



***ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY REGENERATION SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE***

10.00 am FRIDAY, 29 JANUARY 2016

COMMITTEE ROOMS A/B - NEATH CIVIC CENTRE

PART 1

1. To receive any declarations of interest from Members
2. To receive the Minutes of the Economic and Community Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 4th December (*Pages 5 - 14*)
3. To scrutinise information and monitoring issues being reported by:
Report of the Head of Property and Regeneration
4. Regeneration and Economic Development Report Card (*Pages 15 - 20*)
5. To receive the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2014/15. (*Pages 21 - 22*)
6. To select appropriate items from the Cabinet Board Agenda for pre-scrutiny (Cabinet Board reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members).
7. 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
8. 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. 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

Monday, 25 January 2016

Committee Membership:

Chairperson: **Councillor A.Llewelyn**

Vice
Chairperson: **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.*

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ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)

Members Present:

4 December 2015

Chairperson:

Councillor A.Llewelyn

Councillors:

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

**Officers In
Attendance**

A.Evans, C.Millis, S.Brennan, D.Griffiths,
W.John, G Nesbitt and S. Curran

Cabinet Invitees:

Councillors M.L.James and A.Woolcock

1. **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC AND
COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 23 OCTOBER
2015.**

The Committee noted the minutes.

2. **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND
COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 3 NOVEMBER
2015.**

Members received the minutes from the Special Economic and
Community Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on the 3rd
November 2015.

Members asked if there was an update in relation to the planned
public meetings with the libraries and were informed of the well-
attended meetings that had been held in Baglan and Skewen and
that a number of proposals had been put forward which were
progressing well.

Members asked for an update in relation to the Cefn Coed Museum.
They were informed that the recent public meeting had been well

attended and that options with the Friends Group were being explored.

A discussion was held on the web presence of the museum and that currently the only way to access it is through the Neath Port Talbot Council corporate website. Members discussed the options of considering improving the web presence of the Museum and drew comparisons with the Big Pit National Coal Museum website.

The Committee discussed the possibility of installing brown tourist signs to advertise the Museum along the road network and officers explained the issues in relation to doing this along Motorways and the main trunk roads in terms of costs and restrictions. Members asked if options in relation to this could be explored and fed back to the Committee.

In terms of the ownership of the land at the site, Members were informed that there is a 99 year lease from the Coal Board to the Local Authority which commenced in 1978 and which is now owned by the Welsh Government. Officers explained some issues around the lease such as termination options and liability responsibilities. Members noted that there are significant structural and health and safety concerns with some parts of the building and ongoing discussions are being held with demolition firms.

Members asked for an update position in relation to Cymmer Swimming Pool. Officers explained that plans had been received from an interested party in relation to running the facility but that a provider is required to deliver against the business plan and negotiations are ongoing particularly in relation to the complex Health and Safety regulations that surround the operation of a swimming pool. As it stands, officers continue to work to the agreed to the agreed timescales, not ruling out any viable options which would secure a safe facility. If no proposals are forthcoming, officers confirmed that as of 31st December the full decommissioning procedure would commence as agreed.

Following discussion, the Committee noted the minutes.

3. **COMMUNITY MANAGED LIBRARIES AND LIBRARY SERVICE REPORT CARD.**

Members considered the update on the progress of Community Managed libraries in Neath Port Talbot and the Library Services Report Card as contained within the circulated report.

The report included a breakdown of performance of the community managed libraries compared to when these libraries were managed by the Local Authority. Members were informed that no adverse comments had been received in relation to the community run libraries and Members commended the volunteers who are working in the libraries. Members were informed that internet access is available at all of the libraries except at Seven Sisters and that seven of the community libraries now have their own internet provider and are no longer connected to the Local Authority network.

Members were informed that in the Summer of 2015 only two community libraries took part in the annual Summer Reading Challenge signing up just five children compared to the 1114 children signed up by the Library Service. Members noted that performance has dropped but that it is proving a successful alternative method of service provision.

