



ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10.00 am FRIDAY, 19TH JUNE 2015

MARGAM DISCOVERY CENTRE, MARGAM PARK, PORT TALBOT

PART 1

1. To receive any declarations of interest from Members
2. To receive the Minutes of the Economic and Community Scrutiny Committee held on 14th May 2015 (*Pages 1 - 6*)
3. To scrutinise information and monitoring issues being reported by:

Report of the Head of Head of Transformation

4. Margam Country Park (*Pages 7 - 14*)
5. To select appropriate items from the Cabinet Board Agenda for pre-scrutiny (Cabinet Board reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members).
6. Any urgent items (whether public or exempt) at the discretion of the Chairman pursuant to Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972
7. 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

8. To select appropriate private items from the Cabinet Board Agenda for pre-scrutiny (Cabinet Board Reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members).

S.Phillips
Chief Executive

Civic Centre
Port Talbot

Thursday, 11th June 2015

Committee Membership:

Chairman: **Councillor A.Llewelyn**

Vice Chairman: **Councillor I.B.James**

Councillors: M.Crowley, C.P.Golding, A.Jenkins, M.Jones,
D.Keogh, Mrs.M.A.Lewis, Ms.C.Morgans,
Mrs.S.Paddison, S.Rahaman and A.Taylor

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.*

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1/2 - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

14 May 2015

Chairman:	Councillor A.Llewelyn
Vice Chairman:	Councillor
Councillors:	C.P.Golding, A.Jenkins, M.Jones, Mrs.M.A.Lewis, Ms.C.Morgans, Mrs.S.Paddison and S.Rahaman
Officers In Attendance	N.Evans, P.Walker, S.Brennan, C.Millis, A.Spooner- Cleverly and Ms.C.Brettle
Cabinet Invitees:	Councillors M.L.James and A.J.Taylor

1. **TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

The following Members declared an interest at the commencement of the meeting:-

Cllr A Jenkins	Report of the Head of Participation regarding the Community Development Delivery Plan Update 2014 – 2015 as Member of Neath Port Talbot Credit Union
Cllr Mrs M Lewis	Report of the Head of Participation regarding the Community Development Delivery Plan Update 2014 – 2015 as Member of Neath Port Talbot Credit Union
Cllr A.J Taylor	Regarding the Playing Field and Pavilion at Talbot Memorial Park Taibach as he is Chair of The Friends of Talbot Memorial Park

2. **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 2ND APRIL 2015**

Members agreed that the content of the minutes were a true reflection of the meeting held on the 2nd of April 2015 but made the following observations;

2.1 **Playing Field and Pavillion at Port Talbot Memorial Park, Taibach**

Cllr A.J Taylor re-affirmed his interest at this point and left the room.

Members asked for an update regarding the issues surrounding the lease of the Playing Field and Pavilion at Port Talbot Memorial Park.

The Head of Property and Regeneration stated that there had been no further objections received from members of the public regarding the lease. Positive discussions have been made with all parties involved resulting in the property being signed off by the Margam Estate.

2.2 **European Funding Update**

Members requested an update regarding European Funding be brought to the next meeting scheduled for the 19th June 2015.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

3. **TO SELECT APPROPRIATE ITEMS FROM THE CABINET BOARD AGENDA FOR PRE-SCRUTINY**

3.1 **Local Authority Partnership Agreement Progress Report**

Members considered the Report of The Director of Education, Leisure And Lifelong Learning.

The Physical Activity and Cultural Services Manager highlighted to Members that NPTCBC have positive working relationships with our partners in Sport Wales, Swansea City Football Club, Ospreys Rugby, and schools which have resulted in successful roll out of the programmes as stated in the report.

Members queried what the swimming standard was for Key Stage Two children and if all schools in the Local Authority had been offered the swimming programme.

Officers stated the Key Stage Two Level is currently under review and in the region of 80% of children achieving this standard which is delivered by Celtic Leisure. Celtic Leisure offer free top up lessons to children who have not achieved this level. Members were informed that every school had been given the opportunity to participate in the Swimming Programme for which there has been a 98% uptake. Ultimately, it is the Head Teachers decision whether the school participates or not.

