

POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Members Present:

14 June 2017

Chairperson: Councillor A.N.Woolcock

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Councillors: M.Crowley, J.D.Morgan, S.E.Freeguard,
M.Harvey, S.K.Hunt, H.N.James, L.Jones,
A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, L.M.Purcell, S.M.Penry
and A.L.Thomas

Officers In Attendance S.John, D.Rees, D.Michael, Mrs.K.Jones,
Mrs.S.Rees and Ms.A.Hutchings

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors D.Jones, and A.J.Taylor

Observers Councillor C.Galsworthy

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

The following Members made declarations of interest at the commencement of the meeting:-

Councillor S.K.Hunt Report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services re Community Councils Minor Projects Scheme Application– as he is the Councillor for Seven Sisters.

Councillor S.Rahaman Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services re Urgency Action 0368 Non Domestic Rates – High Street Rates Reliefe Scheme – As he is employed by a Local Business Who Pays Business Rates.

2. **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 8TH MARCH 2017.**

The minutes were noted by the Committee.

3. **TO RECEIVE THE SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18.**

The work programme was noted by the Committee.

4. **SICKNESS ABSENCE MONITORING REPORT**

Members received an update on the Sickness absence Monitoring report informing them of the management of sickness absence across the Council.

Members queried how the authority identifies outside of workplace related stress and what is the authority doing to help assist the staff with this. Officers confirmed that when the absence is reported by staff the information is collated. The Council's primary responsibility is to ensure measures are in place to deal with work related stress. Where issues outside of the workplace are causing stress, they can be referred to the NHS with wellbeing through work programme, Counselling support is available and recently a trial of Mindfulness Sessions took place. Stressors outside of the workplace are obviously outside of the Council's control, but where possible and reasonable, managers can support employees with, for example, changes to their working patterns to enable more flexibility in their working day and to enable them to juggle conflicting priorities.

Members requested that the Director of Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning report to the Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee in relation to Teacher absence.

Members asked if the Trade Unions were involved during the development stages of the Early Intervention and Effective Communication strategy. Officers highlighted that they were involved and that a trade union representative had been seconded to the HR team for a six month period to enable the joint development of the strategy. There continues to be good communication between the trade unions and the Authority.

Members commended the Council for signing up to the Dying to Work Scheme.

Members queried what support was available to staff who have been bereaved. Officers confirmed counselling support is available and that guidance has been developed to support managers.

5. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

5.1 Welsh language Standards

Members received an update on the Welsh language Commissioner's response to the Council's submission, in February 2017, in relation to its challenge to a number of standards.

It was noted that as a result of an ongoing dialogue with the Commissioners representatives a number of the issues identified in the Council's challenge to several standards had now been resolved. However, Members were asked to seek authorisation to submit a response as a consequence of the correspondence from the Welsh Language Commissioner, in regards to the 29 standards that continue to be challenged as detailed in Appendix 2 to the circulated report.

Members queried whether it would be more cost effective to create a translating post to translate all Minutes and Agendas in regards to standard 41 rather than using an external translating unit. Officers highlighted that it would not be feasible to have one post that would translate all agendas and minutes as there would not be enough capacity.

Members highlighted to officers that Standard 62 which requests that any new street signs which conveys the same information in Welsh and in English, that the Welsh language text must be positioned so that it is likely to read first could cause road accidents in future.

Members asked officers that Standard 41 that requests that agendas, minutes and other papers that are available to the

public which relate to management board of Cabinet meetings, be where the original source was through the medium of Welsh should be treated as the official record for legal or other purposes.

Members requested that the next monitoring report to come to a future meeting include the evaluation of the impact of adhering to the standards in relation to cost and impacts.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that Cabinet Board be asked to consider the following recommendations:

- a) Standard 41- that where the original source was through the medium of Welsh this should be treated as the official record for legal or other purposes.
- b) Standard 61 – that Officer's take advice from the Environment Directorate regarding translation of Street Signs
- c) The next monitoring report include the evaluation of the impact of adhering to the standards in relation to cost and other impacts.

5.3 Replacement of the Council's Telephony System with Unified Communications Solution

Members received information and a presentation on a replacement Telephony System.

Members asked what the impact on cost would be for the authority. Officers confirmed that the system could have a potential impact cost of £200k-£250k, which includes a budget for training.

Members asked Officers if the iPad that they currently use could have more functionality on it that could replace the laptops that they currently utilise. Officers informed members that an iPad's functionality is not used to replace a laptop, it is to be used as a portable device that allows Members to access their emails and Council Business while on the go. However, Officers mentioned that Members would be transferred on to a different device in the future that would replace an iPad and Laptop and have both functionalities in one device.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the 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 private matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

7.1. Urgency Action No.0368 – Non Domestic Rates High Street Rates Relief Scheme

Officers confirmed after a query from Members that the Council follows the Welsh Government Scheme.

7.2 Hardship Relief – T.B.B

Members queried whether there was any conflict between the hardship relief criteria and the Regeneration programme. Officers confirmed that there was no conflict and officers would relook at the Hardship relief criteria.

CHAIRPERSON