

POLICY AND RESOURCES/ CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

5 July, 2017

Chairperson: Councillor A.N.Woolcock

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Councillors: C.Edwards, S.E.Freeguard, M.Harvey,
S.K.Hunt, L.Jones, A.Llewelyn, S.M.Penry,
L.M.Purcell and A.L.Thomas

Officers In Attendance S.Phillips, H.Jenkins, G.Nutt, A.Evans,
N. Jarman, Mrs.K.Jones, C.Furlow and
A.Manchipp

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors R.G.Jones, A.J.Taylor, C.Clement-
Williams, D.W.Davies, A.R.Lockyer,
P.D.Richards and A.Wingrave

Observer: Councillor C.Galsworthy

1. **PRE SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matter:

Cabinet Board Proposal

Draft Wellbeing Objectives

Prior to consideration of the report before Members today, the Leader of Council gave an introduction to the Draft Wellbeing Objectives and the proposal to issue the report for public consultation.

The Scrutiny Committee then received a comprehensive presentation by the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services on the

proposals contained within the circulated report. Members of the Scrutiny Committee then raised the following points:-

- Members asked that the report refer to all 3 town centres (ie Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe) throughout the text, in order to make the document more inclusive;
- In relation to the timescales for improvement, as the document covered the period 2017-2022, Members asked when the proposed improvements contained in the circulated report would be realised. In addition some of the data related to 2016-17 and Members asked what was the current position? In addition Members asked whether comparative data, including baseline information and benchmarking could be included.
- Members expressed their view that the Authority did not publicise its achievements;
- Concern was expressed that there was inconsistency throughout the document with timescales and percentages. The Chief Executive advised that, given the diversity of the areas concerned it may not be possible for a consistent approach in all areas.
- Members asked whether the consultation venues could include the Upper Afan and Amman Valleys? Members were asked to liaise with Officers to include any additional venues or events.
- With regard to the WESP, Members asked for the current position and were advised that the document was at present with the Welsh Government. In relation to the Welsh Language Strategy, this would be considered by Members shortly. Members also noted that in relation to the National Childcare commitment, this was being rolled out at present;
- Members questioned whether the objectives contained in the circulated report were achievable, what were the consequences should the Authority fail and where would any additional funding come from? In response the Chief Executive advised that where there were no legal implications should the Authority not achieve the objectives, but that there would be a need to prioritise its objectives.
- In relation to the number of surplus school places, Members noted that improvements had been achieved in Secondary schools however this had been more difficult in the case of Primary schools. Members also requested an update on the position regarding Band B proposals for the 21st Century Schools Improvements and noted that the proposals were with the Welsh Government.

- Members asked that the reference to the availability of quality childcare include the word “affordable”.
- Members asked for details of the number of children’s out of county placements, and were advised that the Authority had 65 out of county placements which were reviewed annually by the Education Psychology Team and also by Estyn. This represented a small percentage of the 20,000 children in the County Borough;
- In relation to the out of county placements, Members asked who maintained the statistics surrounding the child and were advised that the receiving Authority would maintain the child’s record, and that this Authority worked in partnership to achieve the best outcome for the child.
- Members felt that the support provided to carers was very important, and asked about the introduction of the Direct Payments Scheme. Members felt that this should not be the default position and that service users be given the choice. The Director of Social Services, Health and Housing advised that at present the take up of Direct Payments was in the region of 16% and that he aimed to increase this to 40%. In order to mitigate the effects of Delayed Transfers of Care on hospital admissions, Members were pleased to note the work of the Rapid Response Team;
- Members noted that the Authority had one of the lowest rates of crime and disorder, and partnership working was seen as one of the catalysts. The Chief Executive supported this and the good working relationships with, for example, the Police.
- Members noted that during the last administration, there had been a Task and Finish Group set up into Tourism. This report would hopefully be taken into consideration going forward;
- Members felt that it was necessary to improve internet connectivity especially in the valley areas, in order to support businesses and to sustain valley communities;
- In relation to recycling and composting, although this was working within the County Borough, Members felt that it should be made simpler as there had been difficulties particularly during its roll out. Some residents were still encountering problems.
- Members also commented on the public transport issues and the need to explore alternative methods such as community transport. This could be looked at through the Valley’s Initiative or the Authority could explore the possible setting up of its own bus company.

- Concern was expressed that the City Deal Initiative left out the valley areas and it was noted that it would be imperative that the Talk Valleys initiative liaise with the City Deal to work in partnership.

The Chief Executive advised Members that public engagement with the process was normally poor and Members suggested that social media be used to improve this.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services advised that the Draft Wellbeing Objectives needed to be issued for consultation as soon as possible and that any “tidying up” of the document would be carried during summer period prior to re submission to Members, for adoption.

Members noted that the Authority was held to account by the various bodies such as Estyn, CSSiW and the Wales Audit Office. The Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services also advised that additional duties and responsibilities had been vested in the Authority under Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and that mandatory training was being rolled out throughout the Authority.

In relation to the EIA attached to the report, this would be updated prior to the consideration of the report in the autumn.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the recommendations before cabinet, subject to the comments above.

CHAIRPERSON