Officers explained that the free swimming grant to all councils had been cut, and NPTCBC had fortunately one of the lowest cuts out of all the authorities, with a cut of £15,000.00 out of the original grant of £60,000.00.

Members asked how it was decided which sports should be included as priority.

Members were informed that as part of the process, children in the schools were directly consulted with in order to find out demand. Discussions are then held with the Governing Body to see if that sport is sustainable by the Governing Body after the initial programme roll out.

Members queried whether discussions had been held with all sporting associations as there were some concerns surrounding a drop in participation in some areas, and if this could be linked to a dwindling number of facilities available.

Members were informed that there is an Officer who works closely with the Wales Trust, Rugby Development Officers and other associations in the area. The Football Association for Wales (FAW) has restructured which has had a knock on effect at the grass roots level and the FAW are now more hands on. The new school in Baglan will be a Community School and its facilities can be accessed by the public when it is not being used by the school. It was confirmed that the pitch will have floodlights and be an all-weather pitch for multi-use.

Members sought clarification as to why demand falls and what steps do Officers take to re-engage people and encourage participation.

Officers confirmed it is essential that these areas are specifically targeted in order to increase participation and are subject to ongoing review.

Members requested that Officers look at good practice in other areas to see if NPTCBC can replicate success according to the current funding schemes

constraints. Members asked how the current grant was divided and what the future held.

This year's funding is divided as follows;

- £250,000.00 – 5x60
- £50,000.00 – Dragon Sport
- £51,000.00 – Free Swimming
- £105,000.00 – Community Chest for allocation to clubs
- £25,000.00 – additional funding still to be allocated

With regards to the future, the Government will not be in a position to fund 22 Local Authorities and 52 Governing Bodies of Sport. Results of a review regarding the above will be published in the next two months.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

3.2 Community Development Delivery Plan – Update 2014 – 2015

Members considered the Report of the Head of Participation regarding the Community Development Delivery Plan 2014- 2015.

Members offered their disappointment over the Social Enterprise Strategy funds which are currently on hold. Members also requested further information regarding the number of Strategic Social Enterprises across the authority and what they contribute to the local community.

Officers stated the reason for the funds currently being on hold is because the CVS did not have enough resource due to financial implications to continue with the strategy at present.

Members requested further clarity on the following points;

- Clarification regarding the situation with the CVS and the Social Enterprise Strategy Fund and return with more detailed information to the next meeting
- Enterprise Support for Rural Businesses - could Officers provide a breakdown as to what the 'Micro Enterprises' were
- The LIFT project (Tackling Workless Households) - can it be identified where the people who found work lived, if they had to travel to get to their new job and the aspects of that work.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed the report be noted.

4. **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.**

5. **TO SELECT APPROPRIATE PRIVATE ITEMS FROM THE CABINET BOARD AGENDA FOR PRE-SCRUTINY**

5.1 Appointment of Design Consultancy Services for the Vibrant and Viable Places Programme (VVP) – Green Park Connections Project

Members noted the Private Report of the Head of Property and Regeneration.

Members raised concern over the cost of bringing in the Consultant and wondered if it was something that could have been done in-house.

Officers advised that the Consultancy firm in question had been used before by NPTCBC and that it was actually the cheapest way. Due to the high volume of work already being done in-house it would not be possible to do in-house. The VVP funding has to be delivered within a certain time. There have already been delays as the site has uncovered archaeological remains. The significance of those finds had yet to be established but further information can be brought to the next meeting.

Members queried the deadline for the grant and were advised that the money has to be given out annually over a period of three to four years. Using the same Contractor for the work ensures continuity of work. An update will be brought to the next meeting on the 19th June 2015.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal(s) to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

5.2 Proposed Lease of the Community Education Centre, Margam Road, Taibach, Port Talbot

Members noted the Private Report of the Head of Property and Regeneration.

