

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

24 October 2018

Chairperson: Councillor A.N.Woolcock

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

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

Officers In Attendance A.Jarrett, S.Phillips, N.Headon, C.Griffiths and J.Davies

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

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee noted the minutes.

2. PRE-SCRUTINY

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following Cabinet Board items:

Cabinet Board Proposals

2.1 Proposal for the Introduction of Non-refundable ceremony booking deposits for Neath Port Talbot Registration Services

The Committee received information in relation to the Proposal for introduction of non-refundable ceremony booking deposits for Neath Port Talbot Registration Services as contained within the circulated report.

Members queried how the fees in the report had been determined. Officers stated that they had researched the fees charged by other local authorities. Officers added that most local authorities charged around £60 and that the Authority was proposing to introduce a fee of £50.00, which was in line with other authorities' fees.

Members commented that there were other external circumstances such as loss of life which were not covered in the report. Officers stated that some discretion was built in to deal with individual circumstances.

Members queried whether there were plans to develop online services. Officers stated that this was currently being explored.

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

2.2 Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report 2017/2018

The Committee received information in relation to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report 2017/2018 as contained within the circulated report.

The Committee received the information as circulated in Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report 2017/2018.

Members referred to page 31 and queried whether there had been a decrease in the number of complaints received by the Ombudsman for Wales in relation to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. Officers confirmed that there had been a decrease in the number of complaints received by the Ombudsman for Wales for the Authority. Officers added that compared to other local authorities of similar size, the Authority were on a par.

Members commented that the public sometimes misunderstood the Ombudsman's role and would contact them directly in the first instance instead of attempting to resolve any issues with the local authority or town/community councils. Members added that there was a real burden on the Ombudsman with regard to the number of complaints that they typically received, and queried whether there was anything that the Council could do to

help, such as raise awareness of how matters should be reported and escalated.

Members referred to page 33 in the report and stated that the majority of complaints to the Ombudsman were not considered to be valid. Members added that there was a tendency for many not to engage in the authorities' internal resolution processes. Officers stated that the Authority used to have regular forums with clerks for community and town councils and that the Head of Legal Services was due to reconvene these forums again in order to discuss matters such as good practice and code of conduct.

Members commented that they were grateful for the constant training received from the Head of Legal Services in relation to code of conduct matters. Members added that there was a need for community and town councillors to receive training on code of conduct matters also.

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

3. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 18/19**

The Committee noted the work programme.