised that there are two current consultations regarding town centre strategies as well, but also the re-engagement of the traders. He said he is trying to involve everything as part of the consultation and make sure it gets fed back through the consultations so it can influence process.

Members commented that local members are going to be consulted with the review of the town centre, which they were happy about, but

members noted that there's two other consultations, and a feasibility exercise going on within the towns that members were unaware of. Local members asked when they were going to be included?

The cabinet member explained that he had only just heard about this week and would ensure that the local councillors would be included.

Officers also advised members that in relation to the Place plans, the regeneration team is working with consultants, the urbanists to do what is called a place plan for the town centres. This would be for Neath, Pontardawe and secondary and tertiary town centres like Tai Bach, Britton Ferry etc. They are going to draw up a series of documents for a setting out a potential public realm regeneration projects that they might want to consider for the town centres in the future and the work is still ongoing.

Officers advised that this is not going to be completed until the end of the calendar year. But when we do have the produce from the urbanists, there will be a series of workshops and consultations which will include local members. It will be brought forward for constant full consultation.

Members were also advised that the authority had secured a grant this year for feasibility on the town centre as well to see how the town centre can be enhance active travel and walking. Officers explained that until they have done a feasibility study, they aren't in a position to consult. Officers stated that the local members will be part of that consultation as well.

Members made a comment relating to continuous administrations using car parking as a means to provide council services. Some members suggested that as a principal it is fundamentally wrong. Members suggested that Council services can't be provided based on car parking when it is unknown how many people are going to use the car parks.

Members suggested that Car parking is not a cash cow, requested that members look at car parking and next year when budget setting comes around members hoped that car parking isn't factored in and is just an additional bit of income to spend on discretionary services rather than anything else.

Following discussion, the following amendments were put forward by the scrutiny committee.

Option 6 - That the charging hours be amended to 9am to 6pm

Option 7 That the charging hours be 9am -6pm

That additional recommendation 1 reads that Blue badge holders be granted an extra hours parking on top of the existing tariffs in town centre's to reflect the additional time disabled people require, this is to ensure there is no adverse impact on disabled people as a result of the increase in hourly parking charges.

That an additional recommendation be added:

That a full consultation is undertaken on these proposals with the community, including businesses and residents before implementation of any changes.

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to the Cabinet Board with the amendments.

4. **Urgent Items**

There was none.

CHAIRPERSON

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**Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Scrutiny
Committee**

**(Multi-Location Meeting - Council Chamber, Port Talbot & Microsoft
Teams)**

Members Present:

14 September 2023

Chairperson: Councillor S.Pursey

Vice Chairperson: Councillor T.Bowen

Councillors: W.Carpenter, R.Davies, N.Goldup-John,
C.James, S.Grimshaw, S.M.Penry, L.Williams
and S.E.Freeguard

**Officers In
Attendance** D.Griffiths, C.Morris, N.Pearce, C.Plowman,
M.Roberts, A.Thomas, J.Stevens, T.Rees and
L.Beynon and T.Rees

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors W.F.Griffiths, J.Hurley and S.Jones

1. Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chair noted that the Members of the Scrutiny Committee had agreed to scrutinise the following items from the Cabinet Board agenda:

- Item 7. Amendment to Byelaw prohibiting cycling at Neath Memorial Gates and along the path between the bottom pond and Cimla Crescent
- Item 8. Public Space Protection Orders - Aberavon Seafront
- Item 9. Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) - Revised Delivery Agreement (DA)
- Item 10. Parking Review 2023

2. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

3. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

Amendment to Byelaw prohibiting cycling at Neath Memorial Gates and along the path between the bottom pond and Cimla Crescent

Members were concerned about the danger of any irresponsible cyclists cycling fast down the hill through the gates. Members wanted to know if it was possible to open the two side gates so they would have to unseat to pass.

Members questioned whether the gates would be open during important anniversaries of remembrance such as battle of Britain or the armistice.

Officers advised that this was a procedural report to consult on the removal of the prohibition of cycling. To comply with Active Travel guidelines, officers would need to have the main gates open. Officers advised they wouldn't get support if cyclists had to dismount at the gates. Officers advised that for remembrance services officers would suspend the order and put in road closures to facilitate the events. If the gates were to remain open, after the services, wreaths would be placed in a way that won't cause an obstruction to the cyclists.

Members wanted to keep in mind that it is a memorial and to keep people safe.