Members were advised that a Community Interest Company were applying for the lease of this building. It was decided that the best management of the

proposed lease was to have a rental level placed on the building and the tenant could apply for grant funding to help pay toward the lease. It was agreed that this was the cleanest way of leasing the property as if the Council were to act as a Landlord there would be more legal implications. A Service Level Agreement can be drawn up with provisos so that current users are protected.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal(s) to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

CHAIRMAN

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF TRANSFORMATION

ANDREW THOMAS

19th JUNE 2014

SECTION A – FOR INFORMATION

WARD(S) AFFECTED: MARGAM

MARGAM COUNTY PARK

Purpose of report

To provide Members with an update on the capital and revenue developments within Margam Country Park.

Background

Margam Park is a remarkably diverse and varied landscape within which there is evidence of over 4,000 years of continuous habitation and use by man. The Park is set in over 850 acres of parkland and is a site of outstanding historical importance including the Tudor-Gothic style Victorian Mansion House. The historic core includes Cistercian Abbey remains and 18th and 19th Century garden and landscaping phases. Of particular importance are the banqueting house façade (the Temple of the Four Seasons), the 18th Century Orangery, the Citrus House and the 19th Century gardens.

The Park is a multi faceted visitor attraction with well established deer herd, narrow gauge railway, a children's adventure playground and extensive play area and a well stocked farm trail.

Margam Country Park's purpose is encapsulated in the Parks vision

...to create a sustainable flagship facility that celebrates the synergy between heritage and the natural environment in a stimulating fusion of education and entertainment , in a unique, inspiring, historic setting, establishing Margam as an environmental education centre and a high quality cultural and leisure destination of national status and significance...

The Council has developed an outline Master Plan for Margam Country Park in order to maximize any funding opportunities that could arise, to maximize its

current resources whilst responding to the significant challenges of a reducing revenue situation.

This approach has led to significant changes and improvements within the Park and has expanded the Park's customer and client base beyond what it has traditionally experienced.

The changes have also been recognised by awarding bodies in the countryside and tourism sector with the Park receiving the Green Flag Award for the first time in 2013 which it retained in 2014. In 2013 it was also voted the UK's favourite Park by members of the public in the People's Choice Awards and in 2014 it was voted third overall in the UK and first in Wales.

Key statistics

Visitor numbers for the past three years have grown significantly from 180,954 in 2012-13, 220,963 in 2013-14 to 269,827 in 2014-15.

Financial management

Managing a complex and multi faceted facility such as Margam requires close financial regulation to ensure that income is maximised whilst expenditure is controlled. The variability of the weather makes this process even more complicated as it affects income as well as expenditure levels on a daily basis.

The Park's main source of income is the Car Parking fees with the resultant secondary spend aspect, such as the Park's shop, essential as well. The Park has also diversified its secondary income offer by hiring out meeting rooms (this also attracts a new client base to the park), outdoor activities, special events and filming.

Until January 2015, the Park was not responsible for the Orangery and currently is not responsible for Charlotte's Pantry in the Park's Courtyard.

The financial figures for the past three years are depicted below with the 2014/15 figures excluding Charlotte's Pantry, Orangery and the HLF project as well as one off costs, such as playground refurbishments, and are provisional and subject to Audit.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Total Income	400,568	476,528	542,158
Total Net Expenditure	542,519	453,948	558,681

The Forward Financial Plan has had significant impact on the operation of the Park with a reduction of £150,000 in the core budget for 2015/16. This saving

has been achieved by efficiencies and reductions in the expenditure budget as well as three experienced staff members of staff leaving through voluntary redundancy.

Both Park management and staff are identifying and adopting new and more flexible methods of working, particularly in the area of grounds and estate maintenance. Despite this, visitor numbers to the Park have held up well at the start of 2015 / 2016 however there is no doubt that this is presenting operational challenges.

Key Developments

Historic Core

The Council was successful in its application to the Heritage Lottery Fund Parks for People programme in December 2012. This was to conserve and enhance the Historic Core of the Park (circa 1902) with a view to increasing the usage of the Park, raising public awareness of its heritage value, providing opportunities for learning and volunteering and improving future management and maintenance. The total project cost for the Historic Core was £2,063,801, with £1,600,000 from HLF matched with £218,210 of ERDF funding and £245,591 from the Council.

