

**ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY REGENERATION SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)

Members Present: **15 July 2016**

Chairperson: **Councillor A.Llewelyn**

Councillors: M.Crowley, M.Jones, Ms.C.Morgans and S.Rahaman

Officers In Attendance S.Brennan, S. Curran, Ms.L.Willis, C.Morris, W.John, P.Walker, O.Gavigan, N.Thomas and L.Beynon

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors S. Miller and A.J.Taylor

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

The following Member made a declaration of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

Cllr. A. Llewellyn: Private Joint Report of the Head of Property and Regeneration and the Head of Transformation re: Phase 2 Works at YGG Ystalyfera as he is a Governor and a parent at the school.

2. MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 3RD JUNE 2016.

Members asked for an update in relation to item 5.1 on lease conditions in relation to Bowls Pavilions. Officers explained that there is a standard clause in all leases to not permit the sale of alcohol but each application is assessed on a case by case basis.

The Committee noted the minutes.

3. SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17.

The Committee received the Forward Work Programme for 16/17 and were reminded that the scoping meeting for the Tourism Inquiry is due to take place. The Committee were informed that a Special meeting of the Committee will take place on October 21st to consider the Budget.

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

4. NPT WORKS REPORT CARD

The Committee received the NPT Works Report Card 2015-16 as detailed within the circulated report.

Officers explained that NPT Works is a non-statutory service that was created in 2009 as a specialist unit delivering welfare- to- work programmes on behalf of the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) delivering The Work Programme in Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend County Boroughs. Participants are on the programme for 2 years and income to the service is by 'Payments by Results'.

Members noted that NPT Works deals with approximately 920 participants and the number of staff delivering the programme has reduced significantly.

The Committee observed that minimal instances of sickness absence in a small section does impact heavily on sickness performance figures but were pleased to note that levels of sickness absence were reducing slightly.

Members noted that 100% of staff had received performance appraisals during 15-16 and that the number of complaints received has reduced.

Members queried if the performance and number of participants dictates the staffing compliment. Officers explained that this programme is due to run till 31st March 2017 and the staff numbers have been predicted up until this point.

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

5. PRE-SCRUTINY

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

5.1 Quarterly Performance Management Data 2015-16- Quarter 4 (Education.)

Members received information in relation to the Quarter 4 Performance in Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning as contained within the circulated report.

The Committee noted the slight increase in the number of people using Public Libraries during the year which was attributed to the effort of the staff to attract audiences to the venues for activities and events.

The Committee further noted the decrease in the materials issued which could be attributed to a cut in the mobile library service by one vehicle and an amendment of the remaining mobile service from a two weekly to a three weekly schedule. Similarly there has been a decrease in reserved items supplied within 7 days which Members understood could be attributed to a 50% cut in the book-fund.

In relation to Sports and Leisure Centres there has been a decrease of visits to Local Authority centres and Members noted that this could be attributed to the transfer of two facilities to community groups. The opening of new Aberafan Leisure and Fitness Centre was discussed and Members looked forward to receiving performance data from Celtic Community Leisure in their next meeting; the Chair encouraged Members of the Committee to consider submitting questions and lines of inquiry in advance.

Members noted the significant increase in Stage 1 complaints compared to 14/15 which was mainly attributed to the 'Super Hero' day at Margam Park and noted the procedures that have been put in place to reduce the likelihood of a possible re-occurrence.

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

5.2 Quarterly Performance Management Data 2015-16- Quarter 4 (Environment.)

Members received information in relation to the Quarter 4 Performance in Environment as contained within the circulated report.

Officers explained that in light of the recent announcements of significant job losses at TATA and the continued uncertainties about the future of the site the Economic Development Team is working with Careers Wales, DWP and Welsh Government to help those facing redundancy and in providing support to the many local businesses involved in the supply chain.

The Committee acknowledged the dip in performance relating to major applications determined within 8 weeks which was attributed to the complexity of the types of applications being received. Members queried the pre-application stage and if the charges now allocated to this process were resulting in a lesser take up; Officers agreed this could be contributing to the more complex issues being faced at the application stage which could have been negated at the pre application stage.

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

5.3 Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan

The Committee received the Consultation Draft Planning Obligations, Affordable Housing and Baglan Energy Park Development Framework Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) as contained within the circulated report.