Officers advised that it may be possible for additional signage to be considered to make people aware of the need to respect the memorials when cycling past and to be careful.

The Chair felt that it was a good point about being respectful of the memorials and to reflect that in the consultation members of the public would appreciate that.

Members asked if there was a separate part of the path dedicated to cyclists.

Officers advised that the route is designed in principle, and officers will consult further what the proposals will be. There may be parts that are a shared path, and they may be able to achieve segregated cycling and walking paths in other areas. This will be consulted at the detailed design stage.

Officers explained that this is only a small part of the Active Travel route.

Members asked how routes are identified and prioritised. Members didn't think this was an obvious priority in comparison to other routes elsewhere.

Officers advised that the adopted network route for the authority has identified 500 routes. There is no clear guidance now from Welsh Government or TFW on how to prioritise these. There are currently, High, low and medium priority routes. Officers are waiting on a software tool that is going to help local authorities prioritise the schemes further.

Officers explained that they will then try to deliver these based on the re-assessed prioritisation of routes with a view to secure grants to deliver those. Some schemes will come forward at different stages as some routes may require the purchase of land from private parties and there may also be consultation with statutory consultees as well.

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

Public Space Protection Orders PSPO- Aberavon Seafront

Officers introduced the report as circulated to members.

Members expressed support for renewing the order and felt the previous prohibitions had worked to keep the seafront safer. Members asked officers to consider the early or late use of the beach for people who may wish to walk their dogs prior to/after work.

Members agreed that they have had similar feedback from residents and dog walkers about the timing and that the PSPO's sometimes prevent responsible dog owners who are considerate about picking up the dog mess to walk their dogs at the earlier or later times.

The Chair stated he would have liked to have seen this addressed as a specific question in the consultation but accepted there was a section in it where feedback on any issue could be included. Officers advised that they have done research with other coastal authorities, and those authorities have noted that they have found it hard to manage in relation to enforcement. Officers said there are two issues, having the dog off the lead and fouling. Officers are aware

that the majority of dog owners are considerate and pick up dog waste after them but those that don't cause a health risk. Officers noted the report today is only requesting permission for consultation.

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

Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) - Revised Delivery Agreement (DA)

Ceri Morris introduced the report and explained that while it was disappointing to have to bring forward the report, it is the right approach to reset the clock on the RLDP timetable. Officers said they have been in contact with Welsh Government (WG) and they are understanding of the challenges and support the approach. Officers therefore don't think there will be issues with WG approving this.

Members asked what will be done differently this time round so there is an improved outcome? They noted that on page 70 there are several constraints like contamination, flood risk, infrastructure etc that won't change. Members wanted to know what solutions officers are looking at? Members also wanted to know what is being done differently to get more or different submissions for candidate sites?

Officers advised that the revised timetable would provide an extra year for plan preparation. The majority of work that has been done to date will remain relevant which means that officers can focus on looking at the solutions.

The authority under delivered in housing delivery, only built 100 units in 2021-22 and 100 units in 2022-23 with the growth levels they were looking at building 277, so the revised timetable will enable the under delivery in the early years of the new plan to be resolved.

Officers explained that they will do another call for candidate sites and welcome suggestions for candidate sites from members. Members were advised that there is an urban capacity study that officers are looking at, in all communities for past planning applications that haven't been implemented yet.

Officers have undertaken a sub-regional analysis with Swansea and will be talking to them and Powys to see if the growth and land needed is aligned. Officers will also look at what the Freeport implications will mean to the county borough.

Officers will need to look at commuter patterns and working from home and working with Transport for Wales regarding infrastructure issues. The Strategic Impact Assessment and phone data will help officers analyse this. Officers also advised of the need to consider the impact of the Metro and are working with Transport for Wales in that respect.

The extra time allows officers to explore large sites like Coed Darcy to discuss with landowners and developers on how to move these strategic sites forward.

Members were glad to hear the approach but felt some of it sounds like altering the definition of the numbers rather than the land that is available. Speaking to the big sites where there are issues is important and that the TFW infrastructure discussions is good to try tackle the issues around infrastructure and the transport to the valleys is crucial as an alternative to people using their cars.

Officers advised that in terms of the candidate site process, they have discussed with Welsh Government officials about looking at how they can review the threshold of evidence needed by those submitting sites. This has turned people off submitting sites, so they are looking at trying to reduce the burden at this early stage to try get more submissions in for review.