The works were completed in early summer 2014 and were delivered as a successful partnership between Margam Country Park and the Environment Directorate. The quality of the restoration will enable the physical attributes of structures such as the Pierced Screen on the north terrace walls and the Broadwalk steps to be enjoyed by generations to come.

The HLF funding is also supporting, for a five year period, the plans to improve and enhance the management and maintenance of the Park, training, audience development and a volunteer development programme. The Park has employed a Head Gardener, Assistant Gardener and Volunteer Co-Ordinator to help implement these plans.

The Volunteering aspect of the programme is essential to the longevity of the Historic Core and is helping the Park Management cope with the reduction in the core budget. To date, the Park has received over 190 enquiries from potential volunteers and currently have 20 active volunteers.

The Council is currently working with colleagues in the Environment Directorate to develop a “Phase Two” bid to the HLF which, if successful, would enable the Park to carry out further essential capital works to conserve Margam Castle and other structures within the Historic Core.

Citrus House & Abbey Ruins

Following the restoration of the 200-year-old Citrus House, £230,000 was secured from WREN (£75,000), Cadw (£750) and the Rural Development Plan (£154,250) to carry out works to stabilise the twelfth century Abbey ruins which are a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Surveys revealed that both structures were in a poor condition and in danger of collapse. This work has now been completed again to a high standard.

Margam Activities Centre

The Park has an excellent track record in delivering outdoor activities and events to a wide range of user groups including local schools, the youth service, social services and visitors to the Discovery Centre. Participants have the opportunity to take part in canoeing / kayaking, mountain biking, stand up paddle boarding and archery. 217 sessions were delivered in 2014 to 2,345 participants.

The Park works in partnership with the Council's Physical Activity and Sport Service and this programme significantly contributes to the Council's objective of getting young people more physically active. For example, the Afan Tawe Nedd Schools Cross Country events now take place within the Park linked to Welsh Athletics.

The Council has also continued to work closely with the Welsh Government, Welsh Cycling and British Cycling to attract major Mountain Biking events to Margam utilising the 4.5km Championship course that has been constructed in the Park, again utilising European funding (Cognition).

Caravan & Camping Site

For some time negotiations have been progressing with The Caravan and Camping Club with regard to establishing a 91 pitch camping and caravan site at the East end of the Park. It is currently estimated that construction works will commence in autumn 2015 with a view to the site being open from Easter 2016. This will bring additional, new visitors to the Park and to Neath Port Talbot. From the Park's point of view it will generate a rental income and provide the opportunity to increase secondary spend.

Play Facilities

A significant proportion of Park visitors are families with young children therefore it is important to provide appropriate play facilities within the Park. The highly popular adventure playground within the Park was showing significant signs of wear and tear. This has been completely refurbished at a cost of £25,000 and once again is proving popular.

Excellent use has been made of the Increasing Play Opportunities for Children grant from Welsh Government. In 2014/15, four projects were completed including the installation of a Wood Vibrations Trail using timber from the Park, an adventure trail in the children's fairytale village, with bridges, rope walks, silt walks, zig zag beams, creating a more challenging play experience, enhancements to the adventure playground at Margam Park to encourage free play and, for the younger children, a living willow cathedral has been planted in that area.

Filming and media

The Park has been successful in developing longstanding partnerships with private sector film companies to use the Castle and the Park as a location. This has included the 10 episode series Da Vinci's Demons, a Stars TV production in conjunction with BBC for worldwide broadcast, a major Bollywood film with Mr Amitabh Bachchan again for worldwide Broadcast and the Bastard Executioner produced by TCFTV Ltd.

Not only does this provide an additional source of income for the Park but it also provides a wider economic impact to the local area.

The partnership with the BBC, S4C and ITV has been developed with a wide variety of programmes being regularly filmed within the Park including Countryfile, Dr Who, Ffermio, CBBC, Coast and Country and Weatherman Walking. Work has also been carried out with our colleagues in Economic Development to promote the Park more widely as a filming venue. Evidence of this is coming to fruition with the ITV filming their successful Flog It programme in the Park.