Officers stated that Welsh Government had issued new guidelines and as of May 2015 they will require Community Libraries to have a paid member of staff onsite for 50% of the time and Members were concerned about the financial and resource implications of this.

Members stated they were disappointed at the reduction of books issued even in the libraries that had retained their number of opening hours and were informed that this is a trend within all libraries. Members discussed the options of integrating libraries into broader service provision and that innovation would be required to drive forward the service and performance of libraries across the Borough.

Members asked if there had been any increase in the issue of electronic books and were informed that there had not been any substantial increases and that the issue of audio books has risen but not proportionately to compensate for the decrease in book issues. Members discussed the rise in popularity of E-Readers and asked if the demand and what libraries are being used for could be considered including figures on E-Books.

Members observed through the Library Services Report Card that whilst traditional book issue numbers had decreased, visitor numbers for other activities had increased. They noted the fall in performance of reservations supplied as well as a reduction in the number of

available computer hours in use although officers explained that this was in relation to static computers whereas the rates of 'BYOD' (Bring your Own Device) had increased.

Members were pleased to note that young volunteers had been recruited throughout the summer to assist with various activities and Members praised the sterling work performed by the volunteers. Members were also pleased to note how the 'Every Child a Member' scheme continued to progress with the aim of signing every Year 4 child up as a member of their local library.

Members noted the lack of sickness absence data in the report card as well as some other key corporate measures, which they would expect to see included such as financial information, levels of Employee Development Reviews conducted and staff satisfaction and engagement levels. Officers noted this and committed to including the information in the next report card that is presented to the Committee.

Members inquired into the process for donation of books and were informed that the post of Cataloguer had been deleted and there is a policy on library donations; Members noted that for example there is a requirement that academic books are current but that local history books are always well received.

Members asked about Welsh books and if Neath Port Talbot coordinate with any other Local Authorities. Officers informed the Committee that there is an agreement with Camarthenshire Council for Welsh books for learners and children and also there is an agreement across twelve Local Authorities to share and exchange books in the Welsh language.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

4. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16.**

The Committee raised the topics of Tourism Strategy and Town Centre Regeneration which they would like added to the existing Forward Work Programme.

The Committee then noted and agreed the Forward Work Programme.

5. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

4.1 Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report 2014-15

The Committee received the Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report 2014-15 as contained within the circulated report.

Members praised the hours given to the service by volunteers and were pleased to learn heard that two volunteers are ex - employees of the Council.

Members drew attention to the financial information included in the report and in particular what the costs to the Authority would be to fully comply with the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS). Officers explained the standards Neath Port Talbot fails on are always resource related and that only one Local Authority in Wales fully achieves all standards currently.

Members noted that performance against the WPLS is expected to decline next year, set against the budget reductions to the library service, in particular resources relating to stock and staffing.

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

4.2 Quarter 2 Performance Management Data 2015-16- Education

The Committee received the Quarter 2 Performance Management Data for 2015-16 for Education as contained within the circulated report.

Members forwarded a question that had been raised in a recent Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee relating to a drop in performance in relation to LCS/002 (b) the number of visits to local authority sport and leisure centres during the year per 1,000 population where the visitor will be participating in physical activity; members queried the drop in performance and asked what was being put in place in an attempt to improve. Officers explained that the Afan Valley Sports Centre had been shut for refurbishment for 6 months. In addition all of the Council's playing fields are now being leased to individual

sports clubs and there has been a demise in local football and rugby teams. Members heard how there is a drive to switch young people on to sport and Neath Port Talbot's Physical Activity and Sports Service (PASS) has a high participation rate.

Members agreed that the new Aberafan Sports and Leisure Complex will be a great opportunity to promote health and fitness in the area and to encourage new visitors to the facility. Members also noted that the new Ysgol Newydd Bae Baglan will have sports facilities such as all-weather pitches which will be open to the public.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

4.3 Quarter 2 Performance Management Data 2015-16- Environment

The Committee received the Quarter 2 Performance Management Data for 2015-16 for Environment as contained within the circulated report.

