

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

20 February 2019

Chairperson: Councillor A.N.Woolcock

Councillors: M.Harvey, N.T.Hunt, L.Jones, S.A.Knoyle,
S.Miller, J.D.Morgan, S.Paddison, S.M.Penry,
L.M.Purcell and A.L.Thomas

Officers In Attendance A.Evans, S.Phillips, K.Jones, G.Nutt, C.Griffiths,
H.Jones, N. Sparkes and C.Davies

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

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

Cllr. N.T.Hunt Re: Report of the Head of Financial
Services on the Non Domestic Rates
– High Street and Retail Rates Relief
Wales 2019-2020 as he owns a
business in Port Talbot.

2. PRE-SCRUTINY CABINET

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:-

Cabinet Proposals

2.1 Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring

Members received information on the Corporate Plan Key Performance Indicators for Quarter 3, 1st April, 2018 to the 31st December, 2018 for services within Cabinet's purview.

It was noted that an explanation was required on the decline of the performance indicator, relating to the number of working days lost to sickness absence per employee. Members queried whether this was due to pressures in the work place from staff, leaving on the Early Retirement/Voluntary Retirement (ER/VR) scheme. It was explained that even though there had been a decline in sickness absence, officers did not have any major concerns. It was also noted that Neath Port Talbot Council were ranked fifth in the All Wales 2017/18 data for the least working days lost to sickness. It was explained that sickness within the workforce was complex and the current budget constraints would increase added pressure on to the workforce.

Observation was raised in relation to whether data was recorded on staff that were sick but working from home. It was explained that this data wasn't collected as staff that were sick would be on sick leave.

It was queried from Members whether there were particular patterns of sickness within the workforce. Officers explained that Members receive regular reports detailing this information. However, the main cause of sick was stress related, which was commonly home related stress rather than work related stress. It was noted that there were procedures in place to support staff with stress related sickness.

Clarification was required on the 98.5% target relating to the collection of Business Rates performance indicator, as officers were uncertain and confirmed Members would be informed following the meeting.

Staff were congratulated on the increase of online transactions and it was asked what the target was for 2019/20. Officers confirmed that a delivery plan on the Digital Strategy would be brought back to committee detailing further information on additional services that would be put online.

Members queried the decrease in the performance indicators relating to Customer Services. Officers explained that the staff in Customer Services were the first point of contact, and when

the call was then transferred to the appropriate directorate it was then their responsibility to action that call. Officers asked that if there were any specific cases in which calls were not being actioned, to speak with the Assistant Chief Executive and Digital Officer to rectify any issues. It was also noted that a report would be brought back to Committee in relation to the One Stop Shop.

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

2.2 Risk Register Review 2018-19 as at 31 December 2018

Members were provided with an update on the Strategic Risks as at 31 December, 2018.

Questions were raised in relation to the affect Brexit would have on the Council and requested that this item be placed on the Forward Work Programme. Officers informed Members that a report on Brexit would be brought to Cabinet shortly and a seminar would be provided to clarify and inform Members on this topic.

2.3 Additional Voluntary Contributions

Members received information on appointing AVC Wise Ltd to provide a fully managed service for Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVC) as part of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) arrangements. Members also were informed of excluding the requirements of competition, to suspend Rule 2.2 of the Council's Contracts Procedure Rules ("CPRs") and to make a direct award to AVC Wise Limited ("the Service Provider").

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

3. **PRE-SCRUTINY CABINET (FINANCE)**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:-

Cabinet Proposals

2.1 Non domestic Rates - High Street and Retail Rates Relief
Wales 2019-20

(Cllr. Nigel Hunt reaffirmed his interest and left the meeting at this point)

Members received information on the new discretionary rates relief scheme known as High Street and Retail Rates Relief Wales 2019-20.

In response to Members queries, officers explained that the new discretionary rates relief scheme would help keep Local Business in the Community as this was a concern from Members.

Members questioned whether this scheme would support charity shops. Officers explained that there was a discretionary rate for charity shops to apply; however, Members were asked to provide specific details outside of the meeting for a more accurate response.

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

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

Members asked that a report on Brexit be added to the Forward Work programme. Officers explained that a report on Brexit would be brought to a future meeting of Cabinet where Members would have an opportunity to scrutinise. Members therefore withdrew the request for the report to be included on the Forward Work Programme.

CHAIRPERSON