

REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)

Members Present: **20 April 2018**

Chairperson: Councillor S.K.Hunt

Vice Chairperson: Councillor L.Jones

Councillors: J.Evans, D.Cawsey, C.J.Jones, S.Rahaman,
R.W.Wood and H.Jones

**Officers In
Attendance** S.Ball and J.Davies

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

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

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

Cllr. L. Jones – Report of the Head of Planning and Public Protection re Environmental Health and Trading Standards Changes to Officer Delegation Arrangements, as she has family members that are employed in the Environmental Health and Trading Standards section.

2. **MINUTES OF THE REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 9TH MARCH 2018.**

The Committee noted the Minutes.

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

Members were informed of a workshop that had been arranged on the 10th May for the Committee to discuss items for inclusion on the scrutiny forward work programme for the civic year 2018/19.

Members were also informed of a training session for the Committee on the 15th May with Ian Botterill.

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

4. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

4.1 Regeneration and Sustainable Development Performance Indicators for Quarter 3 of 2017/18

The Committee received information in relation to the Regeneration and Sustainable Development Performance Indicators for Quarter 3 of 2017/18 as contained within the circulated report.

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

4.2 Planning Pre-Application Advice: Amended Service Protocol and Proposed Increase to Charges 2018/19

The Committee received information in relation to the Planning Pre-Application Advice – Amended Service Protocol and Proposed Increase to Charges 2018/19 as contained within the circulated report.

Members queried how the increased fees and charges for non-statutory pre-application planning advice compared with the rates charged by other local authorities. Officers reported that the increase to the charges were in line with most local authorities. Officers stated that the fees for the statutory pre-application service were set by the Welsh Government, while non-statutory pre-application planning advice was set by the Council. Officers explained that the increased fees and charges for non-statutory pre-application planning advice would be monitored, and if the increased charges were deemed to adversely affect delivery of the pre-application service, then the charges would be reviewed.

Members questioned whether there were adequate resources within the Planning Department to deal with a potential increase in demand from developers entering into Planning Performance Agreements, and whether this would have a detrimental effect on other day to day duties and performance outcomes. Officers stated that while the number of posts within the Planning Department had reduced in recent years, the workload at present was manageable. In this context, if a Planning Performance Agreement was entered into for a large project which required the allocation of a dedicated officer, Officers were satisfied that the service could continue to operate for all service users with no adverse impact on day-to-day performance.

Members questioned whether consideration had been given to charging voluntary and not-for-profit organisations for the service, as some were capable of paying the fees, especially as the Council was under financial pressure. Officers explained that the majority of the existing policy had remained in its current form for years, and that applications involving voluntary and not-for-profit organisations had not generated much work or taken up much staff time to date, therefore an amendment to the policy had not been considered necessary. Officers stated that they would monitor the situation.

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

4.3 Environmental Health And Trading Standards Changes To Officer Delegation Arrangements

The Committee received information in relation to the Environmental Health And Trading Standards Changes to Officer Delegation Arrangements as contained within the circulated report.

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

CHAIRPERSON