Members queried the drop in performance in relation to L(ED) 2 number of new business start-up enquiries assisted through business services. Officers explained that performance of this indicator had been affected by changes in the way Job Centre Plus refer clients to the Council's Enterprise Club and new ways of working together are being discussed with additional sources for referrals being developed.

Members raised concern in relation to new Welsh Government regulations that could see the Council having its planning powers taken over by Welsh Government if certain guidelines were not met. Members agreed the importance of ensuring the Planning section is fully staffed to ensure income generation is maximised and the Committee agreed it was important for them to continue to monitor the performance of the service to ensure targets for the future are met and all income generation streams are maximised.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

4.4 Neath Food and Drink Festival

The Committee received an update on the Neath Food and Drink Festival 2015 as contained within the circulated report.

Members were pleased to note the success of the event and would be pleased to explore any further opportunities in expanding the event.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

4.5 Neath Business Improvement District- Ballot Result

The Committee received the result of the Neath Business Improvement District (BID) Ballot as contained within the circulated report. Members were pleased to note that the vote, which closed on 19th November 2015, resulted in 64% of the businesses who voted, supporting the BID proposal.

Members noted that an independent, not for profit organisation known as Neath Inspired Ltd will go live on 1st April 2016 who will meet to oversee specific projects in the programme.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

6. ACCESS TO MEETINGS

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 Paragraphs 12 and 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Above Act.

7. PRE-SCRUTINY

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

6.1 Catering Service Contract for Croeserw Community Enterprise Centre.

The Committee received details of the award of a catering service contract for Croeserw Community Enterprise Centre as contained within the circulated report.

Members asked the facility was fully accessible for disabled people and discussed the facilities available such as large formatted menus and hearing loops.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by Cabinet Board.

6.2 Celtic Leisure-Half Year Performance Review

The Committee received the update on performance of Celtic Leisure in the first half year of the financial year as contained within the circulated report.

Members noted the loss in the half year was £47,000 above their anticipated budget position.

Members noted that public swimming is currently down on target which is line with national trends but the achievement in the Swimming Academy offsets this with income being 3% ahead of budget predictions. Members raised concern at the waiting lists which are now in place for the Swimming Academy and were informed that new measures are being introduced over the next couple of months to increase the number of classes available, reduce waiting lists and improve standards.

Members noted that outdoor facilities are currently not achieving budget predictions but that this usage and income stream is seasonal and it is anticipated that by year end the anticipated budget position would be realised.

Officers informed the Committee that through negotiations Celtic Community Leisure have confirmed that there will be no facility closures over the next two financial years and all budget savings will be realised by reductions in costs and increased levels of income.

Members noted that income through the Box Office in the Gwyn Hall is below target and discussed programming options and the culture of delivery. Members agreed that a commercial focus is required going forward building on the successes of

initiatives such as the live streaming of West End performances.

Members raised concern at the state of repair of Neath Leisure Centre and were informed that this will continue to be monitored with the introduction of spot checks conducted via a 'mystery shopper' approach. Members felt it was important that the customer is valued and they have positive experiences in Neath Port Talbot facilities.

Members asked for clarification in relation to the performance data that is presented to them and whether the data is inclusive of Celtic Community Leisure data. Officers committed to bringing back a report to a future meeting of this Committee providing a detailed breakdown of the performance information.

Members queried the more detailed performance monitoring of Celtic Leisure and officers explained that they are held to account on a monthly basis. Members agreed that they would like to see more frequent performance reporting through this Committee and agreed that quarterly performance reports on the Celtic Leisure contract be scheduled into the Forward Work Programme for this Committee.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

6.3 Afan Forest Park Visitor Centre

The Committee received the position on the procurement tender for an operator to provide a catering provision at Afan Forest Park Visitor Centre as contained within the circulated report.

Members noted that the preferred tenderers will continue to be evaluated to ensure full compliance with the Council's requirements and noted the planned timetable in place to award the contract.

Members queried the pricing structure raising concern about passing an increased pricing structure onto visitors. Officers stated that all businesses require a balanced and considered pricing structure and that it is considered that the prospective operators will have a viable and robust business model.

