

**REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)

Members Present:

21 July 2017

Chairperson: Councillor S.K.Hunt

Vice Chairperson: Councillor

Councillors: C.J.Jones, S.Jones, D.Keogh, D.M.Peters,
S.Pursey, S.Rahaman, A.J.Richards and
R.L.Taylor

**Officers In
Attendance** A. Collins and N.Evans

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors D.W.Davies and A.Wingrave

Observers Linda Whitaker -

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

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

Cllr. S Pursey the report of the Head of Property and Regeneration – Vibrant and Viable Places Progress Report as he sits on the Plaza group.

Cllr. S. K. Hunt The report of the Head of Legal Services – Public Footpath – Community of Seven Sisters as he is the applicant.

2. **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 23RD JUNE 2017.**

The Committee noted the minutes.

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

The Committee noted the work programme.

4. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

4.1 NPT Homes Progress Report – to May 2017

Members considered progress report that gave an overview of the progress made by NPT Homes in respect of the promises made to tenants in the Council's Offer Document.

Members asked for clarity on the issue of anti social behaviour and the findings of the internal audit. Officers stated that a significant amount of work had been undertaken on anti social behaviour and this had been done in conjunction with the tenants. It was further clarified that lawyers are used where appropriate (e.g. for injunctions with the power of arrest). Members noted that the latest report stated that there has been an improvement and monitoring is undertaken by the board.

Members asked whether there was a risk associated with welfare reform. It was noted that there was a risk but not great enough to affect the sustainability of the organisation. The risks were due to the Universal Credit now being paid directly to individuals as opposed directly to NPT Homes however, NPT Homes have undertaken a great deal of work educating tenants on the changes. It was further clarified that should a tenant hit 8 weeks of arrears then the Department of Work and Pensions will step in and pay the rent (by reducing the residual benefit payable to the tenant) and then make alternative arrangements paying the future rent direct to the landlord.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

4.2 NPT Homes Adoption of Community Housing Cymru's Model Rules for Wales

Members considered a report that gave information on NPT Homes' intention to adopt the CHC's Model Rules for Wales. Officers asked Members to note that NPT Homes were adopting this in line with Welsh Government guidance.

Members raised concern in relation to the make up of the board and rules in relation to quorum. Officers stated that to improve the functionality of the Board they were now looking at skills of those applying for a position. Members also queried why the number of tenant members would be reduced from 4 to 3 and it was confirmed that this would not be an issue because there had been a vacancy for over a year which the NPT homes had not been able to fill.

Officers advised that the new Members of the Board had a wide range of skills and included former Chief Executives of different organisations.

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

4.3 Vibrant and Viable Places Progress Report

Members considered a report on the successful delivery of the Vibrant and Viable Places Regeneration Programme for Port Talbot.

Members asked whether the amount of areas used for housing was the best use of space. Officers advised that due to the guidelines for receiving funding that generally housing was the preferred option and with a shortage in the County Borough this was welcomed. It was further noted that in the instance of Aberafan House it was not economically viable to continue the building as an office block, and that the former Police Station and Glanafan School were now deemed to be surplus to their original uses.

Members asked for clarity in relation land at Burrows Yard that had been deemed contaminated. Officers stated that investigations were ongoing to identify remedial works at a lower cost. As it currently stands it is a possibility that the costs of remediation might make the site too expensive to use by Coastal Housing and if the site is not used for housing then Welsh Government would need to be consulted should an alternative use be identified.

Members asked whether there will be any future funding for such schemes and officers stated that there had been talk of a Vibrant and Viable Places 2 programme but as yet no firm details had been confirmed.

Members asked for further information in relation to the Homes above Shops initiative particularly in the Station Road area. Officers stated that this had not progressed because the works required would have potentially had a detrimental impact on the food businesses. Officers continued that the Council still owned the previous Eden Nightclub and it was the intention to seek to still convert the space above to homes.

Members raised their concern on whether the proposed retail units at the Police Station would be economically viable unlike Custom House. Officers stated that with the new transport hub in development the retail units will have sufficient customers to be viable.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

CHAIRPERSON