The Park makes extensive use of social media including both Twitter and Facebook. The Park's Facebook account currently has 12,377 likes. In addition to this, the Park has developed an App specifically for visitors.

Events

The Park has changed its focus from organising large scale events, with the inherent risks associated with doing so, to focusing on providing a daily school holiday activity programme. This has been well received by visitors. The Park also organises small events designed to appeal to a family audience on Bank Holidays and continues to deliver the ever popular Santa deer feeds.

The Park works closely with third party event organisers who wish to put on events in the Park. This strategy is successful on many levels and provides excellent publicity for the Park as well as contributing significantly to our income. These events include the National Mountain Bike series race, Mini

Burn adventure race, 5km / 10km club and themed runs, Wiggle Dragon Ride, Dogs Trust and Volksfest.

One of the challenges which face the Park going forward is to review the pricing structure for events, in particular those events which hire the whole of the Park. During the last two years in particular the Park has become increasingly busy at weekends, generating significant income which potentially could be greater than the income derived from hiring out the park to a third party event organiser.

Voluntary Sector Partnerships

The Park has built strong partnerships with its resident Sports Clubs namely Margam Cricket Club, Margam Angling Club and Margam Archers. The Field Studies Council based at the Margam Discovery Centre continues to be an important partner for the Park delivering environmental education for schools with the Park providing outdoor adventurous activities for residents.

The Orangery

The Park has recently taken over management responsibility for the Orangery and steps have been taken to develop the commercial opportunities that this presents. This has included a review of the charging structure for the Orangery, the development of mid-week bookings, events and re-negotiating costs with suppliers.

Key developments for the Orangery have been:

- The launch of a new web site with revamped branding linked to a newly commissioned wedding brochure, glassware and staff uniform to match the website. New users and targets for face book and twitter.
- Revised menus and Special Packages to compete in the sector.
- Investment in a state of the art oven reducing wastage on meats whilst dramatically reducing cooking times and staffing costs. Kitchen equipment from Port Talbot Civic Centre has been utilised to upgrade The Orangery equipment.
- Retained 5* Environmental Health rating.
- New bar cooler system to improve the quality of the products.
- Efficiencies from changed bar supplier / products to reflect the quality of the venue and food introducing brands such as Lauren Perrier and Peroni. New Wine and branded glasses for all products.
- Addressed spare capacity by attracting new business on a Monday to Friday by promoting a new wider range of booking from 25 delegates up to 300 offering a more flexible venue.

- Completed all outstanding Health and Safety issues whilst finalised agreements with Legal team and Environmental Health regarding third parties.
- New point of sale software, giving detailed sales reports, introduced telephone payments, new booking procedures and new income reconciliation processes
- Reviewed current staffing rotas and introduced new working patterns improving efficiencies.
- New marketing plan based on the new website and branding.
- A review of the current advertising outlets introducing new publications and online marketing.

Diversification

For many years, the Park has been selling venison carcasses to both members of the public and to game dealers. This meat is available as a result of the annual deer cull which has to be carried out for reasons of animal welfare.

In 2014 a grant from Cywain (a Welsh Government initiative designed to encourage diversification and the development of food products) enabled the Park management to explore the opportunities of adding value to the venison. This was done by the introduction of venison boxes for sale to the public and the production of venison sausages and burgers as well as salami.

These new products have been well received – all three varieties of burger won Gold awards at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society’s Winter Fair and the sausages took one Gold and Two Silver awards. Plans are in place to introduce other new produce (such as rare breed pork boxes).

The Park plans to develop its existing shop to sell additional lines of locally produced food and to become an outlet for other local producers to sell their wares. The completion of the caravan and camping site will help to make this viable.

List of Background Papers

Margam Country Park – Acceptance of Heritage Lottery Fund Parks for People Round One application.

ECR Margam Country Park Stage G report September 2012

ECR Margam Country Park update report March 2013

Wards Affected

All

Officer Contact

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