Members agreed that marketing the facility going forward is important and that a robust social media and web presence will be required.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by Cabinet Board.

CHAIRPERSON

REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

REPORT CARD

April - December 2015 (cumulative) 2015-2016

Brief description of the service

The Regeneration and Economic Development team delivers a wide range of services such as leading on the delivery of major construction, development and regeneration projects and public realm enhancements; supporting the local economy through activities which assist in the development and growth of sustainable new and existing businesses and promoting and maintaining a healthy and inclusive labour market through the delivery of projects such as Workways Plus.

Regeneration: There are currently 6 people working within this part of the team delivering services that help to secure funding from external sources such as Convergence, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Regeneration Investment Fund for Wales (RIFW), Heritage Lottery, Vibrant & Viable Places and Regional Property Development Fund to assist in the delivery and preparation of industrial, commercial and retail development schemes and public realm improvements. They also have the lead role in taking forward the housing-led Vibrant & Viable Places programme in Port Talbot; the regeneration of Aberavon Seafront; the re-development of Neath Town Centre as well as various environmental and heritage improvement schemes throughout the County Borough.

Economic Development: This part of the team has 7.5 FTE people involved in delivering business support services to meet the needs of individual local businesses. The service involves administering the Council's loan and grant schemes, delivering specialist business advice in areas such as business planning, website development, marketing and tendering and providing a comprehensive signposting facility to other business support organisations such as Business Wales. Work is also undertaken in partnership with other Councils, national and local organisations, community bodies and businesses within the region on delivering business support programmes as part of the Swansea Bay City Region.

Employment Support: Following the success of the Workways project, a new application has been developed and submitted to WEFO for European Social Fund (ESF) funding to deliver a further employment support project. Approval of funding for the new Workways Plus project is imminent, and once given the ahead, the new project will employ 15 FTE staff supporting people across the region to overcome barriers which prevent them from finding work.

REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

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April - December 2015 (cumulative) 2015-2016

Service Performance (April – December 2015)

During the first ten months of 2015/16, the team have made excellent progress in delivering their key actions:

- Secured £10.1m from the Welsh Government's Vibrant & Viable Places regeneration programme to deliver a £30m regeneration programme in Port Talbot in partnership with the public, private and third sector. Projects include Green Park Redevelopment; Housing Renewal works; Former Fire Station Employability Centre; Glanafan School; Port Talbot Police Station; Plaza Cultural Centre and the Integrated Transport Hub.
- Developed pedestrian links and brown field land at Harbourside to bring forward further commercial development opportunities helping maintain and attract investment into the local economy.
- Attracted high quality business investment to purpose built accommodation such as the Research and Development Village in Port Talbot Harbourside and Baglan Bay Innovation Centre.
- Delivered the first phase of Neath Town Centre redevelopment including a new 600 space multi-storey car park and 23,000 square foot of new retail space.
- Established a Business Improvement District for Neath to make improvements in the trading environment of Neath Town Centre.
- Secured funding for Neath Food and Drink Festival helping to attract visitors to Neath Town Centre as well as showcase local food and drink producers.
- Secured Rural Development Plan funding to employ a Business Development Officer to work with tourism businesses within rural communities to enhance investment in tourism infrastructure and help bring forward business development projects.

REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

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April - December 2015 (cumulative) 2015-2016

- Maximised community benefit clauses in key construction contracts and encouraged supply chain development by introducing local businesses to main contractors on key regeneration projects and helping them tender more effectively.

To date this year, the team have completed 5 projects helping 75 local residents get back into work, more than 270 apprenticeships; traineeships & work experience opportunities and over 90 local businesses securing new contracts.

- Developed the business plan for Workways+ to apply for approx. £7.5m of funding to support people into work across the region. Staff structures and offices are in place and final approval for the project is imminent.

Page Supported economic growth across the County Borough by providing support to help local businesses create new employment opportunities and safeguard existing jobs.

