

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

23 May 2018

Chairperson: Councillor A.N.Woolcock

Councillors: M.Crowley, J.Evans, S.E.Freeguard, S.K.Hunt, S.Miller, J.D.Morgan, S.Paddison, S.M.Penry and J.Warman

Officers In Attendance A.Evans, H.Jenkins, G.Nutt, C.Furlow and C.Davies

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

1. CABINET SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

2. CABINET AGENDA FOR PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following Cabinet items:

Cabinet Proposals

2.1 Annual Governance Statement 2017/2018

Members received an update on the Council's Annual Governance Statement 2017/18 as contained within the circulated report.

Members highlighted that the Annual Governance Statement, refers to 'Openness' and Members asked whether that meant an 'open door policy' or transparency. Officer's highlighted that it referred to transparency, Members therefore asked for the

word openness be changed to transparency in the Annual Governance Statement.

Members stated that the Consultation Pages were not available via the front page of the Neath Port Talbot website and agreed that they should be easily accessed. Officers committed to looking into the issue.

Members noted that the improvement work identified following the development of the Annual Governance Statement is overseen by and progress reported to Audit Committee. Members asked when the Audit Committee would have sight of this and Officers highlighted that it would be included in the Statement of Accounts.

Members highlighted that within the Annual Governance Statement there is a section relating to the Welsh Language Standards and they asked whether the work and findings of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Task and Finish Group should be included in this section. Officers responded that the main focus has been the progress of work undertaken in 2016/17, however will be amended to include some wording around the Task and Finish Group

Members asked whether the Corporate Risk Policy had been scrutinised. Officers highlighted that it would be going to the Audit Committee in June 2018.

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

2.2 Revenue Outturn and Reserves Position Statement 2017/18

Members received information in relation to the Council's General Fund Revenue Outturn and Reserves position for the 2017/18 financial year as contained within the circulated report.

Members asked for information on the reserves Members stated that some areas require additional money to be spent however the budget isn't available but could existing reserves. It was highlighted that there is detailed information on where reserves are spent in Appendix 2 of the report.

Members asked for more detail to be included on point 3.4 of the circulated report in relation to school reserves. Officers explained that information is presented at Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee and it is within the remit of that committee to scrutinise school reserves in detail.

Members queried the overspend in the internal fostering service for two Looked After Children, and queried whether the amount was high. Officers highlighted that the cost is not just for the two children but includes other associated costs.

Members queried the underspend within the Adoption Service. Officers highlighted that there were less children placed in adoption which required less money.

Member's queried the overspend in 'Other Community Care – Direct Payments, Third Sector'. Officers highlighted that there has been an increase in people applying for direct payments that was not anticipated.

The Chair of Planning highlighted to the Committee that the Planning Department has not got an overspend, it is the amount of money that is owed through the collection of fees that is represented in the report

Members queried the overspend in Elderly Services – residential care – external provision and highlighted that it works out roughly £10,000 per each elderly person and asked whether this was an unexpected overspend in that period. Officers highlighted that there was an increase in people that went in to elderly residential care which accounts for the overspend

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

2.3 Capital Programme Outturn 2017-18

Members received information on the financial outturn position for the Capital Programme for 2017/18 as contained within the circulated report.

Members asked whether Officers feel confident that the opening of new schools will stay on budget. Officers highlighted

that 50% of the funding for new schools has come from Welsh Government, however the Authority has also had to match fund 50% but Officers reassured members that grant will be secure.

Members asked for an update on the progress of the former Metal Box site. Officers stated that work was ongoing with the solicitors, but that there were no updates to raise at this point. The Ward Members thanked Officers for their continual updates on the Metal Box.

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

CHAIRPERSON