Nicola Pearce Director of environment explained that there are lots of exciting economic development opportunities coming into NPT so this will help developers' peace of mind in having a market for their product such as the Freeport opportunity and valley community sites and projects were unknown when they last went out for candidate sites.

Members asked what impact the RLDP delay would have on the Corporate joint committee subcommittee on planning.

Officers explained that they are separate processes given that they are two different tiers of development plan. Whilst there are also delays with bringing forward the Strategic Development Plan (SDP), because of the resource issue situation, Welsh Government has a stance that local planning authorities must not stop the preparation of the Local Development Plans (LDP). While LDPs and SDPs need to be in conformity with one another, they are separate processes.

A lot of the joint work that has been undertaken across the region, the broader and local issues are being looked at on a joint basis. The work not only supports the individual LDPs but also will provide the building blocks for the SDP. With a total of three tiers of development plan in Wales, you will always have challenges in aligning them all, particularly the timescales for preparation.

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

Parking Review 2023

The Chair advised that the committee has undertaken a significant amount of scrutiny on these proposals both in the task and finish group with those recommendations produced and at the previous meeting of the Scrutiny committee. Members raised significant concerns about the impact of the proposals on businesses, residents, and disabled people and extent of consultation. The Chair reminded members that cabinet members deferred the decision in the July meeting. The chair reminded the members and the public that the decision will be made by the cabinet members not by the scrutiny committee. The chair advised that the report is substantially the same as the one in July but acknowledged some of the concerns of the committee on disability. The chair welcomed the updated Impact assessment but noted no changes to proposals had been made on that.

Members expressed concerns that many points raised last time had not been addressed. Members were concerned about the parking charges and the request that the committee try raise funds through the charges. Members stated that VIVA Port Talbot have been working hard on revitalising the town centre. Members felt that the legal minimum consultation wasn't appropriate for this level of change for businesses in the area and members were disappointed that no change had been made on that. Members also expressed shocked that the report doesn't show an impact on disabled people.

Officers advised that there will be 2 statutory consultations, one for the tariff charges for off-street car parks and the other for strategy consultation on any amendments to on street regulatory traffic orders. Officers advised that consultees would have an opportunity to respond to. Any objections received will need to be reported back to scrutiny and cabinet board for consideration.

Members were advised the town centre free Christmas parking days, were a discretionary option from the council to offer those. Town centre managers will conduct consultation with traders directly on what days they would like to select for the free 5-day parking offer and how they would like to align those dates with any events they have across the year.

Officers explained that they have made an amendment to the IIA. Officers advised that they are not saying that it doesn't affect disabled visitors, but that it may affect them, and having taken advice from the equalities officer they were satisfied that it reflected the officers position contained within the IIA.

Local members advised that they were disappointed with the parking review and its recommendations. Members felt that the council and VIVA Port Talbot have worked hard to increase footfall and they felt that this report will have a negative effect on footfall. Members accepted that there were budget pressures but were concerned that the proposal didn't justify the wider impact on Port Talbot and against increases in charges.

Members expressed the view that the same support needs to be given to the beach and town centre area traders as developers looking to build in the area.

Members felt that the changes will create an increase in Blue Badge applications.

Members read out a statement from the Chair of VIVA Port Talbot board.

Members spoke on behalf of the traders of Neath and urged officers to be careful of causing an issue for people who would want to drop in quickly for something from the town but may get put off, the low tariff for the first hour would help this.

Members explained that traders don't feel that they have been properly consulted as this will affect them greatly. Christmas revenue sees traders in Neath through January, and they are not sure that the free parking in January will offset that. Members appealed to cabinet on behalf of the traders of Neath to re-think this and encourage footfall into the towns.

The Cabinet member for Economic Growth advised that he did contact VIVA PT to get their views because of comments from the

last meeting but didn't receive a response as of that meeting, however he had listened to the statement read out. He would like to get close to communities in all the authority's town centres so they can get feedback prior to putting forward changes.

Members raised the effect on disabled people and highlighted in previous scrutiny that because of their disablement they may be constrained to specific times of accessing services taking away of the free 1hour spot is going to severely affect them. and disproportionately affected as most disabled people are on benefits or a fixed income.

Members urged officers to think again about removing the free hour due to the impact on disabled people, people with mental health issues. Members advised that businesses on the seafront have made representations about the fact that any changes that prevent customers stopping off to quickly pick up something from them. Members also raised that some of the charges were over the 5-10% fees and charge rises stipulated by the current administration had previously suggested.