To date this year, helped 73 local businesses create nearly 160 new employment opportunities and safeguard a further 125 jobs. When compared to the same period for 2014/15, there is a slight increase and the team are on track to achieve the Corporate Improvement Plan target.

- Promoted self-employment to over 80 local people through Enterprise Clubs and the facilities available at Sandfields Business Centre.
- Help new businesses start-up through the Council's Innov8 programme of support.

To date this year, helped 27 new businesses start-up which is slightly down on the same period in 2014/15, but is progressing well to achieving the Corporate Improvement Plan target.

- Dealt with over 450 business requests for advice, information or financial support from existing companies as well as over 180 enquiries for business start-up information and support. Both are slightly down on the same period in 2014/15, but it is

REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

REPORT CARD

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anticipated that Corporate Improvement Plan targets will be achieved.

Key Priorities for 2015/16

- Secure both public and private sector external funding to bring forward industrial, commercial, retail and housing-led regeneration programmes to create a business environment that attracts investment opportunities.
- Support economic growth by providing support to help local businesses create new employment opportunities, safeguard existing jobs and attract new high quality business investment.
- Secure funding to support the development and investment in tourism infrastructure and business development projects.
- Promote self-employment to local people and the facilities available at Sandfields Business Centre.
- Maximise community benefit clauses to encourage local employment, training and work experience opportunities.
- Encourage the development of supply chains by working with local businesses to help them tender more effectively.
- Work with partners to deliver the Workways+ project supporting people into work across the region.

Financial

- FFP savings being delivered - 1 member of staff has recently retired via the Council's ER/VR policy. Additional income is being raised via rent and service charge at Sandfields Business Centre.
- As at end of December 2016, the service is operating within budget. However, regeneration has been successful in securing a significant amount of external funding which has enabled the Council to take forward key regenerations projects.

Employee/Staffing

REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

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April - December 2015 (cumulative) 2015-2016

- 169 days sick from 01/04/2015 – 31/12/2015 which is an average of 10.2 days per employee. This is just above the council average of 9.4 days but was due to 3 members undergoing routine operations.
- Staff Morale - staff survey developed by Corporate Strategy to be completed in 2016. In the present climate of uncertainty, pay cuts, pay freezes, ER/VR, LA re-organisation and the possibility of job losses, this will be a useful exercise to help staff morale and general feeling amongst staff.
- Staff PDR's to be completed by end of March 2016.
- Staff Training is an on-going process and the next round of PDR's will highlight any training needs going forward.
- To date, there have been no unplanned employee departures but two secondment opportunities have been agreed:
 - Assistant Business Development Officer has taken up the post of Senior Communications Officer within the Corporate Strategy & Democratic Services department on a 12 month contract.
 - Neath Town Centre Manager taken up the post of Marketing Officer for Swansea Bay City Region on an 18 month contract.
- Recruitment of 15 posts for the new Workways+ project completed - start dates pending European funding approval.

Customers

The Regeneration & Economic Development service has received one complaint this year from an applicant that was not awarded business start-up funding. Feedback was provided to the individual and there has been no further correspondence.

On a more positive note, the service receives many compliments from local businesses on their support and assistance provided by the team.

A Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire has also been developed to capture feedback on business support service and this will be used to improve the loan and grant application process going forward.

REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

REPORT CARD

April - December 2015 (cumulative) 2015-2016

**Economic and Community Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Forward Work Programme**

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item
23 rd October 2015	Development Control Report Card
	Planning Policy Report Card
	Building Control Report Card
	European and External Funding Report Card
	Architectural Services Report card
	Pre-Scrutiny – Cabinet Board Items
3 rd November 2015	Stand Alone Budget Scrutiny
4 th December 2015	Quarterly Performance Reporting

	Pre-Scrutiny – Cabinet Board Items
29 th January 2016	Regeneration and Economic Development Report Card
	Pre-Scrutiny – Cabinet Board Items
11 th March 2016	Asset Management, Estates and Facilities Report card
	Pre-scrutiny - Cabinet Board Items
	Quarterly Performance Reporting
22 nd April 2016	Pre-scrutiny - Cabinet Board Items