In relation to the Planning Obligations SPG, Members asked for further information in relation to the difference between s.106 agreements and community benefit funds. A separate note will be prepared to explain the difference.

Members queried how the obligations in relation to the Welsh Language mitigation arrangements were monitored. Officers explained that the Council has a dedicated section 106 officer responsible for ensuring protocols are followed and contributions tracked. Members were also pleased to hear

about the ongoing work with Menter Iaith to monitor the effectiveness of the mitigation measures/schemes.

Members asked for further information in relation to the provision to deliver 1,200 affordable housing units over the plan period. Officers explained that the target of 1200 affordable units will be delivered through the planning system and not through Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) using Social Housing Grant (SHG). Officers also explained that the target will be monitored through the framework contained within the LDP. Members agreed the importance of monitoring policies annually to ensure plans remain on track.

Members noted that responses to the consultation SPG's would be brought back to this Committee.

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

5.4 European Structural Funds

Members received an update on the 2-14-2020 European Structural Funds programme as contained within the circulated report.

Members heard how the West Wales and the Valleys programme area comprising of 15 Local Authorities including Neath Port Talbot qualifies for the highest level of European Structural Funds support under the 'less developed area' programme for the period 2014-20.

Members asked for further information in relation to sustainable employment. Officers explained that the client is followed up 6 months later to see if they are still in employment as the aim is to promote long term and sustained employment; Members were pleased to note that zero hour contracts are not eligible for the programme.

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

5.5 European Structural Funds Update following EU Referendum Result

Members were notified of a variation to the agenda and that this report would now be taken in open session.

The Committee received an update on the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) and potential implications for the Council following the 23rd June 2016 European Referendum and the UK vote to leave the EU as contained within the circulated report.

Officers explained that Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty needs to be invoked which will give the UK up to two years to negotiate withdrawal and once this has occurred deadlines and the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) has advised that until this time, the situation is 'Business as Usual' and will honour all existing funding commitments and continue to approve projects.

The Committee observed the potential implications for Neath Port Talbot schemes as contained within the circulated report. Members agreed that there should be a focus on those projects that had been approved and requesting extra funding from any unallocated spend as well as preparing robust exit strategies for existing projects.

Members expressed their gratitude to the existing European Team for their efforts and queried if the team is properly resourced to undertake the work that will be required in the coming months which will include maximising the amount of remaining funding; preparing 'box ready' project proposals for submission and ensuring robust exit strategies for existing projects.

Following discussion, the Committee recommended to the Cabinet Board that:

'The Committee feels that maximising the remaining available European Funding is a priority and are concerned that there are insufficient resources within the existing team structure. The Committee requests that the Cabinet Board considers these unique circumstances and explores all options available while considering proposals to maximise the resources within the team.'

The Committee requested that a letter be drafted to the UK and Welsh Government requiring the commitment to replace the loss of EU funding in Wales.

Following scrutiny, and with the above recommendation it was agreed that the report be noted.

5.6 Property and Regeneration Business Plan 2016-17

The Committee received the operational business plan for 2016-17 for Property and Regeneration for 2016-17 as contained within the circulated report.

Members heard detail about the unit's performance against last year's action plan and targets, the challenges and opportunities faced in the short and medium term and the actions and targets for the 12 months from April 2016 to March 2017.

Members were pleased to note that the days lost due to sickness absence was 6.1% for 15/16 which is below the Council average.

It was noted that 3 employees had left the team in the last year and exit interviews undertaken highlighted that this was due to job insecurity and salary; Officers explained that it is possible that more staff will seek alternative employment and explained the difficulty in recruiting suitable replacement staff on the salaries available.

Officers verbally updated the Committee on mandatory corporate measures to read:

CM03 % of revenue expenditure within budget was 99.13% for 14/15 and 98.88% for 15/16.

CM07 % of staff performance appraisals to be completed during 2016/17; Members were informed that this is a relatively new process and will be rolled out over the coming year.

The Committee praised the team for the completed actions and the priorities for the upcoming year.

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

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 paragraph 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

7.1 Digital Advertising Boards

The Committee received information in relation to the proposal to erect large outdoor digital advertising screens in Neath Town Centre and at the new Port Talbot Transport Hub as contained within the circulated report.

Members discussed the possibility of usage for the screens including advertising Council services and performance and broadcasting live events.

Following scrutiny, the Committee were supportive of the proposal to be considered at Cabinet Board.

CHAIRPERSON