Officers made a general response to the issues raised. They understood that it was a difficult time for an increase in charges for people to afford, but due to the significant budget problem officers are having to raise charges as they have no alternative in order to do so. Officers said that they are looking at ways to increase income and reduce costs so they can still provide the level of service the authority is currently providing if not a better level of service.

Officers highlighted that the vast majority of the proposals in the report were supported and that there has been a long period where there was no charging for car parking and was only after a hard decision when austerity hit that charging was brought in to enable the authority to maintain carparks.

Members were advised that there are significant maintenance backlogs because of the lack of funds available but people will pay for services if it is of good quality. Officers explained that some of the carparks are not maintained to the standard officers would like and there is a report being done on parking provision across the County Borough. This is looking at use and demand and if there is any potential to downsizing the number of carparks in NPT and using some of these for alternative purposes.

Members were informed that there are lots of pieces of work that will inform income generation opportunities and how the town centres and other destinations can be supported going forward to increase footfall and attractiveness of them. Officers highlighted Place Plans that are being developed for the town centres and some of the district centres to identify what regeneration opportunities could be looked into further and secure funding to make them more attractive and bring more people to the town centres.

Members were advised that work on viability and vitality of town centres is being done in relation to the Local Development Plan. Officers are aware that some of the town centres are significant in size and there are several vacant properties and residential properties appearing within town centres. Officers looking at the size and position of town centres to concentrate activities within a smaller area to increase vitality as part of the LDP.

Officers explained that there is a small-Town Centre team which is being restructured and the terms of reference and priorities of them being looked at as well. The teamwork with the traders and the BID in Port Talbot to try and identify what events or activities bring people into the town centres and what has been effective previously through analysis.

Members were advised that funding had been secured to undertake a seafront strategy to see what would need to be undertaken to make it more attractive to visitors and for people to stay longer and spend money in the businesses and facilities in the area.

It was explained to members that there was lots being done to improve attractiveness as an attraction but they can't afford to manage the carparks on the income currently generated and they need to increase the income in order to invest back into those facilities that they want to maintain in the long term.

Officers noted that some councils may operate free parking, but it is only Llanelli town centre who operate an alternative offer to Neath Port Talbot and the charges have been benchmarked against other authorities.

Members were advised that the Authority is also a payer towards the BID and not all BID payers are against the charges. Officers highlighted to members that it was the BID who suggested the idea of

having days that the free parking is spread out through the year and BID wanted more freedom in when the free parking days would be.

Officers advised that in the recommendations in the echelon parking at the Seafront, while it is time limited. Blue Badge holders would be exempt the time limit and the charge. If members of the public are eligible for a Blue Badge they should be encouraged to do so.

The chair highlighted that when the task and finish was undertaken, the decision to raise income had already been taken and the task and finish group worked within that when they came up with their recommendations in order to try and make the best of the situation. The committee members do not necessarily support or were happy with the principle of the parking charges but accepted it was inevitable in sense of the budget.

Officers advised that they accept that and as officers they also didn't want to be in the position to put the fees up either but the circumstances mean that it is a necessary requirement to maintain these facilities and as officers they also use these services and would affect them also.

Officers thanked the scrutiny committee as a lot of positive feedback came out of that process and there are work streams that will continue to be taken forward as a result. Even though the budget had been set, even with these proposals they will be £25,000 short and there has also been other financial pressures. The financial predicament for the council will be challenging now and in the future.

Members were concerned that the occupancy of carparks wasn't where it should be and to maintain and develop the carparks to a higher standard costs money and questioned if this the right course of action? Members also highlighted that there are other towns in Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) that do have free parking in most towns.

Members understood the pressures and need to increase revenue but felt that this was not the best way. Members also raised that VIVA Port Talbot had not been consulted at all before the review had been completed. Members advised that after last Christmas traders wanted free parking sooner than Christmas and if officers think about more free parking days that might help. They expressed the view that 5 days would not be sufficient.

Members felt that Neath has one of the best multi story car parks in Wales and if as an authority they want to see car parks of that standard and maintain others and bring it up to that standard also then charges would need to increase as it costs a large amount in maintenance and cleaning.

Members felt that other authorities were charging far more than Neath Port Talbot.

The Cabinet member explained that the biggest increase in footfall was in regeneration in Neath. Boots had recorded record figures when they opened. The commitment is being shown by the regeneration team with places planning and town centre managers. Getting footfall up is improving the town centres and he is speaking to property owners in Queen Street to move things forward and as a commitment to try improving and increase footfall.

