

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

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

Members Present:

13 October 2023

Chairperson: Councillor C.Jordan

Councillors: T.Bowen, C.Galsworthy, J.Henton, J.Jones, R.G.Jones, S.Paddison, S.H.Reynolds and A.J.Richards

Officers In Attendance N.Daniel, P.Chivers, C.Furlow-Harris, V.Petty, A.Thomas, V.Dale, C.Jones and Wellington, R.Monks and P.Chivers
Superintendent E. Davies (SWP)
G.Richards (CVS)

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1. **To resolve to exercise the powers set out in Section 35 of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 being the designated Overview and Scrutiny Committee for this purpose as approved by Council May 2015.**

Resolved: to exercise the powers set out in Section 35 of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 being the designated Overview and Scrutiny Committee for this purpose as approved by Council May 2015.

2. **Chairs Announcements**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. **Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4. **Neath Port Talbot Well-being Plan 2023-28 - Progress Update - Well-being Objective 2 - All our communities will be thriving and sustainable**

The Corporate Director for Strategy and Corporate Services introduced the report which provides an update on the Public Services Board (PSB) Wellbeing Plan.

The Director of Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) / Chair of the Cost of Living and Poverty Prevention Partnership, gave a presentation on progress.

Members were in agreement with the content of the report but questioned if Wellbeing Objective 2 'all our communities will be thriving and sustainable' was achievable and if so, what was the target date. Members suggested amending the statement to 'All our communities strive/hope to be thriving and sustainable' and this suggestion was noted by officers.

The Director of Neath Port Talbot CVS acknowledged members concerns and agreed the challenges faced were unchanged over a long time period. The current targets have been set in partnership with agencies and a range of officers, it is important to show ambition and continue to give communities hope. The logic model will help to focus the timescales and targets and it is important to take into account lived experience.

Members referred to feedback from the cost of living workshop referenced on page 35 of the report and commented that feedback from the recently held second workshop would have been valuable. Concern was expressed by members for working residents who are above the threshold for claiming DWP benefits who are not earning enough to survive in the current cost of living crisis. It was noted that the benefit system is outside of the control of the local authority and Welsh Government. The PSB is not funded and receives a minimal amount of grant funding which is not guaranteed going forward. Members commented that it was important to canvass residents to obtain lived experience of poverty.

The Corporate Director for Strategy and Corporate Services confirmed that the results from the most recently held workshop are currently being collated and the data would feed into future reports. The benefits of real life case studies and including individuals with lived experience would be considered for future workshops. The

recently held 'Let's Keep Talking' survey resulted in 1600 responses and the top concern of residents is the cost of living crisis. The Corporate Director agreed with members' comments regarding working families who were unable to claim benefits and living in poverty, this was recognised at the workshop and further focus is needed in this area.

The Director of Neath Port Talbot CVS outlined the challenges of determining the number of people living in poverty but noted that members and third sector partners were well placed to pass on this information due to their links to their communities. Consideration has been given to setting up a Poverty Truth Commission; a similar Commission has been set up in the City and County of Swansea, however, due to high costs the funds will be utilised in other areas. It was noted that Community Development and Local Area Co-ordinators are working within communities but individually no agency can tackle the issues alone.

Members commented that the 'Let's Keep Talking' campaign, was too narrowly focused to obtain meaningful feedback from local communities and consideration could be given to gathering information from teams within the local authority e.g. Benefits and Housing Options.

The Corporate Director for Strategy and Corporate Services agreed that further work was needed in relation to data capture but advised the 'Let's Keep Talking' campaign was not the sole mechanism used to gather intelligence.

Members expressed frustration regarding the ongoing poverty situation and the speed of effecting change and a suggestion was made to utilise the I.T database system to analyse residents. The Director of CVS shared the frustration but noted that help was needed from Welsh and UK governments in order to move forward and the continued lobbying of UK Government was important. The Corporate Director for Strategy and Corporate Services acknowledged that there were a number of factors outside of the local authorities control but the local authority would work within the finances and budgets available.

Members commented that one avenue to lift people out of poverty was to provide well-paid skilled jobs and economic regeneration was something the authority had excelled in and there will be further

opportunity with the projects on The Global Centre of Rail Excellence (GCRE), Wildfox, Freeport and City Deal.

The Chair welcomed the Strategic Manager for Partnerships and Community Cohesion, Principal Officer for Community Safety and Superintendent Eve Davies, Head of Community Safety and Partnerships for SWP who provided a joint update on the work of the Community Safety Partnership in helping to achieve the ambitions of the PSB Wellbeing Plan.

Members expressed frustration in relation to the current system to deal with reports of anti-social behaviour. It was noted that there is heavy emphasis on youth anti-social behaviour and in the community there is often more serious anti-social behaviour carried out by adults. Members were in support of the 'Heads Up' campaign to train hairdressers to signpost clients to local support services. Members commented that there is too much reliance on data and that priorities change as they are driven by data.

Members congratulated South Wales Police and the Community Safety team on the recent Members event and the key issues raised, but, expressed frustration that there was insufficient time for more in-depth discussions. Officers confirmed that the Police and Crime Commissioner agenda was prescriptive but an extended agenda can be put forward at any future workshop to enable issues to be discussed in more detail. Officers extended an offer to members that they were available to discuss any issues with them individually.

Members praised the work of officers but noted the current top down approach was not empowering. In order for communities to thrive people need to be involved, empowered, engaged and given ownership of what is happening in their communities. It was noted that young people who commit anti-social behaviour and are referred to the Youth Offending Team get extra support that those committing lower –level anti-social behaviour don't get due to funding pressures. Members commented that the symptoms are being treated but not the causes and underlying social need. It was suggested that more task and finish groups are needed in order to workshop ideas and there should be more focus on community commissioning. There is an issue with third sector organisations competing for funding.

Members commented that the public have lost confidence in the police. More government funding is required for local services.

Officers thanked members for their comments and feedback and were in agreement that non-statutory services across the authority were trying to achieve more with less funding. Officers drew members attention to a number of new national government duties (Serious Violence, Counterterrorism) which have been imposed on authorities but with no additional resources or funding, resulting in the re-direction of existing resources. It was noted that there are significant issues of under reporting. There is further work to do to in relation to educating people on the different reporting mechanisms available and to overcome barriers to reporting.

Superintendent Eve Davies commented that whilst the issues discussed may appear the same as issues faced historically, there are factors to be taken into account; third generation unemployment locally, highest level of children avoiding school, cost of living crisis and the recent Covid pandemic. The Community Safety Partnership relies on funding and data is required to enable access to funding streams. In relation to the public's confidence in the police, a multi-agency approach is needed to ensure the police are able to focus on the issues impacting communities, nationally the 'Right Care Right Person' programme aims to address this issue.

Following scrutiny, members noted the information provided on the progress being made by the PSB on delivering Well-being Objective 2 'All our communities will be thriving and sustainable'.

5. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

CHAIRPERSON