

REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Members Present:

10 November 2017

Chairperson: Councillor S.K.Hunt

Vice Chairperson: Councillor L.Jones

Councillors: J.Evans, D.Cawsey, C.J.Jones, D.M.Peters,
S.Pursey, S.Rahaman, A.J.Richards,
R.L.Taylor, O.S.Davies and R.W.Wood

Officers In Attendance S.Brennan, G.Nutt, S.Phillips and S. Curran

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors A.Wingrave

1. **SWANSEA BAY CITY DEAL**

The Committee received an update to Members on the Swansea Bay City Deal as contained within the circulated report.

Members were made aware that there was an error on page 44 of the report in the second paragraph and that the date should read 12th October and not the 13th October as stated.

Members noted that several of the signatories to the original deal are no longer in post and asked if the Council would be in a position to withdraw from the Deal if they saw fit. It was explained that while the individuals may not be in post the signatures represent a corporate commitment but confirmed that there would be scope to withdraw if the proposed Joint Working Agreement was not clear, robust and fit for purpose.

Members agreed that it would be premature to withdraw at this stage; it was stated that while it is important to work jointly with partner agencies the Joint Working Agreement must work for the benefit of the Neath Port Talbot County Borough and that the final say of Neath Port Talbot projects will lay with Neath Port Talbot Members.

The Committee agreed that there remains a strong case for diversifying the economic base of the region and that issues of economic, social and environmental cohesion in the Valleys remain.

It was queried if the position of new Ministers in Welsh Government would have an impact on the process but it was explained that this was not thought to be the case.

The Committee heard how the set projects are not set in stone and there is scope for these to be altered if so required. Out of the proposed projects, 9 out of the 11 are self-contained within the Neath Port Talbot locality and Members noted that the Digital Infrastructure and Skills and Talent Initiative are regional projects so will by nature require different formulas for funding. Members agreed that the financial ownership of the Neath Port Talbot projects remain within the control of this Council. The Committee asked if any 'reserve' projects have been lined up if alternatives are required. Officers explained that while there are projects that could be pursued if required they require capacity and resource to work up into feasible project briefs which have not been done while the focus has been on the 'live' projects.

The Committee noted that while the City Deal is important symbolically in relation to regeneration of communities and community development regeneration of the County Borough is still continuing in other guises.

Members agreed there was a risk of isolation and missing opportunities if reluctance is shown and reiterated the importance of getting it right in terms of job opportunities, community cohesion and sustainability.

Members looked forward to being further involved in scrutinising ongoing information in relation to the City Deal and the Joint Working Agreement.

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

CHAIRPERSON