Officers highlighted that there are free carparks still in NPT just like RCT and that in comparison Swansea have removed all free car parking as part of delivering a balanced budget. Officers advised that they haven't gone that far in proposals but do have to make difficult decisions of increasing charges and imposing charges in other areas where they aren't currently in place. The effectiveness and impact of these decisions will be reviewed within 6 months of it being implemented to have the opportunity to amend anything not working.

In relation to Christmas parking, they took VIVA Port Talbot's comments on board about more flexibility on free parking days and not concentrate them all to Christmas lead up and after. Officers will be consulting with VIVA, Neath and Pontardawe town council's and the traders via town centre managers. That consultation will be undertaken as part of this process.

The Chair advised that he understood where VIVA Port Talbot were coming from in terms of flexibility, but the report was reducing 17 days down to 5 and VIVA were probably not intending on that reduction in free parking days when they asked for flexibility.

Following scrutiny, a recorded vote was proposed and seconded and agreed.

The recommendation as outlined on pages 206 - 209 of the Cabinet report was proposed and seconded.

For: Cllrs T.Bowen, W.Carpenter, R.Davies, N.Goldup-John.

Against: Cllrs S.Purseley, S.Freeguard, S.Penry, C.James,
S.Grimshaw, L.Williams.

Members were not supportive of the recommendations to be considered by Cabinet Board.

4. **Urgent Items**

There was none.

5. **Access to Meetings**

Members decided not to scrutinise any private items.

6. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s**

Members decided not to scrutinise any private items.

CHAIRPERSON



***ENVIRONMENT, REGENERATION AND
STREETSCENE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE***

10.00 AM FRIDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2023

***MULTI-LOCATION MEETING - COUNCIL CHAMBER, PORT TALBOT
& MICROSOFT TEAMS***

All mobile telephones to be switched to silent for the duration of the meeting

This meeting may be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet Site. By participating you are consenting to be filmed and the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes.

1. **Chairs Announcements**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chair noted that the Members of the Scrutiny Committee had agreed to scrutinise Item 3 of the Scrutiny agenda and the following items from the Cabinet Board agenda:

- Item 9 Key Performance Indicators 2023/2024 - Quarter 1 (1st April 2023 - 30th June 2023)
- Item 10b Proposed lease of the former Wilko retail limited premises comprising part of the ground and first floors within the multi storey car park in Neath Town Centre to CDS (Superstores International) Limited t/a The Range
- Item 11 Surrender of existing lease and grant of a new agreement for lease and lease of catering kiosk and adjoining

land at the western end of Aberavon Seafront Port Talbot.

2. **Declarations of Interests**

There were none.

3. **Annual Report**

The Chair introduced the report as circulated. The Chair commented on how hard the committee had worked and the achievements of the committee such as completing two task and finish groups and intensive scrutiny sessions. The chair also commented on the successful amendments to policy and documents the committee had secured. The Chair thanked members of the committee for their hard work and the support of Democratic services.

Members commented on how good the report is and that it gave an excellent outline of the work done through the year.

The Environment Regeneration & Streetscene Services Scrutiny Committee noted and endorsed the annual Report 2022/2023 attached at Appendix A and commended to Council.

4. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

Key Performance Indicators 2023/2024 - Quarter 1 (1st April 2023 - 30th June 2023)

Officers introduced the report as circulated to Members and highlighted that it is a new presentation format as a response to member feedback. Officers said they would record any feedback and pass that on to the corporate performance team who came up with the new presentation format.

The Chair reminded members of the upcoming training session on the new format KPI's and encouraged them to attend as it will help members interpret Key Performance Indicators better.

Members commented that they thought the new format was clearer and better and shows longer term trends and direction of travel. Members also felt it would be useful to have a line on graphs that indicates what the target is as a visual aid.

Members referred to page 64 of the report relating to missed collections of waste recorded. Members wanted to know if this also include online reports and members reports of missed collections to waste services.

Officers explained that online reports are logged and encouraged members to report issues via the call centre so that it would ensure reports are logged correctly. Individual officers don't use the system that the contact centre uses, and it is less likely to be recorded properly.

Members commented that there was a danger that the missed collections won't be picked up that day as by the time it is logged, the crew may have left the area already by that time.

