

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

25th September, 2014

Chairman: **Councillor A.Jenkins**

Councillors: Mrs P.Bebell, A.Carter, Ms.C.Clement-Williams, M.Harvey, Mrs.L.H.James, A.Llewelyn, A.R.Lockyer, Mrs.K.Pearson, Mrs.S.M.Penry, L.M.Purcell, I.D.Williams and Mrs.A.Wingrave

Officers In Attendance S.Phillips, H.Jenkins, A.Evans, G.Nutt, D.Michael, Mrs.K.Jones and Mrs.A.Manchipp

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors A.H.Thomas, M.L.James, P.A.Rees, J.Rogers, A.J.Taylor and A.N.Woolcock

Invited Members: Councillors S.Jones, R.Thomas and H.G.Rawlings

1. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Members made declarations of interest at the commencement of the meeting in relation to their roles as school governors, as specified below:-

Councillor Mrs.P.Bebell Coedffranc and Crymlyn Primary Schools
(Dispensation to both speak and vote)

Councillor A.Carter Cefn Saeson and Crynallt Primary Schools
(Dispensation to both speak and vote)

Councillor Mrs.C.Clement – Williams Baglan Primary School (Dispensation to both speak and vote)

Councillor M.Harvey Neath Abbey Infants School (Dispensation to both speak and vote)

Councillor Mrs.L.H.James	Awel Y Mor Primary and St Therese's Primary Schools (Dispensation to both speak and vote)
Councillor M.L.James	Chairman of Governors at Llangiwg and Governor at Rhydyfro Primary Schools (Dispensation to both speak and vote)
Councillor A.Jenkins	Cefn Saeson Comprehensive and Gnoll Primary Schools (Dispensation to both speak and vote)
Councillor A.Llewelyn	YGG Y Wern and Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera (Dispensation to both speak and vote)
Councillor A.Lockyer	YGG Castell-nedd (Dispensation to both speak and vote)
Councillor Mrs.K.Pearson	Creunant Primary and Llangatwg Community School (Dispensation to both speak and vote)
Councillor Mrs.S.M.Penry	Cwrt Sart and Melin Junior Schools (Dispensation to both speak and vote)
Councillor L.Purcell	Cwmtawe Community School and Rhydyfro Primary Schools (Dispensation to both speak and vote)
Councillor P.A.Rees	Cefn Saeson Comprehensive and Crynallt Primary Schools (Dispensation to both speak and vote)
Councillor J.Rogers	Chairman of Governors at Eastern and Groes Primary Schools (Dispensation to both speak and vote)
Councillor A.J.Taylor	Eastern School (Dispensation to both speak and vote)
Councillor I.D.Williams	Cwmafan Infants and Junior Schools (Dispensation to both speak and vote)
Councillor Mrs.A.Wingrave	Catwg and Coedffranc Primary Schools (Dispensation to both speak and vote)

Councillor A.N.Woolcock Chairman of Govenors at Tai'rgwaith
Primary School (Dispensation to both speak
and vote)

2. PRE SCRUTINY

The Committee scrutinised the following matter:-

Cabinet Proposal:

(i) Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Budget Proposals

Committee received the comprehensive report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the budget proposals for 2015/16, which were subject to extensive consultation with staff, stakeholders and Trade Unions, as outlined in the circulated report.

During scrutiny Members raised the following issues:-

In relation to the proposals for community facilities, Members requested more detail of the public consultation that would be undertaken. Members were advised that community councils, Celtic Leisure and the wider public would be the main focus of the consultation and that alternative service provision would be explored where possible. Consultation would commence immediately with details of the usage of facilities being included in the materials that would support the consultation process.

Members asked for clarification on the period of the consultation process. Officers explained that legal requirements to consult can vary from issue to issue. Generally, the maximum period of time would be 3 months, however, shorter periods of time might be necessary for specific proposals to enable proposals to emerge within the overall budget timetable.

Concern was expressed that businesses such as Celtic Leisure, etc. were undergoing commercial pressures at the time the Council was seeking to reduce subsidies.

Members highlighted that some community facilities were already being provided by community councils, in the Neath and Pontardawe areas, but that this was not the case in the Port Talbot area, where there were no community councils in place. The proposals being

tabled might therefore enable this perceived inequality to be addressed.

Members asked whether the Authority would be flexible around the date when those bodies prepared to take over some of the Authority's facilities/provisions could start and were advised that the Authority would have limited flexibility due to time constraints imposed by the budget position.

Details were requested on the City and County of Swansea's position in relation to the Music Service and in particular the joint agreement between the two Authorities. Members were advised that further Officer discussions would be held to establish the overall impact on the Music Service.

The cumulative impact upon schools was discussed, and Members requested assurances that no school would become bankrupt as a result of the additional costs that would fall to schools if the proposals presented were agreed. The Director responded that some of the Authority's schools were at present working in a deficit position but action plans were in place to address that. Schools would be advised of the proposals as soon as possible so that they had opportunity to comment within the consultation process.

With the permission of the Chairman, the Local Members for the Afan Valley raised concerns that, whilst the area had a high level of deprivation there appeared to be a high level of budget cuts particularly in that area. The proposed closing of the Cymmer pool had health implications. Welfare Reform had also adversely affected the area. The communities had worked together following the budgetary cuts in 2014/15 to keep the local library open, etc. The Director advised that it was hoped that alternative service delivery options could be identified during the consultation process to sustain services in a different way.

In response to questions from Members about the parity of cuts across the county borough, the Chief Executive advised Members that the current pattern of services was unequal but that the impact of proposed cuts would be thoroughly assessed.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by Cabinet that the proposed savings be subject to public consultation.

CHAIRMAN