Officers advised that the waste action plan has been approved for the in-cab data system so the crews will get alerted about missed collections. The tracker system will mean officers will know where the crews are, and the in-cab data system will let the nearest crew know about the missed collection.

Members asked if reports of fly tipping made by members are included in KPI 17 as well as whether reports are getting categorised differently now as there is a lower number in this quarter.

Officers explained that for fly tipping the FLARE System is used to document everything as it's a legal process. Officers also advised that there are sometimes presentation issues of residents putting waste out on the wrong week.

Members were advised that fly tipping historically has fluctuated and during lockdown fly tipping increased. The legal process for fly tipping was suspended for a period which prevented interviews as part of the enforcement process. With enforcement having now returned, fly tipping has dropped back down.

Members asked if complaints of mess left over from waste collections are logged. Officers advised that customer services system captures everything.

Members were concerned that raising the issues through the call centre or online causes a delay in issues being rectified and wanted

to check if the in-cab system will get the updates from notifying via customer services.

Officers confirmed that once the in-cab system is in place it will. The service first system is also being reviewed to put in improvements, as well as looking at what it captures so that it does capture everything.

Members stated that they tend to speak to officers directly as it tends to mean action is taken quicker. Members wanted to check that the new in cab system would make sure this would mean quick responses to incidents.

Members were informed that data from all the rounds has been uploaded into the Service First System and Officers will be able to analyse complaints against individual rounds in the future, although This won't be available for a few months.

The report was noted.

5. **Committee Action Log**

The Members of the Committee noted the Action Log.

6. **Forward Work Programme 2023/24**

The Members of the Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

7. **Urgent Items**

There were three urgent items, members decided to scrutinise two of these.

Resolved:

That pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following items of business which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

Item 10b Proposed lease of the former Wilko retail limited premises

comprising part of the ground and first floors within the multi storey car park in Neath Town Centre to CDS (Superstores International) Limited t/a The Range

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

Item 11 Surrender of existing lease and grant of a new agreement for lease and lease of catering kiosk and adjoining land at the western end of Aberavon Seafront Port Talbot.

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

K.Jones
Chief Executive

Civic Centre
Port Talbot

12 October 2023

Committee Membership:

Chairperson: Councillor S.Pursey

**Vice
Chairperson: Councillor T.Bowen**

Councillors: W.Carpenter, A.Dacey, R.Davies, N.Goldup-
John, C.James, K.Morris, S.M.Penry, R.W.Wood,
L.Williams and S.Thomas

Notes:

- (1) If Committee Members or non-Committee Members wish to have relevant items put on the agenda for future meetings, then please notify the Chief Executive/Chair eight days before the meeting.*

- (2) *If non-Committee Members wish to attend for an item of interest, then prior notification needs to be given (by 12.00 noon on the day before the meeting). Non-Committee Members may speak but not vote, or move or second any motion.*
- (3) *For pre scrutiny arrangements, the Chair will normally recommend forthcoming executive items for discussion/challenge. It is also open to Committee Members to request items to be raised - though Members are asked to be selective here in regard to important issues.*
- (4) *The relevant Cabinet Board Members will also be invited to be present at the meeting for Scrutiny/ Consultation purposes.*
- (5) *Would the Scrutiny Committee Members please bring the Cabinet Board papers with them to the meeting.*

ERSS Committee - Actions and Referrals Update – 2023-24

No outstanding actions currently

<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Minuted Action / Referral / Request</u>	<u>Progress Update</u>	<u>Officer</u>	<u>Target / Completion Date</u>	<u>Completed / On-going</u>

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Environment, Regeneration & Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee

(All starting 10am unless otherwise stated)

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Contact Officer
2023		
June 2 nd	Burrows Yard – Update Report	Simon Brennan
July 14 th	Active Travel - Update	Dave Griffiths
	<p>Report on the Neath Integrated Transport Hub (NITH), progress to-date, background to proposal, and the subsequent documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WeITAG 1 • WeITAG 2 • Canopy RIBA 2 Report • Other background documents <p>This should be issued no later than 14 days prior to the next meeting.</p>	Dave Griffiths
28 th July (Special)		
September 14 th (Special)		
October 6 th		
Nov 17 th		

2024		
Jan 12 th		
Feb 9 th		
March 22 nd		
May 3 rd	Ongoing Monitoring of Waste Collection and update on all actions	Mike Robers

Report to be included in future cycle:

- BES update (Deferred from October 6th) – Jan 2023.